



400th Anniversary of America's First Representative Legislative Assembly
Historic Jamestowne on Jamestown Island and Jamestown Settlement
July 30, 2019

Welcome

Elizabeth S. Kostelny, CEO of Preservation Virginia

Elizabeth S. Kostelny:

Governor Northam, Speaker Cox, Senator Norment, Sir David, and all of our distinguished guests, welcome to historic Jamestown. I'm Elizabeth Kostelny. I have the great honor to serve as Chief Executive Officer for Preservation Virginia. On behalf of Preservation Virginia's Board of Trustees and our Jamestown Rediscovering Foundation Board of Directors, I share our appreciation for friends and partners gathered today, and acknowledge the leadership of the administration, the general assembly, American Evolution and Jamestown/Yorktown Foundation. Our special appreciation to our partners in managing historic Jamestown: the National Park Service, tribal representatives, and members of the descendant and family societies.

Today we commemorate the events that occurred on this site 400 years ago. The distinguished speakers who follow me will capture the importance of those proceedings and the direct influence still felt today. I will highlight this physical place and the persistent efforts of women who have ensured its preservation. The history embodied within these walls would have been lost if it not were the vision and dedication of women. In 1889, Mary Jeffery Galt and Cynthia Beverly Tucker Coleman founded the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, now known as Preservation Virginia. Their goal was to save and restore disappearing landscapes and buildings that embodied our colonial traditions.

Successfully securing Williamsburg's Powder Magazine and Mary Washington's Fredericksburg home, the women established an organization, the first in the nation, over 130 years ago, and has saved more than 500,000 Virginia historic places. Never veering from their early ambition to acquire Jamestown, in 1893, they were successful, and obtained 22 acres, including the 17th century church tower and the foundations of the old churches. Within that first decade,

steamships brought guests, and ever persuasive, the ladies convinced Congress to build a sea wall protecting Jamestown from further erosion.

Preservation Virginia founders formed alliances with the National Society of Colonial Dames, the Colonial Dames of America, and many family descendant societies represented here to construct this church, place monuments, markers and gates in advance of the 1907 anniversary. Connections between these organizations and this place of historic memory remain resolute.

In those early years, Ms. Galt and Mary Winder Garrett and Annie Galt launched an excavation to find the foundations where the first assembly met. Although amateurs, their careful notes provided clues to Mary Anna Hartley, Jamestown Rediscovery's senior archeologist, who, in 2016, led only the second archeological investigation of this church. Ms. Hartley and her team carefully peeled back the layers of concrete and brick to find evidence of the 50 by 20 foot, timbered-framed 1617 church and its foundations.

One evening, her team stood back, the realization that they were looking at the cobblestone footings that literally and figuratively represent the foundations of our democracy. The team unearthed the very spot where Governor Sir George Yeardley met his councilors and 22 burgesses back in that first assembly that we commemorate today, the very space in which we sit.

At historic Jamestown, and in all of our Preservation Virginia programs, we embrace the belief that historic places offer singular opportunity to connect present and future generations with final lessons about all facets of our complex history. Standing where history happens offers experiences that may be sobering, inspiring, and thought-provoking. Our preservation efforts strive to capture, not gloss over, the complexities of our history, and tell us stories of the widely-known figures of John Smith, Chief Powhatan, Governor Yeardley, as well as the recently revealed stories of the unnamed Virginia Indian women who lived within the fort walls in the early years; a teenage girl we call Jane, whose butchered remains will speak to the brutal conditions of that deadly 1610 winter; and Angela, an Angola woman captured and brought to Jamestown on an English ship.

With this anniversary, ongoing research and interpretation builds on an internationally recognized archeological work initiated in 1994 by Dr. William M. Hilson and his team. Today, Dr. James Horn leads the Jamestown Rediscovery team to expand the narrative to reflect the perspective of Powhatan people, the English settlers, and the Africans brought unwillingly to the colony. We followed their footsteps here on Jamestown.

The archeological remains of the 1617 church survived through the persistence of patience of women. In 1907, at the dedication of the memorial gates, James Alston Cabell remarked on the women's legacy. Quote: "Any work that requires sincere unselfish devotion is always best entrusted to the love and sympathy of women." Today, we commemorate the first assembly in 1619 and honor all the people, women and men, who ensured that we could stand here where the seeds of our democracy were first planted. Thank you, and welcome.

2019 Commemoration Greeting

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr., Majority Leader of the Senate of Virginia

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.:

Good morning, and a glorious morning to everyone, and thank you for being here for an incredible commemoration of the founding of this nation and how we have evolved over 400 years. I'm Tommy Norment, and I have the distinct pleasure of representing the 3rd Senatorial District in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is a marvelous opportunity because it is the site and venue of historic Jamestown, where we are now seated. It also includes the reconstruction of the Jamestown settlement, just across the Causeway and about 22 miles down the Colonial Parkway is where freedom was ultimately won in 1779 when the world turned upside down at the Yorktown.

As you all know, this venue includes the first permanent English settlement, when 104 very brave young men and boys landed on May the 13th of 1607. This site also includes not just the first English settlement, but the reconstructed remnants and remains of Colonial Virginia. Between the James River and the York River, you will find sites that are directly related to our nation, and others that involve the near destruction of this nation.

On this Jamestown Island itself, site of the first English colony, the earthworks of three Civil War forts still exist. Of course, when you grow up surrounded by history where different things are preserved, protected, and interpreted, you simply accept it as part of your surroundings. It's just home, and this is my home. I further say that that's why when you see a person in the supermarket locally, for instance, dressed in leggings, a waistcoat, or tri-corn hat, you must think nothing of it. It is just part of being home. The same goes for the Native Americans in traditional native dress, or women in large, elaborate, glorified dresses of bygone eras. It is just home.

Bygone is what we do. History, for many of us, is a preoccupation and an occupation. It is a central part of our present, and we hope it will always be a respectful part of our future. Our neighbors explore, they teach, and they preserve history as a living, and Elizabeth, I want to thank you for the many years... what you have done for Preservation Virginia, and Elizabeth and I spent a lot of quality time back in 2007, and she's done a marvelous job.

Even so, we took on the 400th anniversary of representative government with all the efforts to better understand the emergence of slavery, the vital role of women, and the effects of this colony on the indigenous Native Americans. It is a challenge for all of us to do better. We have worked at it very hard; considerable thought has gone into it. I honestly do not know what they did in 1719; I do recall what they did in 1819 because I was here to commemorate the 100th and the 200th anniversaries. But when the 20th century arrived, news accounts and records indicate the effort of remembrance and commemoration mostly involve a sustained salute of our English roots.

A point, in fact; we do appreciate our English roots. It is foundational to our law and our current political structure. But now we understand so much more, and it is not by accident; we have

worked and worked arduously at that. We have examined the events that occurred here, including their consequences, intended and unintended, and we have done so much with greater sensitivity and honesty. It seems to me that it is our duty, it is our stewardship that we owe each other... it is our stewardship that we owe America... and then, tell it all as best as we can, unvarnished.

There is history and there is memory. I will leave it to the scholars to make the necessary distinctions between history and memory, but clearly, the two enjoy a very close relationship. Someone once wrote that memory remains a subject of reflection and anxiety, not the least because as people live longer, more of them survive without connections to the past, and I identify with that; I can't remember things like I used to.

