

VA250

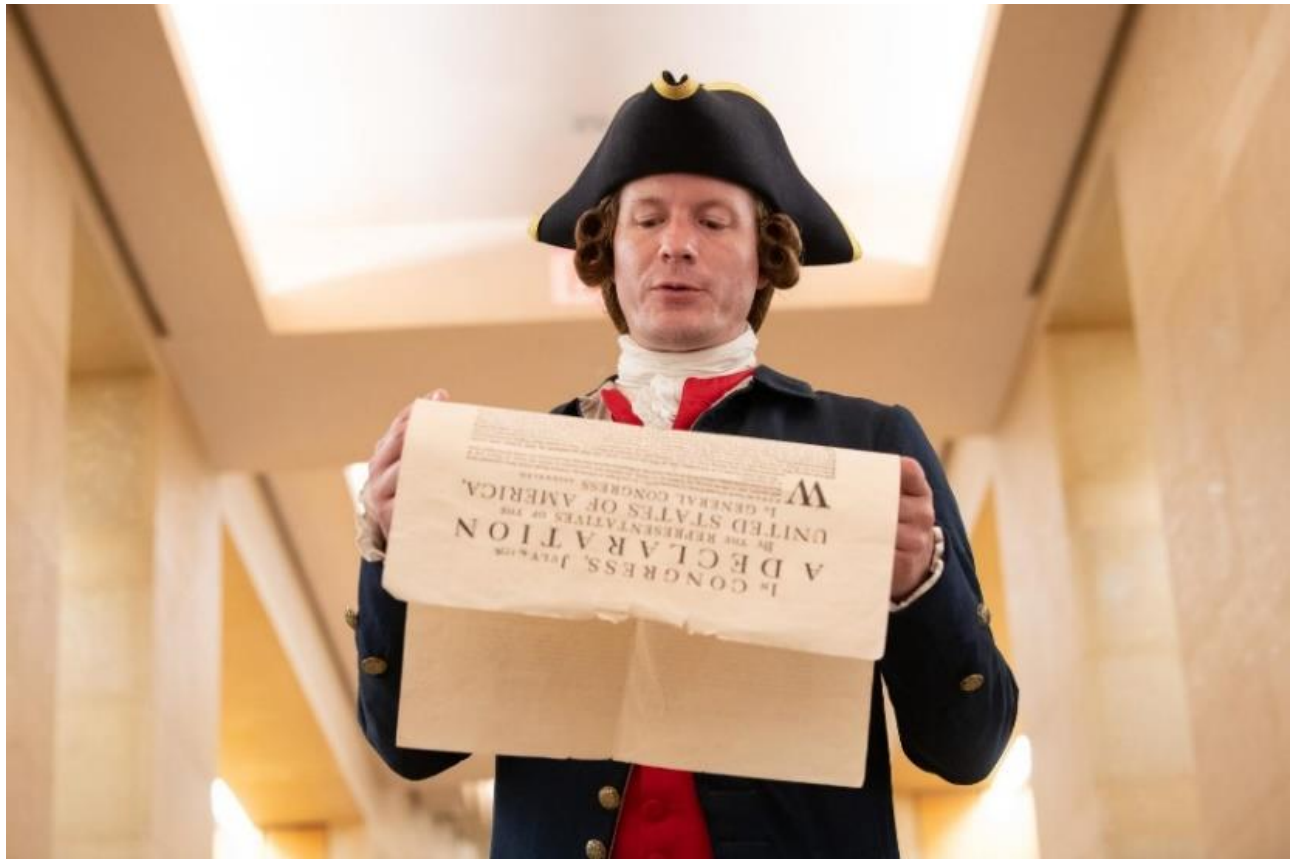
4th of July

VIRGINIA STATE CAPITOL

Toward a More Perfect Union: A Celebration of Freedom and Our Nation's Founding

"...I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival... with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more..." – John Adams, 1776

Inspired by John Adams' vision, VA250 brought the majestic grounds of the State Capitol to life as a vibrant hub of activity that showcased Virginians from all walks of life. The energy, the music, the sense of community – it was truly a night to remember.



Thomas Jefferson, portrayed by Colonial Williamsburg's Kurt Smith, opened the celebration with a reading of the Declaration of Independence inside the Virginia State Capitol.

