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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **NEW EXHIBITION, *THE GREAT CHARTER AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY: FOUNDING A LEGACY IN 1619*, SHOWCASES VIRGINIA'S ROLE IN ESTABLISHING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY**

*Visit Virginia State Capitol Visitor Center to learn about the Virginia General Assembly's legacy as the oldest continuous law-making body in the Western Hemisphere*

Jamestown, Va. (January 25, 2019) – Today Virginia's 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution announced the opening of [\*The Great Charter and the General Assembly: Founding a Legacy in 1619\*](#), a special exhibition at Virginia State Capitol Visitor Center in Richmond, Va. The exhibit, which is on display through December 31, 2019, highlights the historical origins of the Virginia General Assembly in the Great Charter of 1618. The exhibition is produced in two forms: wall panels that will be mounted in the Virginia State Capitol Visitor Center, and a set of pull-up banners for statewide distribution to museums and historic sites.

The Great Charter of 1618 abolished martial law, allowed property to shift to private ownership, and authorized the governor to summon a General Assembly to propose and act on legislation. The 400<sup>th</sup> class of the Virginia General Assembly recently convened for the 2019 session, making it the longest standing representative government body in the United States and the oldest continuous law-making body in the Western Hemisphere. The first representative legislative assembly in English North America took place between July 30 and August 4, 1619 in Jamestown, Va., and formed the basis of today's representative system of government in the United States. It was then and is now a legislative body comprised of "citizen legislators," elected representatives that serve in a part-time capacity meeting full-time responsibilities.

"Virginia's role in the creation of the United States was just not at our founding, but at every stage of America's development." said Kathy Spangler, Executive Director of the 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution. "The Great Charter of 1618 introduced the idea of representative democracy to Early America and created opportunities for stakeholders to have a voice in government."

*The Great Charter and the General Assembly: Founding a Legacy in 1619* is a Legacy Project of the 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution. Throughout 2019, American Evolution is partnering with notable Virginia institutions to host more than 20 events, programs and educational initiatives showcasing key occurrences from 1619 Virginia. These events set our nation on a course towards the ideals of democracy, diversity and opportunity, and include the first representative legislative assembly in the New World,

the arrival of the first recorded Africans to English North America, the recruitment of English women in significant numbers, the first official English Thanksgiving in North America, and the development of the Virginia colony's entrepreneurial and innovative spirit. A full schedule of American Evolution programming can be found [here](#).

### **About the 2019 Commemoration**

The 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution™, highlights events that occurred in Virginia in 1619 that continue to influence America today. Featured programs, events and legacy projects will position Virginia as a leader in education, tourism and economic development. American Evolution™ commemorates the ongoing journey toward the key ideals of democracy, diversity and opportunity. Dominion Resources is an American Evolution Founding Partner and Altria Group and TowneBank are Virginia Colony Partners.

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