Technology and a far more open approach to history may have changed that. I prayerfully hope so. Clearly, people yearn to better understand their own ancestry, but we need to pull apart and closely examine our national DNA. Historical milestones, including commemorations such as we are celebrating today, offer us an opportunity for greater insight and more deft understanding of our ancestry. We want to remember, we want to commemorate, we want to respect our heritage.

I will now say that it is an honor to be joined by a contemporary leader who embraces the heritage of our parliamentary and legislative form of government. It is my pleasure to introduce to you Sir David Lionel Natzler. He is the former Clerk of the House of Commons. He is the Principal Constitutional Advisor to the House of Commons in the United Kingdom, and an advisor on all its procedure and businesses. He is the 50th person to hold your role, President Fairfax, sometimes I would need him in the Senate of Virginia.

Sir David hosted a 2019 commemoration delegation in 2016 and has been keenly interested in the history of Jamestown and all the relevant matters of today. We are honored to welcome Sir David to offer remarks on the intersection of our international relations and our impact on the democracy worldwide. Sir David.

Special Remarks

Sir David Natzler KCB, Clerk of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom (2014 – 2019)

Sir David L. Natzler:

Thank you for that generous greeting. I know some of you must have difficulty seeing me, staring into the sun, so you can shut your eyes. There's nothing to see.

So, on this very day 400 years ago, and in this very place, something very special happened: the first meeting of an elected assembly in what was then the New World. It was a real assembly, not a ceremonial meeting like this, or a ritual - combative; assertive; discursive, I'm afraid; and ultimately, productive; and it sat here, as you well know, at the hottest time of the year, hot enough to kill one of its members. And we all now have some idea of what the weather would have been like through those hot days.

And a year later, a very similar assembly was held in Bermuda. But it's not just in a spirit of antiquarianism that this event of 400 years ago needs to be celebrated and acknowledged, because it is important not only to you all here in Virginia, not only throughout the United States and all its state legislatures, which give your country its name, but throughout the world. Wherever the idea has taken root that people wish to be governed by laws made by their own elected representatives, that is representative democracy.

So representative democracy is not a perfect system of government. It's not the rule of the saints, not even in New England. The 22 burgesses who gathered here 400 years ago were not exceptionally righteous or upright men... and they were all men. They were no doubt liable to all the frailties shown by their successors in elected assemblies over the centuries that followed, and all over the world. But the ideal of representative democracy first expressed 2,500 years ago in Athens, and here again in Jamestown 400 years ago, has survived those centuries of bruising contact with real people, and the Jamestown assembly was the first child of Westminster, and a first child occupies a very special place in a parent's heart.

But you have descendants across the United States, siblings to the north in Canada and to the south across Central and Latin America, across Africa and Asia, and as far as Australasia and Oceania. There are over 170 members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union... that's the union of parliaments and assemblies... and over 70 of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, whose tie I'm wearing today; forgive the garish colors.

In the north, Greenland has a parliament, the Inatsisartut, at 64 degrees north. At 52 degrees south is the world's smallest parliament, the Legislative Assembly of the Falkland Islands, which meets in a building smaller than this. It has eight elected members, but a vigorous democratic tradition, as I've experienced. So, this idea obstructed by authoritarians; resisted by elites; mocked by cynics; sometimes insulted, belittled, or bullied, but again and again, it rises... the idea of a freely-elected representative assembly, wherever people seek freedom and self-rule.

In the 1950s and the 1960s, it happened in the former European colonies in Africa and Asia; in the 1990s, in Central and Eastern Europe, in the countries freed from Soviet control; and most recently, in the countries of the Arab Spring and in Burma. And as we meet, on the streets of Hong Kong, the independence of the legislative council, LegCo, is the principle demand of the demonstrators. In Sudan, people are fighting and dying for an assembly, so they have one simple remedy, for which thousands have fought and died over the years: to elect their own representatives. And assisting those demands is, and should be, a common endeavor between the great representative democracies, foremost among them the United States and the United Kingdom.

Now, of course, it is not, and it never was quite that simple. As a descendant of the British emancipator, William Wilberforce, I am only too aware that you're also marking here the arrival 400 years ago of the first enslaved African men and women in Virginia. In 1619, there was no representative democracy for Virginia's women, nor was there justice for those who already

occupied the land, and having an assembly did not and could not even begin to right those wrongs.

We also know that around the world, representative democracy is under attack from many different directions. It will not survive on its own unless it is defended and sustained, and if need be, constructively criticized by engaged citizens, which means us.

Our modern assemblies are different in form to Jamestown in 1619. Many have professional representatives and staff; sophisticated, purpose-built buildings; temples of democracy, such as Jefferson's wonderful capital in Richmond. But they're not different in substance, and the meeting here 400 years ago of two dozen hot and bothered early settlers in this little church marks the humble start of a very big idea, that the best form of government is a representative democracy, and that this is the best protection against tyranny and arbitrary government.

And that's why I'm profoundly honored to be bringing you greetings from the mother of parliaments to the 1619 General Assembly of Virginia, its eldest child. Runnymede, where Magna Carta was signed in 1215, is a low-lying marshy field on the banks of a great river. Jamestown echoes that site of freedom and the rule of law. So Friday, 30th of July, 1619, was a very special day, and so is today. Thank you.

Introductions

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr., Majority Leader of the Senate of Virginia

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.:

Sir David, thank you very much for sharing those insightful remarks. I had a number of takeaways, but the one that stood out in my mind... perhaps we should emulate the Falkland Islands and reduce our legislature to eight members. I'm just trying to figure out who the other seven are going to be.

It is, indeed, my pleasure now to introduce a very distinguished gentleman and a friend of mine for many years. Governor Ralph Northam and I have known one another for many, many years. We share a common alma mater, which happens to be one of the outstanding public colleges and universities in the Commonwealth of Virginia, sometimes known as Virginia Military Institute.

Our professional interests took us in different directions in life. Governor Northam went on to be recognized as a skilled pediatric neurologist, serving our country as an armored doctor, as I struggle to be a humble, small-town country lawyer. Interestingly enough, our careers circled back towards each other in a cause of publicly elected service. In some respects, that follows a pattern that began 400 years ago at Jamestown.

Back then, everyone knew each other, for better or for worse. They knew each other's strengths, they knew their habits, their inclinations... all of the attributes that go into the human character and shape of our personal conduct. Personally, I think VMI did a world of good for both of us. There, everyone gets shoved into a same space. Discipline is imposed upon you. Tradition is

inculcated into your brain, and you begin to realize that human leadership takes many forms, as do human ideas.

Ultimately, a democracy... you must work out your differences, have a workable system grounded on sound principle, ordered by tried and true... is vitally important to that effort. Partisan rhetoric is a distraction, no matter from whom it comes.

Governor Northam would agree with me, I believe, that we should all be respectful to our Virginia ancestors for having set in motion a system of representative democracy that enables our people, our citizens and Americans, to resolve disputes, remain safe, and prosper. We are all beneficiaries of that legacy. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my distinguished honor and pleasure to introduce to you, His Excellency, the 73rd Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Ralph S. Northam.

Address

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam, Governor of Virginia

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam:
Please be seated. Please be seated.

Well, good morning. It is a tremendous privilege to be with all of you here today. Senator Norment, thank you very much for the kind introduction. Speaker Cox, it is good to share the stage with you, and thank you for your leadership in Virginia. It is also good to see our Lieutenant Governor, Justin Fairfax... thank you for being here... and our Attorney General, Mark Herring, and to all of our legislators, thank you for your attendance this morning, and thank you for your leadership in Virginia.

