



## **“The Great Charter and the General Assembly: Founding a Legacy in 1619”**

### **A legacy project of American Evolution**

“The Great Charter and the General Assembly: Founding a Legacy in 1619” is an exhibition designed for a general audience and produced in two forms, including a wall panel exhibit to be mounted in the Virginia State Capitol Visitor Center and a set of eight pull-up banners for statewide distribution to partners. The content highlights the historical origins of the Virginia General Assembly in the Great Charter of 1618, which abolished martial law, allowed property to shift to private ownership, and authorized the governor to summon a General Assembly to act on legislation. The exhibition includes the legacy of representative government, which became the model adopted for the establishment of the government of the United States.

The wall panel exhibition will be in the Virginia State Capitol Visitor Center from January 25 – December 31, 2019.

Specs for banner exhibit – 8 silver step retractable banners 31.5” x 58”  
Available for booking January through December 2019

#### **2019 Provided Package**

- 8 – 31.5” x 58” Silverstep Retractable Banner Stand panels
- Digital file for poster – leave space to fill in date, time, location
- Refer to marketing kit on web site
- 2019 brand brochures
- Link to google form for post-program report

#### **Institutional Requirements**

- Promote exhibit
- Secure indoor space
- Floor space to accommodate all 8 panels
- Adequate lighting
- Complete Summary Report

#### **Post-program**

- Summary Report (google form)

## Background on the “Great Charter” (1618)

On November 18, 1618, the Virginia Company of London drafted a set of instructions to the colony's newly appointed governor, Sir George Yeardley. These instructions have come to be known as the “Great Charter,” in the development of the governance of the colony, even though the document was not a formal charter issued by the king.

Highlights of the instructions include:

1) Replaced the martial law under the *Laws Divine Moral and Martial* that had been in place since 1609 with a Crown-appointed governor and advisory council (known as the Governor's Council, the Council of State, or simply the Council).

2) Allowed property to shift from company to private ownership, including a system of headrights. This system of was heavily promoted by Sir Edwin Sandys, who served in Parliament for several terms between 1604 and 1626.

3) Authorized the governor to summon a General Assembly to act on legislation.

Virginia’s House of Burgesses had its origins in this document. On June 25 1619, Virginia's new governor, Sir George Yeardley, issued a writ for the election of two burgesses, or representatives, from each of the colony's eleven settlements to meet at Jamestown as the first General Assembly of Virginia. The instructions specified “two Burgesses from each Plantation freely to be elected by the inhabitants thereof.” The Assembly met July 30 through August 4, 1619. Within a few years, the General Assembly saw themselves as “a little Parliament.”

The Parliamentary model adopted by the Virginia General Assembly became a model for developing governmental structure in subsequent English colonies established in North America. Ultimately, the same model was adopted for the establishment of the government of the United States.