



**INSPIRING THE  
AMERICAN SPIRIT**

**2020  
AMERICA**

**REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT**

Submitted by  
The U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission  
December 31, 2019



# CONTENTS



Preamble of the Declaration of Independence	<b>3</b>
Transmittal Letter	<b>5</b>
List of Figures, Tables and Appendices	<b>6</b>
Preamble of the United States Constitution	<b>7</b>
Executive Summary	<b>8</b>
I. Introduction	<b>20</b>
II. Who We Are	<b>24</b>
III. What America 250 Means — Educate, Engage, Unite	<b>30</b>
<b>IV. How America Will Participate</b>	<b>36</b>
V. A Big Opportunity	<b>60</b>
VI. Leading America 250 — Operations Approach	<b>70</b>
VII. Laying the Groundwork — Infrastructure Approach	<b>82</b>
VIII. Recommendations	<b>90</b>
Photo Credits	<b>95</b>
Appendices	<b>97</b>



December 31, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

This letter transmits, as provided for in section 5(c) of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016, a report presenting the Commission's overall program for observances marking the 250th anniversary of the United States of America.

The Commission envisions America 250 (the brand name and commonly accepted alternative to the formal Semiquincentennial) as a monumental initiative—engaging all Americans in the largest and most inclusive celebration and commemoration in our nation's history—with the potential to:

- Inspire the American spirit to deepen understanding of our history and the democratic process through *education*; increase *engagement* in our communities and governing affairs; and foster *unity* that includes the “many” Americans in our “one” nation;
- Engage nearly 350,000,000 Americans and millions of friends worldwide by 2026;
- Produce more than 100,000 programs engaging participants at the local, territorial, state, tribal, regional, national, and international levels;
- Attract billions of dollars in resources that will ripple through our national, state, and local economies to positive effect, and
- Extend over a multiyear crescendo reaching its peak on the Fourth of July 2026.

The nation is just beginning to explore the possibilities and tackle the challenges presented by America 250 on our journey to form “a more perfect Union.” The Commission submits this report for your review and transmission to Congress as an important first step in the ongoing collaboration necessary to advance the overall program for America 250.

Along with my fellow commissioners, I stand ready to provide any clarification or support required to assist you and your staff as you review this plan. We look forward to working with the Administration and Congress to coordinate America 250.

Sincerely,

**Daniel M. DiLella, Chairman**  
U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission

- Media and technology platforms that provide virtual access to America 250 venues.
- Competitions supporting national student essays, videos, and artistic expressions made available on state or federal 250 platforms.
- Competitions for the use of artificial intelligence, virtual technology, and digital gaming that allow every American to engage with historic figures, documents, artifacts, places, and events.



In cooperation with program partners and affiliates at all scales, and enlisting support from present and emerging leaders in technology, we envision virtual participation to be one of the most prolific modes of engagement for America 250 activities and programs.

## COMMISSION NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS FRAMEWORK—

### AUTHORITY AND SCOPE

The Act requires the Commission’s overall program “to give due consideration to any related plans and programs developed by State, local, and *private groups*.”<sup>36</sup> The Act also anticipates the development of “private sector initiatives regarding the Semiquincentennial,”<sup>37</sup> as well as requires the Commission to “consult and cooperate with, and seek advice and assistance from “learned societies, and historical, patriotic, philanthropic, civic, professional, and related organizations.”<sup>38</sup> This construct facilitates national and regional America 250 program development and implementation by private (for-profit and nonprofit) as well as public/private partnerships for programs that are not owned and controlled by the Commission and do not fall within the scope of the other participatory frameworks.

### AFFILIATES AND PARTNERS

To facilitate these programs the Commission will affiliate with the America 250 Foundation to administer this construct. The framework will primarily support official program recognition and likely incorporate some form of the other common elements described above. Federal agencies,

<sup>36</sup>P.L. 114-196, 130 Stat. 687, Sec. 5(b)(1)(A) emphasis added.

<sup>37</sup>P.L. 114-196, 130 Stat. 688, Sec. 5(e).

<sup>38</sup>P.L. 114-196, 130 Stat. 688, Sec. 6(a).

private institutions, or corporations may play the role of program leads to plan, develop, and implement programs within this construct. Because of the Foundation's involvement and the role of private organizations in program initiation and development, this framework will also attract private partners whose contributions will not only support the specific programs, but also help sustain the overall operations of the Commission and the America 250 Foundation.