As was said, I served in the State Senate along with my friend, Senator Norment, and also presided over that body as Lieutenant Governor. That gave me a deep appreciation for the history of the Senate as part of our General Assembly. I appreciate Senator Norment's service and leadership in the Senate. I feel privileged to be here with him and all of you today, commemorating such important events in our state's and our country's history.

We're gathered here this morning at the spot where 400 years ago, representative democracy began on this continent. We look back across these 400 years as the colony of Jamestown, and from our perspective, in 2019, it is hard to imagine what life was like in that colony. And it's hard to imagine now when the ideas of America and democracy are so rooted in our minds that Jamestown was an experiment that nearly failed. It was not founded to give birth to a new way of governing, or to be an incubator for our lofty ideals of freedom. It was founded to make money for investors and establish a foothold on a new continent.

And it was plagued early on, from a high death rate and a martial law-style of governance that didn't actually make Virginia a very attractive place to come. Potential colonists were not eager to go to Virginia. To save the colony, the men running the Virginia Company started to make

changes to make the place more attractive. With ideas planted by Sir Edwin Sandys, they started talking about a different system of government. They directed the creation of a general assembly.

On this very day, July the 30th, in 1619, 22 burgesses met here in this place. This church stands on the foundations of the one in which they met. Like today, it was hot, it was humid. For six days, they sweated out the details of what would become our first representative government. They built a framework to settle disputes, pass laws, and manage the colony through discussion and legislation. And over the years and the centuries, as the Jamestown colony and the Plymouth colony became 13 colonies, then states... then those states became united as America... the ideals of freedom and representative government have flourished here. They spread out from this very ground here in Jamestown.

But that's not the only thing that spread from this place. While we mark this history, we must also remember that it is more complex. The story of Virginia is rooted in the simultaneous pursuit of both liberty and enslavement. Because just a few weeks after that first general assembly in 1619, a ship arrived, carrying stolen African people taken from Angola. Here, they were sold and sold again, the first enslaved Africans... people who were not granted the same freedoms that would be given to white land-owning colonists. And here, those enslaved Africans joined the thousands of Virginia's first people, the members of the Virginia Indian tribes, who would also wait centuries to have the same freedoms.

So today, as we hold these commemorations of the first representative assembly in the free world, we have to remember who it included and who it did not. That's the paradox of Virginia, of America, and of our representative democracy. A full accounting demands that we confront and discuss those aspects of our history, and it demands that we look not just to a point in time 400 years in the past, but at how our commonwealth and our country evolved over the course of those four centuries.

In many ways, Virginia today represents the best of what it means to be American. We know our diversity is our strength, and we welcome immigrants, refugees, and all, who like those who stood on this spot 400 years ago, come to Virginia in search of a better life. Our doors are open, and our lights are on. No matter who you are, no matter who you love, and no matter where you came from, you are welcome in Virginia. There is nothing, nothing, more American than that.

But even as we stand here today proud of the progress we've made, let's not forget we have a long way to go. There are a number, a number, of inequities that continue to exist in Virginia and beyond... inequities in access to a world-class education, inequities in access to healthcare, inequities in access to business opportunities, to the justice system and to the voting booth. A true commemoration of the founding of our democracy requires us to examine how we have lived up to our ideals or failed to do so, and it requires we do this work not just today, but every day, and not just with big speeches or commemorative events, but with action.

I want to thank the many people and organizations that have worked to create this event today: Preservation Virginia, the Jamestown/Yorktown Foundation, Fort Monroe Authority, and the National Parks Service. And I want to thank all of those people who work to preserve these sites

here at Jamestown and Point Comfort, now Fort Monroe; the archeologists and historians who work to understand what happened here, from the food people ate to the laws that they passed.

I have always believed that if you don't know where you come from, you can't go where you're going. To understand America as it is today and as it will be tomorrow, we have to understand America as it was yesterday. This site is an important part of that understanding. I am grateful that we come together to talk about all of those aspects of our history and the importance of this place and those events 400 years ago. They made us what we are today, and they continue to guide us as we work towards a better, a fairer, and a more inclusive tomorrow. May God be with all of you. Thank you very much.

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.:

Our Governor Northam, thank you very much. I listened very attentively to some of the cogent comments that you made, and I would remind everyone that the moniker, the theme of this commemoration was as a result of a lot of deliberate thought, and it was American Evolution... and we continue to evolve our form of representative democracy. We continue to evolve the rights and respect of minorities of all gender and of all races.

The chair next to me, regretfully, is vacant today, and my friend, dating back to before 2007, Chief Anne Richardson, could not be with us. She was going to share with us an invocation, and as I was sitting there, I looked at some of the remarks that she would have made, and I extracted this part from it.

She would have said, may we all be united as brothers and sisters, not because of our differences, but because of our love for our God, our country and our commonwealth. Thank you, Anne.

Changing directions a little bit, today we have members of our current-day Virginia general assembly, who represent the boroughs of the original General Assembly, who will offer some reflections. First, my friend, Speaker Kirk Cox of the Virginia House of Delegates is representing the Citie of Henricus borough in the city of Henricus. He will subsequently be followed by Senator Monty Mason, my compatriot here in the historic Triangle, who represents the borough of Argall's Gift, James City, Kecoughtan, and Martin's Hundred. Mr. Speaker.

Reflections

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox, Speaker of the House of Delegates of Virginia

The Honorable T. Montgomery Mason, Virginia State Senator

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:

I'm going to give a few reflections, but first I have to just say this. I feel like one of the most blessed people in Virginia, and I sort of look out today... it's a beautiful day... and boy, 35 years ago when I started as a schoolteacher, I could not imagine standing here today. It's an incredible representative democracy.

Governor, thank you for your words. It's a true citizen legislature, and when I think about Virginia and how blessed we are, we just really should be thankful.

So, for my remarks, here's the wonderful thing about Virginia. 400 years later, 400 years down the road of history, despite the growth in population, the development of cities, suburbs, the roads, railways, and airports, you may easily find spots, particularly along the rivers, where things have hardly changed at all. That's what I would say about the district I represent. It's modern and growing, and not. You can straddle the centuries with little effort. You may also reach back through time and acquire a guidance for the future. The more you look, the more you examine the past, you more advantages you give yourself to engage in the challenges today. Past heroics give you inspiration. Past mistakes really do give you guidance.

I've been telling my students that more or less, since I first walked into a classroom, the early days of the first settlements were rough. They were uncertain and full of physical dangers. Life expectancy of an early Virginia colonist was abbreviated. It was a young population, and mostly male, between the ages of 16 and 25. Few children knew their grandparents. For the Native Americans, the settlers were a disruptive force. How could it be otherwise? Still, the Indians had flexibility built in to their culture and habits. Houses were not meant to last long periods because the tribes were often moving within the region from season to season in order to cultivate new lands find game. Their land itself was managed. The Indians cleared the underbrush of the forest with controlled fires.

There were no domesticated animals except dogs. There were no fences. So when the settlers began arriving, the Indians could adjust, but only up to a point that they wanted to adjust. Initially, they did not see the settlers lasting very long, and eventually, they began to push back. Of course, today, you can leap back and forth across the centuries. We have built bridges.