🔔 A statewide celebration rings true

The day began with a stirring statewide bell ringing ceremony, featuring selections from iconic landmarks and institutions across the Commonwealth. From the bells at the [State Capitol](#), to the [Wilderness Road Regional Museum](#) in Dublin, to the [Military Women's Memorial](#) in Arlington, and many more places, Virginians from all corners of the state united in a powerful display of patriotism.



🎪 Square Fair: A celebration of Virginia's story

The afternoon unfolded with a lively Square Fair, highlighting Virginia's unique history and culture. Interactive booths and exhibitions from museums, cultural organizations, and artists brought the spirit of freedom to life. We were thrilled to see so many families enjoying the diverse activities!



Grand Ceremony: Inspiring words and thrilling performances

The Grand Ceremony featured a lineup of distinguished speakers, including Governor Glenn Youngkin, First Lady Suzanne S. Youngkin, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates Don Scott, PBS News Hour Co-Anchor Geoff Bennett (Master of Ceremonies), VA250 Chair Delegate Terry Austin, VA250 Vice Chair Senator Mamie Lock, Chickahominy Indian Tribe Chief Stephen Adkins, and VA250 National Honorary Chair Carly Fiorina. Their inspiring words resonated with the audience, reminding us of the core values of freedom.

The ceremony was further enriched by captivating performances from the Colonial Williamsburg Fifes & Drums, the DAY Program, Quantico Marine Corps Band, Roanoke Symphony Orchestra & Chorus, New Fellowship Gospel Choir, and Virginia's Tribal Nations.



The New Fellowship Gospel Choir and Roanoke Symphony Orchestra performing at the Capitol.

A dazzling finale lights up the night sky

As twilight fell, a breathtaking drone light show produced by Grucci painted the night sky with dazzling colors and patterns, leaving everyone in awe.



A shared experience across Virginia

The outpouring of support for this event was truly heartwarming. With over 2,500 people registered from 76 Virginia localities and seven states, it was a testament to the unifying power of freedom and celebration.

By the Numbers

2,504 registrants from 76 localities across Virginia and **seven states**

Square Fair (5 pm – 7 pm)

- ◆ 24 participants offering family friendly activities, including:
 - Science Museum of Virginia
 - Virginia Tourism Corporation
 - Visit Hampton
 - Fort Monroe
 - Hampton University Museum
 - Monticello
 - Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest
 - Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
 - Gunston Hall
 - National Museum of the United States Army
 - Heart of Virginia Artisans
 - Robert Russa Moton Museum
 - The Richmond Forum
 - Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe
 - Nottoway Indian Tribe
 - Nansemond Indian Tribe

- ◆ Statewide Tolling of Bells (echoed across the state by at least 20 localities across the state, many of whom posted videos to social media)

- ◆ Open House at Virginia's Executive Mansion

- ◆ Performances at the Bell Tower
 - Reading of the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson, as portrayed by Kurt Smith of Colonial Williamsburg
 - Peter Lee Hamilton, Winner, 2023 UVA Student Oratory Competition
 - Petersburg High Crimson Wave Forensics Team
 - Colonial Williamsburg Fifes and Drums
 - The DAY Program West African Drumming Ensemble
 - Intense Fiyaaaaa Fitness Caribbean Dance Ensemble

Grand Ceremony (7:30 pm – 9 pm)

- ◆ Musical performances by:
 - Indigenous Drum: Virginia's Tribal Nations
 - West African Drummers: The DAY Program
 - Fifes and Drums: Colonial Williamsburg
 - Roanoke Symphony and Orchestra
 - New Fellowship Gospel Choir
 - Quantico Marine Corps Band

- ◆ Remarks by:
 - The Honorable Terry Austin, Chair and The Honorable Mamie Locke, Vice Chair
 - Chief Stephen Adkins, Chickahominy Indian Tribe
 - The Honorable Don Scott, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates
 - The Honorable Glenn Youngkin, Governor of Virginia and First Lady Suzanne Youngkin
 - Carly Fiorina, VA250 National Honorary Chair

Outreach beyond Capitol Square: Webcast views and Media

- The Grand Ceremony was webcast live, with **928 views** during the performance. The archived video and full photo gallery are available at VA250.org
- Interviews with every local news outlet and Fox5 DC (Richmond outlets: WWBT, WRIC, WTVR, Fox35, Connect Richmond, Richmond Times-Dispatch)
- Social media engagement increased exponentially, particularly with short video reels