#### **PROGRAMMING EXTENT AND STAKEHOLDERS**

Commission partnership programs may vary significantly in scope and scale. Some, like the Freedom Train 2026 exemplar described below, may rival the size and impact of the Commission's national signature programs without the Commission taking direct responsibility or a substantial ownership, control, or operating role. Others will be more modest requiring fewer resources and less administration. This framework invites organizations and individuals to pursue innovative and creative expressions of America 250 outside the jurisdictional bounds that define the other constructs. Based on the successful Bicentennial experience with a similar construct and greater support of private resource partners for these types of programs than 50 years ago, their number could range from 250 to 500.

#### **Exemplar Programs Ideas**

##### **National Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and Maker City: Initiative "2026.US"**

Launched even before the Act that created the Commission, this is a 10-year challenge to mobilize young people, cities, entrepreneurs, innovators, leaders of businesses and nonprofits, and policy makers committed to setting tangible goals for America in 2026, as the nation sets a planning horizon toward its 250th birthday. This initiative will lend a distinctly bottom-up character to America's 250th celebration, with civic leaders and teams of citizens taking the lead in conducting a decade's worth of projects, contests, and entrepreneurial experiments — remaking America for the 21st century. In 2016, 2026.US partnered with others in the Bay Area to pilot GEN2026, a youth census of possibilities/listening campaign aimed at inclusion across communities and levels of opportunity that may serve as a model for similar initiatives across the nation. America leads the world in innovation and entrepreneurship, and there is no greater innovation project than America herself.

##### **PDI Rail Solutions/Freedom Train 2026 Foundation: "Freedom Train 2026"**

PDI envisions the 2026 Freedom Train conducting a 22-month "whistle stop tour of America," playing a role serving as a visible, national unity ambassador. Intended to embark near Lexington, Massachusetts (the home of the Minutemen and the start of the American Revolution), the Freedom Train will travel over 22,000 miles during its 22-month, 48-state sojourn concluding in Trenton, New Jersey (where General Washington crossed the Delaware River). Using the 1976 Bicentennial Freedom Train as a model, the 2026 version will be evolved to not only include an additional 50 years of American history, but also capitalize on the best technology, including

interactive exhibits, befitting a modern museum and exhibition “on steel wheels.” PDI’s goal is to best the attendance of the 1976 Freedom Train, which boasted more than 40 million trackside visitors (watching and waving as the Freedom Train traveled its 22,000-mile journey through America) and 7 million paid attendees (through ticket sales). Depending on the Commission’s role and partner arrangements, this program may develop either within this framework or the national signature programs framework.

**American Historical Association (AHA) in collaboration with the National Council on the Social Studies: “The Declaration at 250: History and Commemoration”**

An initiative to coordinate the creation and dissemination of educational resources centered on the Declaration of Independence and oriented towards student research grounded in the relationship between civic culture, community history, and national identity. As a foundational statement of American politics and values, the Declaration of Independence articulates principles that hold meaning for all Americans. This allows the AHA and its partners to invite participation from all states and territories, and to explore ways in which the Declaration has opened conversation about American history across time and space. Students will begin by wrestling with the text itself, and then move on to research how their communities have used the words and ideas in the Declaration to frame and articulate community values. Given the richness of the Declaration’s text relating to nearly all aspects of “the course of human events,” students provided with guiding frameworks and questions will find a cornucopia of research topics, especially when we add options relating to how the document has been remembered, invoked, and commemorated in communities across the United States. Student work using these resources and methods will promote historical thinking and learning, serve history teachers and students in high school and college classrooms, and promote connections between secondary and higher education.

**American Association of State and Local History’s America 250 Relevance Working Group: “Sites of Revolution”**

This concept imagines identifying 250 sites of revolution across the nation (four to five sites per state, territory, and the District of Columbia) to tell America’s complex story from different perspectives. Using a broad definition to expand our understanding of revolution in the American context, this initiative crosses time and space to focus on the people, places, and ideas at the heart of revolutionary changes in our society, economy, and politics. Selection through state-level contests may attract broad institutional engagement from historic sites and its unifying forward-looking theme may draw interest from national and/or state funding partners. There are also opportunities for educational and virtual connections to extend and expand the program’s impact.★

**“The principle of self-government cannot be violated with impunity. The individual’s right to it is sacred—regardless of class, caste, race, color, sex or any other other accident or incident of birth.”**

**Susan B. Anthony,  
Women Want Bread, Not The Ballot!  
repeatedly delivered 1870–1880**

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