You find Henricus Historical Park, where enactments pay tribute to Native Americans and the English settlers, in my district. It sits 80 miles up the James River from the original settlement. This was the second settlement, and it named for King James the First's eldest son Henry. Sir Thomas Dale settled Henricus with 300 of his English countrymen, and it is open today, and tomorrow, and most days. You can visit, buy a souvenir, learn about America's early years. One thing you will learn quickly is that governance of the settlement was always difficult. If the leadership or the governing itself failed to be responsive to the people and their concerns, then the leadership or the system failed, too.

Two words on that subject: Nathaniel Bacon. There is a reason why he is memorialized in the Virginia state capital to this day. The common political phrasing "time for a change" echoes through the centuries. What you find right from the beginning is a struggle to combine leadership and accountability. It did not always work. Adjustments, dramatic adjustments, were often made, and you see that process, as democracy gains a foothold, played out over the centuries along the James River.

I've always tried to emphasize that civics is not a fixed thing. It is changeable and flexible as humanity itself. It was once said when it came to history, Virginians were strong on what might

have been, and weak on what is. There's some truth to that. Sometimes there was more sentiment than sense, but this event and the examination of ourselves, as much as a commemoration of ourselves, continues our progress in a more inclusive and comprehensive direction.

The passage, the evolution of our commonwealth is worth understanding, and my district, along with most of Virginia, offers endless opportunities to learn. Thank you.

The Honorable T. Montgomery Mason:

Good morning. Distinguished guests, it's a privilege to have the opportunity to address this assembly on this momentous occasion.

Remarkable people have been arriving here for 400 years, and you can stack on another 10,000 years if you include Native Americans... as the speaker mentioned, we absolutely must... and it has made for a rich and dynamic community. If you go back and look at what was happening 400 years ago, I don't see how it could get any more dynamic or bewildering or contradictory or exciting or historic.

Jamestown nearly came to nothing, but it survived to cause the world to pivot in ways that remain a core challenge to our nation. The instinct for representative government was strong here. The Virginia Company may have opened the door to the General Assembly, but it remained open forevermore.

It was not always so in other parts of Colonial America. After the English seized the colony called New Amsterdam and turned it into New York, the instinct for assembly did not take hold until the end of the 17th century. A governor strictly ruled. Of course, New York gets a few things right, too. The governor was instructed to tolerate all people of all religions, and he does so. In the words of one historian, New York becomes a worldly tolerant, untidy town, quite willing to absorb just about everyone. Some things never change, huh?

And that's why I mention this. The early inclinations of different colonies, the way we were structured and ordered right from the beginning establishes enduring and lasting characteristics. Dr. Jim Horn has written magnificently about this in his book published last year, which he titled simply, 1619. I hope you will all take the opportunity to read it.

At this point, 400 years ago, the leadership of the Virginia Company has its mind set to "fashion a society that promoted an abiding commitment to Anglican ritual and God's word, just laws and equitable government, and an economy based on a wide variety of crops and industries, trade and public works, that would benefit the company and the multitudes of settlers who would shortly flock to the colony."

They were just not interested in surviving; they intended to prosper. That was the core idea, and you can see that within that core idea, the substance of thinking that still animates Virginia to this very day. Jim points out that Sir Edwin Sandys strenuously advocated a colony devoted to the public, a commonwealth that would benefit all those that ventured themselves or their money,

and which represented an improvement on English society, principally in respect to the well-being, moral, as well as economic, of the people. Sounds sort of familiar, doesn't it?

And Sandys intended that the colony would get there by involving the people in their own public affairs. That made a representative body located at Jamestown absolutely essential. That is it. Representative democracy starts here and never stops. You can go through Jim Horn's excellent account of 1619 and read others about the same period, and you will encounter over and over again ideas that endured. You will also encounter... and this is the part that's difficult to stomach... you will also encounter ideas on race and enslavement, political participation and basic human rights, that had no place in America, nor should they have any place anywhere in the world.

Any way you cut it, the godly people at Jamestown did ungodly things. But this is the story, and it is our unvarnished history. It inspires preservation. It inspires denunciation. We learn from both. We learn from it all, and with this commemoration, we are intent upon telling the whole story.

I am privileged and grateful to represent this region, a community that stayed interesting and instructive for a very long time. I thank you for your participation. Thank you for your recognition of these important moments, and thank you for the opportunity to share these words today.

Closing Prayer

The Reverend Christopher L. Epperson, Rector of Bruton Parish Episcopal Church

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.:

Thank you, Senator Mason. I'd now like to invite to the diocese Reverend Christopher Epperson for a word.

The Reverend Christopher L. Epperson:

I understand, as Sir David pointed out, that the light from behind is something of a challenge, but I want to offer you the solace that in my case, it's a halo. Let us stand and pray.

God of adventure and sustenance: you created all that is and all that will be. We offer you thanks for the work that you started here in this place. You made us a people. You inspired and initiated our efforts toward the participation of all people, and the decisions that guide our nation. Representative government in our land started here. The vehicle of fairness and the common good started here. We are grateful for the principles that undergird this work.

You are the God of truth, and we must tell the truth. Some arrived on these shores seeking a better life. Some arrived here looking for freedom. Some arrived seeking economic possibilities. Men and women came here as seekers. The arrival of some marked the end of freedom, and shattered the principles we espouse, making a mockery of your dream for the human family. The original inhabitants of this land were pushed aside and suffered at the hands of our forebears.

We have ignored the fact that all people are made in your image. As we reflect on our beginnings, we pray that we might learn from the past to enable a better future. We pray that we may cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, now in this mortal life. We pray that we may be seekers in our time. Give us a longing for expansion and opportunity, and a quality and justice, sort that seem to be in short supply in our time.

We can't claim to love you without loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. We pray that you will move us and galvanize us with such divine love.

Life is short, and we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us. So be swift to love, make haste to be kind, and may the divine mystery who is beyond our ability to know, but made us, and who loves us, and who travels with us, bless us and keep us in peace. Amen.

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.:

Thank you, Reverend Epperson. If you would have a seat, before we conclude, on behalf of the commemoration, I want to extend our genuine appreciation for the appearance of Governor Ralph Northam, my friend; the presiding officer of the Senate who tries to keep me in order unsuccessfully, Justin Fairfax; and the Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Mark Herring... and we have a number of legislators here, including the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the gentleman from Bedford and Lynchburg area, Steve Newman.

I want to thank all the legacy groups that are here. As I looked out, I saw one young lady from the DAR who is certainly looking very patriotic that reminded me we need to extend our appreciation.

I want to thank all of the members of the General Assembly who are here. And with that, and the appropriate benediction we just heard from Reverend Epperson, we will now adjourn and continue the commemoration activities over at the Jamestown Settlement. Thank all of you for being here.

Welcome

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox, Speaker of the House of Delegates of Virginia

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:

Good morning. I am Kirk Cox, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates. I'm absolutely delighted to welcome everyone here at Jamestown Settlement in the recreated church in James Fort and those viewing these proceedings online or watching from beyond to the 400th anniversary today of the first and oldest continuous representative legislative body in the Western Hemisphere. As our forefathers did on this very day, 400 years ago, we assemble right here at the birthplace of American democracy, Jamestown. Freedom in the form of representative democracy began here in Virginia. The unforgettable and inspiring event that happened here, what began here, has changed not only Virginia and not only America, but much of the entire world. Special occasions and commemorations like this offer us an opportunity to pause and

reflect on the history of 1619. As a retired school teacher, I taught government for almost 30 years. I know the year 1619 was pivotal as well as complicated. Events that year profoundly shaped the history of America.

The year 1619 saw the beginning of the highs and lows of America, which included the noteworthy birth of all democracy in the New World and I'll ongoing experiment and representative self-government, but also the forced arrival of Africans to English North America, which tragically was the genesis of the shameful evil that was slavery. Special occasions like this also challenge us to seek insights and learn lessons regarding how our American evolution has brought us here. For example, we know from keen observers that with those first steps, which English speaking settlers took in this new land of Virginia and down the centuries to this very day, promise, hope, and achievement have gone with difficulty, conflict and failure. Our Virginia, our American journey, continues as does our noble work towards finding and forging together a more perfect union. An historic milestone and commemoration also can encourage us to not just look back upon our storied past, but to look forward, to lift up our eyes and aspirations and to envision a better, brighter and more fair and just future as a people, as a Commonwealth and as a nation.

Virginia is more deeply rooted in America's soil in history than any part of our country. And those of us honored our fellow citizens and fortunate enough to be elected as delegates and senators in the Virginia General Assembly are stewards of that great inheritance in all time. We are fortunate to be among the many keepers of the flame of American democracy. It was first lit and began right here at Jamestown, Virginia 400 years ago. Back in 1619 elected representatives called Burgesses from the 11 major settlement areas for the very first time gathered as an assembly, along with Governor George Yeardley and Council of Leaders that included John Pory, who ultimately was chosen as the Assembly Speaker. Their purpose was to pass laws to better manage the colony and to hopefully improve people's lives and livelihoods.

So it was truly apt that earlier this morning at the Memorial Church on Jamestown Island, delegates and senators who now represented portions of these 11 original boroughs were present just as their predecessors were 400 years ago today. They, along with our governor representative of the tribes that were native to the soil, now distinguished leaders and guests assembled where representation of the will of the people began in America and evolved throughout the United States. Likewise, here now at Jamestown Settlement in this recreated church, we are again joined by certain successors representing the 11 major settlement areas, but also with us on this historic occasion, our two leading participants and well-informed witnesses who attended that very first session of Virginia General Assembly four centuries ago. So by special arrangement and the marvelous wonders of living history, let us now hear the voices of Virginia Colony's first governor, Governor Yeardley, followed by the more important first Speaker of the General Assembly, John Pory.

Historical Welcome

Brian Beckley, Assistant Fort Supervisor for Jamestown Settlement (as Governor George Yeardley)

Governor George Yeardley:

Morning. Distinguished guests, gentlemen and kind ladies, it has only been a few years past now since I returned to Virginia in the spring of 1619. I brought with me my commission as governor of Virginia and a new set of instructions from the Virginia Company of London that has come to be known as the Great Charter, which we hoped would bring stability to this colony that had been suffering under martial law for nearly nine years. We had been at peace with the Powhatan Indians for many years and the harsh hand of martial law rather than a help to the colony was now a hindrance. To further the colony's growth and prosperity, the Virginia Company had instructed me to end martial law and re-institute English common law and justice in the colony. The instructions also allowed me to call for each of the 11 towns and plantations along the river to send two representatives here to the capitol at Jamestown where these newly appointed Burgesses would meet to pass laws on the governing of the colony.

Citizens of Virginia no longer had to fear the arbitrary decisions of company officials for we had brought about a familiar form of governing here in Virginia in which their own interests and concerns would drive legislation. At the company's behest, we divided legislative, executive and judicial power between the authority of the governor, the council, and this new representative assembly made up of colonists living here in Virginia. This elected assembly is now the voice of the people here and this assembly is also going to serve, of course, as a check on the power and a balance to the power of myself and my counsel.

It is my belief that the citizens of Virginia have most certainly welcomed this method of establishing laws grounded in English common law and political institutions including this newly formed representative assembly that will certainly continue to tend to the affairs of Virginia for some time to come. Today as we mark that first meeting of that General Assembly that took place on this same day these few years past, some would say that as near as may be, we have brought Virginia to the laudable form of justice and government that we all knew in England. I call upon my good friend and counselor and the man that I appointed speaker for that first meeting of our General Assembly, Master John Pory for his recollections of that gathering. Speaker Pory?

Historical Interpretation

Mark Greenough, tour guide supervisor and historian at Virginia State Capitol (as Speaker John Pory)

Mark Greenough:

Thank you, Governor Yeardley. I remember when you and I, along with a few appointed counselors and about 20 elected Burgesses began meeting together on this very date, July the 30th during the torrid and sickly summer of 16 and 19. Our first legislative session was held in the choir of the church here at Jamestown as it was the most convenient place we could find to sit. 'Tis true, the governor appointed me from his council to serve as a speaker for the whole assembly and not because of my kinship to his wife, Lady Temperance, nay, but rather I was the only member of the assembly who had served as an elected lawmaker in the House of Commons.

I drew upon my experience there to organize our new assembly and reduce all the matters pending before it and to a ready method for the greater ease of the members. The first task of our proceedings was to review and discuss the new Great Charter of 16 and 18. After close examination in committees, this charter received the general assent and applause of the whole assembly.

'Tis certain the ending of cruel martial laws and the granting of good land to ancient planters who had long labored here gave us all great encouragement and hope. Another great task was to propose, debate and vote upon suitable laws for the welfare and peaceable government of this infant Commonwealth. Our new laws were carefully drawn from two sources. Firstly, previous company instructions sent from London to governors here in Virginia were reviewed by committees. Those instructions thought fit to be converted into new laws were reported and farther debated. Eighteen of them were given yet one review more and then did pass the final consent of the assembly. I recall several of these laws dealt with labor contracts and the production of particular commodities deemed profitable by the Company. Secondly, another 18 laws were debated and passed, which originated within the minds of the people living and working here in Virginia. Several of these laws promoted regular religious observances and required our ministers to record births, deaths and marriages among our growing population.

Other laws safeguarded the peace and regulated our trade with the native Indians that were living in great numbers all around us. In sum, over five days, 36 laws were created from previous instructions and from proposals made by many of the Bargesses working behalf of the sundry inhabitants who elected them. These new laws brought to life by our little flock did touch every one living here to the life.

Our General Assembly also produced several petitions to forward to Company leaders in London, mostly to clarify some points in the Great Charter touching upon land and rent and inheritance and new settlers. I included these petitions and a detailed report of our legislative and legal proceedings, which I was charged with writing and then sending across the ocean. I am told that this report, some 30 pages of manuscript has survived and is now known to all of you. I can testify that for many years, the future of our newly planted General Assembly remained very much in doubt. I witnessed the crown dissolving the charter of the Virginia Company and converting this land into a crowned colony, less than six years after our first assembly and yet 'tis also true that people living here did carefully nurture and protect the valuable right to elect their own Bargesses and thus maintain a growing voice in their own affairs.

On this special day, my concluding charge to all of you is this. Keep the promises in the Great Charter and in Governor Yeardley's commission and follow the rules of justice and good government for the benefit of the people and the strength of our Commonwealth. Adieu.

Introduction

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox, Speaker of the House of Delegates of Virginia

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:

Pulitzer Prize winner Jon Meacham not long ago said the obligation as a historian or storyteller is to put yourself in the shoes of the people, engage in those events and then try to figure out what they knew when they knew it. From the presentations we just witnessed, the wisdom of that statement is clear. Thank you Governor Yeardley and Speaker Pory. Also, I truly hope everyone will find time or make time to see John Pory's original 1619 minutes of the first legislative assembly that convened four centuries ago today. They're on loan for the first time in America in 400 years from the National Archives of the United Kingdom and on public exhibit for several months here at Jamestown Settlement. Now it's truly my pleasure to welcome our next speaker who also had a marvelous way of making history come alive. Jon Meacham is a talented and extremely gifted historian. He's one of today's preeminent biographers.

He's won a Pulitzer Prize for his literary endeavors and he's a popular bestselling author. Jon Meacham's extensive writings have helped many people, young and old, find knowledge and understanding as well as wisdom and purposes in history. Perhaps better still, he tells stories as well as anyone writing about America. The legacy of Jamestown in 1619, as I alluded to earlier, is complex. But through American evolution this year-long commemoration, we have been working hard to make sure it's examined thoughtfully, carefully and in full historical context. Here, as with other aspects of history, we confront contradictions and stated purposes and recorded outcomes and contradictions between principals embraced and deeds done. We can and should and are sorting through this and trying mightily to better educate us all. That's why having an historian as astute and assigned as Jon Meacham here with us today is such a tremendous opportunity for education and learning.

Barbara Tuchman, Mr. Meacham says, famously remarked that readers will go along with you when you're telling these stories about even very well-known events if you write it as it was lived without knowing the end. Well, we are very much in the flow of history these days and none of us knows the end. The stories of American history had been illuminated, clarified and enriched by our distinguished guests and next speaker and I cannot think of a more appropriate occasion to hear his engaging and scholarly insights at Jamestown, the year 1619 and so very much more than on this very important anniversary in American history. So ladies and gentlemen, please join me giving a warm welcome to Mr. Jon Meacham.

Special Remarks

Jon Meacham, presidential historian

Jon Meacham:

Thank you. I just said to the Speaker, "I can tell he wasn't sworn as he went through that." Whenever I think I'm the most preeminent anything, my mind goes back to a moment. It was about 10 years ago now on the Washington Mall and I was at that point on my way to give a talk about Andrew Jackson, and a woman ran up to me, which doesn't happen enough, or ever actually, and she said, "Oh my God, it's you." And I said, "Well, yes, existentially speaking, that's hard to argue with." And she said, "Your books have meant so much to me. I just, I love them. Will you wait right here. I'm going to go buy your book and have you sign it." And I said, "Yes ma'am."

And I stood there thinking, this is the way the world is supposed to be. Women are supposed to run up to you. They're supposed to buy your book. It was a twofer. Hand to God, she brought back John Grisham's latest novel. So as a distinguished guest... So whenever I think I'm that distinguished, I remind myself that somewhere in America there's a woman with a forged copy of the *Runaway Jury*. Right? Because you have to sign it. And this is a significant active ecumenical diversity for you all to have a Tennessean come to you on this day, so I'm delighted.

The story that we commemorate today began with dreams of God and of gold, but not necessarily in that order. Issued by King James I in 1606, the First Charter of Virginia was 3,805 words long, 98 of those words were about caring religion, as it put it, to such people as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God.

97% of the Charter concerned the taking of, as it put it, all the lands, woods, soil grounds, havens, ports, rivers, mines, minerals, marshes, waters, fishing, commodities, as well as orders to dig, mine and search for all manner of mines, of gold, silver and copper. And so God and mammon propelled men across the seas and the evolutionary beginnings of popular government came soon after their arrival. We are here this morning in large measure because in 1618, a faction within the Virginia Company led by Sir Edwin Sandys, successfully argued for a series of reforms resulting in what the governor and the speaker have just told us was the Great Charter, a set of instructions sent to governor Yeardley, who was to begin his term in 1619. Officials of the Company authorized the governor to oversee the selection of two male settlers from each of the 11 major settlement areas to attend a General Assembly here in Jamestown.

This new form of government divided political and judicial power between the governor, a council appointed by the Virginia Company and the new General Assembly. The Assembly's first meeting took place four centuries ago this very day, from Tuesday, July 30th through Sunday, August 4th. Our friend John Pory, secretary of the colonies, served as Speaker. Six appointed council members attended along with 20 of the 22 selected Burgesses and so representative government in the New World began. As Abraham Lincoln reminded us, we cannot escape history and I'd argue that we should not want to or try to for by our heritage and our hope, we as Americans are charged with a sacred duty to fulfill the injunction that to whom much is given, much is expected.

And as Americans we have been given much and those gifts in many ways are rooted here at Jamestown, gifts of liberty and of opportunity of self-government and of what Lincoln was to call a fair chance to enable us to lead lives of prosperity and of peace, which is why this is a good moment and a good place to reflect on who we've been, who we are, and where we might go in the next 400 years for to know what's come before is to be armed against despair. If the men and women of the past with all their flaws and limitations and ambitions and appetites could press on through ignorance and superstition through racism and sexism through selfishness and greed, then perhaps we too can take another step toward a more perfect union. History has the capacity to bring us together for our story is ultimately one of obstacles, overcome, crises resolved and freedom expanded.

The story, Jamestown's story and America's is about the best of us and yes, the worst of us. There was human enslavement. There was the abuse and dispossession of the native inhabitants, some of whom it should be said were essential to the survival of Jamestown in its earliest days. There was the subjugation of women. There was, there is, our mixed record of welcoming new immigrants to our shores and yet, and yet so much of American history is captured in the phrase and yet. And yet in this place, representative government, government of the people, not of princes or prelates began. This first assembly on the banks of the James was the forerunner of the United States Congress, of the other 49 state legislatures and of all other American legislative bodies.

In the fullness of time, this first planting blossomed into a worldwide flowering of democratic institutions and of free nations, a development in which American leadership and sacrifice played and should play an indispensable role. We should note too that the first Thanksgiving in America can be traced not to the Yankees at Plymouth Rock, but to our fellow southerners here in Virginia. An instance of New England cultural imperialism we should not reward. After all, don't we throw better parties? As a Tennessean, I would say so. I'm a graduate of the University of the South. My best friend in college was from Lynchburg, Tennessee. His name was Jack Daniels. You all know him. You know what I mean.

We should not sentimentalize the American experience. The nation has been morally flawed from the beginning. We must be honest about that and our honesty should lead us to do all that we can do to be about the work of justice. In August 1619, the *White Lion*, a privateering vessel, arrived at Port Comfort, Virginia at present day Hampton. The ship held 20 and odd Africans who were traded in exchange for provisions, originally captured by Portuguese slavers in West Central Africa, these were the first recorded Africans to arrive in English North America and they were treated much as slaves were in other European colonies regardless of age or gender. The irony was not lost on the Old World. How is it the English man of letter, Samuel Johnson, ask that we hear the loudest yelps from for liberty from among the drivers of negroes? How is it? Well, this is how. We are not perfect.

We are a fallen and a sinful people. We get some things right and some things wrong. We try and we fail, but we must try again and again and again. For only in trial is progress possible and the story of America is in fact the story of progress. At our best, we reach out, we look ahead and we dream big and at our best we close the gap between the ideal and the real. The test of the nation like the test of an individual cannot be perfection for perfection is not possible until the arrival of the new heaven and the new earth. The test rather turns on how often we heed our better angels rather than our worst instincts. The work of America is not done. The American Revolution, indeed the American evolution, unfolds still. That is our blessing and our burden. Extremism, racism, nativism, xenophobia and isolationism driven by a fear of the unknown, tend to spike in periods of stress, a period like our own.

As we gather here, faith in representative institutions is ebbing. Reflexive partisanship is the order of the day. Too many seem more interested in producing heat than shedding light. Our politics rewards the clenched fist and the harsh remark more than the open hand and the welcoming word. Yet history teaches us that we've always grown stronger the more widely we've

opened our arms and the more generously we've interpreted the most important sentence ever originally rendered in English. Thomas Jefferson's assertion that all men are created equal. I will say I am careful about hyperbolic claims, like the most important sentence in the English language, largely because of the old story about the Texas school board candidate who was against teaching Spanish in the public schools and said on the stump one day, "If English was good enough for our Lord Jesus Christ, it's good enough for Texas." But that's in Texas, so we won't worry about that. I also point out that if it weren't for Tennessee, Texas would still be part of Spain and they don't like that at all. First time I met George W. Bush, I told him that when he was governor. He went, "Ha, ha. That's pretty funny, jerk."

We don't tend to build monuments to people who build walls. We build monuments to people who open doors. We honor liberators, not captors. The battle between hope and fear, between what's right and what's convenient, between the larger good and personal interest, those are the battles that have been fought in our common experience for 400 years and they unfold still. And the terrain on which light and dark contend is nothing less than the arena of the soul. Socrates believed the soul was the animating force of reality. In the second chapter of Genesis, the soul was life itself and the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. In the Greek New Testament, when Jesus says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The word for life could also be translated as soul. And our history is determined, our lives are determined by the outcome of the clashes within our soul, both individual and national, between liberty and slavery, between grace and rage and between kindness and cruelty. Good, great good, dwells in our national soul, yet there is evil too. Good and evil, such is the stuff of the unfolding lives of nations down the centuries. During a secret summit at sea in August of 1941, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill attended a church service aboard the HMS Prince of Wales. Together they sang, Oh God Our Help in Ages Past, Onward Christian Soldiers and Eternal Father Strong to Save. Afterward, FDR remarked, "Onward Christian soldiers, yes, we are Christian soldiers, and we will go on with God's help," and on we went.

A product of that rendezvous between FDR and Churchill was the Atlantic Charter, a statement of war aims and the struggle against fascism and totalitarianism. Without a Great Charter in Jamestown, there might not have been an Atlantic Charter amid the winds of the Second World War more broadly, without a Jamestown in 1619, there might not have been a Lexington and Concord in 1775 nor a Philadelphia in 1776 and 1787 nor Seneca Falls in 1848 nor an Appomattox in 1865 nor an Omaha Beach in 1944 nor a Selma in 1965 nor Stonewall in 1969 nor Berlin in 1989. In our search, in our hunger for a way forward through the maelstrom of Twitter and of tribalism, I would commend the utility of history, the very kind of remembrance we're undertaking at this hour. The beginning of wisdom lies in an appreciation of the past, which as William Faulkner taught us, isn't dead, it isn't even past. What can learn from the kind of history we contemplate today? That the perfect should not be the enemy of the good.

That compromise is the oxygen of democracy and that we learn the most from those who came before, not by gazing up at them adoringly or down on them condescendingly, but looking them in the eye and taking them for what they were, human, not as impossibly perfect heroes or as

hopelessly irredeemable villains. Knowing the history of freedom is not only illuminating, but enabling. A person who understands that the past in all its glory and grandeur and horror and injustice understands that the path of civilization while never straight is essentially upward. Forward to what Churchill once called the broad and sunlit uplands. For all its faults, Jamestown was the place where different cultures first came together in English North America setting the stage for racial, ethnic and eventually religious and other forms of diversity. Capitalism and private enterprise are rooted here too. Jamestown is a mirror of who we were and who we are. Dreamers and doers came here, and they built, and we stand in the light of their achievement.

In our finest hours, America has been about life, it's been about liberty, it's been about the pursuit of happiness, not just for some but for all and in that history, history rooted here in this place, lies our hope. Thank you.

Call to Order

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox, Speaker of the House of Delegates of Virginia

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:

Well I think from that applause Jon, everyone certainly wants to thank you for those powerful, engaging, incredibly hopeful remarks. We are truly grateful. Successfully didn't knock it off the podium, which was really good. The Joint Assembly will now come to order. Sergeant-at-Arms.

Presentation of the Mace

John L. Pearson, Jr., Sergeant-at-Arms, House of Delegates of Virginia

John L. Pearson, Jr.:

The Joint Assembly is now in session. All persons not entitled to move forward...

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:

The clerk will call the role of the members of the House and Senate representing the 11 original boroughs.

Roll Call

The Honorable G. Paul Nardo, Clerk of the House of Delegates of Virginia and Keeper of the Rolls of the Commonwealth

The Honorable G. Paul Nardo:

From Flowerdieu Hundred, Lawne's Hundred, Martin's Brandon and Warde's Hundred, Delegate Brewer.

The Honorable Emily M. Brewer:

Aye.

The Honorable G. Paul Nardo:
From the City of Henricus, Senator Chase.

The Honorable Amanda F. Chase:
Aye.

The Honorable G. Paul Nardo:
From Lawne's Hundred, Senator Cosgrove.

The Honorable John A. Cosgrove, Jr.:
Senator Cosgrove, aye.

The Honorable G. Paul Nardo:
From the City of Henricus, Speaker Cox.

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:
Aye.

The Honorable G. Paul Nardo:
From the City of Henricus, Flowerdieu Hundred, Martin's Brandon, and Warde's Hundred,
Delegate Ingram.

The Honorable Riley E. Ingram:
Aye.

The Honorable G. Paul Nardo:
From Argall's Gift, James City, Kiccowtan, and Martin's Hundred, Senator Mason.

Senator T. Montgomery Mason:
Aye.

The Honorable G. Paul Nardo:
From Argall's Gift, James City, and Martin's Hundred, Delegate Mullin.

The Honorable Michael P. Mullin:
Aye.

The Honorable G. Paul Nardo:
From Argall's Gift, James City, Kiccowtan, Lawne's Hundred, and Martin's Hundred, Senator
Norment.

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.:
Aye.

The Honorable G. Paul Nardo:

From Argall's Gift, James City, and Martin's Hundred, Delegate Pogge.

The Honorable Brenda L. Pogge:
Aye.

The Honorable G. Paul Nardo:
Mr. Speaker, members are present.

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:
Joint Assembly now will stand and recess to proceed in procession and reconvene on the mall.

Reconvene

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox, Speaker of the House of Delegates of Virginia

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:
The joint assembly will come to order. The members will rise and be led in prayer by the Right Reverend Susan E. Goff, Bishop Suffragan and Ecclesiastical Authority of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. Remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America by the Senator from James City County, Senator Norment; the National Anthem, performed by Larry Jay Giddens.

Invocation

**The Right Reverend Susan E. Goff, Bishop Suffragan and Ecclesiastical Authority
Episcopal Diocese of Virginia**

The Right Reverend Susan E. Goff:
Let us pray. God, great is your name in all the world. Great is your presence in this land. You were here when native peoples first lived and loved and governed themselves. You were here when the first Englishman immigrated to these shores and when they held their first legislative assembly 400 years ago. You were here when the first English women chose to come and join the men in establishing settled communities and when the first African people were brought here in harrowing circumstances against their will. You were with our ancestors, men and women of diverse races and cultures, through triumph and adversity, through hope and fear. In the same way that you were with your people then, be with us now while we remember the relationships and legacies that have shaped us as Americans today.

The Right Reverend Susan E. Goff:
Forgive us the ways that we have hurt and exploited one another. Give us the courage to do the hard work of real reconciliation and bless our continued efforts for justice, freedom and peace for everyone in this land, everyone, everyone, everyone without exception. For you are a god who does wonders and in your name, we see wonders. May it be so and may we be partners with you in making it so. Amen.

Audience:
Amen.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr., Majority Leader of the Senate of Virginia

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.:

Please remain standing. In these days of sometimes strident and conflicting political views, there's one thing that all Americans can remain united on. If you would, please join me in pledging the allegiance to the flag of our United States of America.

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under god, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

National Anthem

Larry Jay Giddens, special guest artist

Larry Jay Giddens:

Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Remarks and Welcome of Distinguished Guests

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox, Speaker of the House of Delegates of Virginia

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:

If everyone will please be seated. What a perfectly moving way to get our session underway. Earlier today, Governor Northam and others observed this important occasion with a program in the 1907 reconstructed Memorial Church in Historic Jamestowne. Then, just a few moments ago, many of us sat nearby in a more primitive structure recreated to replicate the church in James Fort around 1614. The structure is in conditions under which the Virginia General Assembly first met, may have been primitive to our standards, the dynamic model of democratic government that began here at Jamestown 400 years ago on this very day was anything but. For the first time in Virginia, free Englishmen brought their concerns to a gathering of their peers, the first representative legislative assembly in the western hemisphere and it all began right here in Jamestown, Virginia, first capital.

In 1699, Virginia's capital moved from Jamestown to Middle Plantation or Williamsburg, it is known today. Then in 1780, the state capital moved to Richmond. Today, the Virginia House of Delegates and the Senate of Virginia continue working to improve both the lives and livelihoods of all Virginians in Thomas Jefferson's beautiful capital building. The logo behind us and above us underscores that continuity. In 2007, America's 400th anniversary, we worked to focus national and international attention on Jamestown as the first permanent English settlement in the new world, and on the convergence of cultures that would shape our country.

Now, in this commemorative year of 2019, we have been drawing more heavily from archeological and cultural research. We have broadened our perspective. The result, a far more diverse, comprehensive and compelling picture of events has emerged and we are determined to continue that story and bring to light other seminal events in Virginia and our nation's history. 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution, spotlights the genesis of American democracy, American slavery, American diversity and opportunity, American survival and American genius. We are resolved to tell the story.

Today, we are gathering on a momentous occasion for the Virginia General Assembly, which has been serving the people of Virginia on this very day beginning in 1619. We are delighted by the presence of each of you here and those watching and we are truly honored to be joined at the joint assembly by so many distinguished guests.

And if I could, before I recognize some of those distinguished guests, I ask that we pause, remember a great leader of our Commonwealth who passed away this week. President Harrison Wilson was a true pioneer in higher education and ably led Norfolk State University, one of Virginia's historically black universities, through more than two decades of progress and growth. Please join me in a moment of silence in his memory.

We are truly honored to be joined at this joint assembly by so many distinguished guests. Deputy Secretary of the Interior, Kate MacGregor; Ambassador of Portugal, Domingos Fezas Vital; Counselor of Defense, Embassy of the UK, Edward Ferguson; Former Clerk of the British House of Commons, Sir David Natzler. Our congressional representatives, the Honorable Jennifer Wexton, the Honorable Elaine Luria, the Honorable Robert Wittman. Former congressional representatives, the Honorable Barbara Comstock, the Honorable Virgil Goode, the Honorable Robert Goodlatte, the Honorable Robert Hurt, the Honorable Thelma Drake, the Honorable Scott Taylor.

Statewide elected officials, the Honorable Justin Fairfax, the Honorable Mark Herring, the Honorable John Hager, former lieutenant governor. We also want to certainly welcome members of the governor's cabinet. Our former governors, the Honorable George Allen, the Honorable Gerald L. Baliles, the Honorable James S. Gilmore, the Honorable Robert F. McDonnell. We also want to welcome our members of the Supreme Court; state legislators, the Honorable Jordan Harris, Pennsylvania; the Honorable Toi Hutchinson, Illinois, who's our NCSL president; and of course, our tribal chiefs, Nottoway Indian tribe, Chief Lynette Allston; Upper Mattaponi Indian tribe, Chief W. Frank Adams; Upper Mattaponi Indian Chief, Chief Emeritus, Ken Adams;

Chickahominy Indian tribe, Chief Stephen R. Adkins; Patawomeck Indian tribe, Chief John Lightner; Rappahannock Indian tribe, Chief Anne Richardson.

We also want to welcome our local officials and the Honorable Andrew H. Card, Jr., the chairman of the National Endowment of Democracy and James E. Ryan, the president of the University of Virginia. On behalf of the entire joint assembly, we are thankful you are all here to be a part of this commemoration with us.

The Clerk will report a resolution.

The Honorable G. Paul Nardo:

Commemorative session joint resolution, commemorating the first representative legislative assembly in the western hemisphere. Whereas 2019 marks the 400th anniversary of the first and oldest continuous representative legislative assembly in the western hemisphere, when the General Assembly met on July 30, 1619 at Jamestown in Virginia. And whereas, in 1619 members of the Virginia Company implemented a series of reforms that resulted in the Great Charter, which directed incoming Colonial Governor George Yeardley to oversee the selection of two male settlers from each of the 11 major settlement areas who would attend a general assembly. And whereas, the members of the general assembly called burgesses shared power with the governor in a council appointed by the Virginia Company, and the first meeting of the body took place from July 30th to August 4, 1619. And whereas, at that first meeting of the General Assembly, the burgesses formed several committees to review the Great Charter, develop just laws for the happy guiding of the people and address concern from the major settlement areas to improve the overall management of the colony.

In its early years, as well as acting as a legislative body, the General Assembly also functioned as a higher court of justice. Whereas Charles I of England officially recognized the General Assembly in 1627, and while the Virginia Company continued to appoint governors and issues instructions, the seeds of self-determination and democratic rule had been planted in the fertile soil of Virginia. Whereas after the concept of parliamentary government was introduced to Virginia, the General Assembly created the House of Burgesses in the early 1640s. The resultant bicameral legislature, which included the House of Burgesses and the Council of State, is now the oldest continuous law making body in the western hemisphere and has become a model for governments of other English colonies, the United States Congress, the other 49 state legislatures, and countless local and municipal representative bodies across our country. And whereas American Evolution and other organizations are hosting a variety of programs and special events throughout 2019 to commemorate this historic milestone and the unique contributions of the 1619 formation of the Virginia General Assembly to the democratic process and the heritage of the nation.

Whereas the story of Virginia is the story of America, and the Commonwealth continues to influence history with its citizens serving as leaders in their communities both at home and throughout the United States and the world. Now therefore be it resolved that the House of Delegates and the Senate concurring that the General Assembly hereby commemorates this 400th anniversary this very day of the establishment of the first representative legislative

assembly in the western hemisphere. And be it resolved further that the Clerk of the House of Delegates shall enter into the proceedings for the commemorative joint assembly in a special edition journal and shall certify a copy of the same to the Clerk of the Senate.

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:
The delegate from Fairfax, Delegate Hugo-

The Honorable Timothy D. Hugo:
Speaker, on behalf of the joint assembly and the General Assembly, I move to adopt the motion.

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:
Those meeting in favor of the adoption of the resolution will say aye.

Audience:
Aye.

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:
Those opposed no? The resolution is agreed to.

Now to bring greetings on behalf of our other sister state legislatures throughout the United States, we are honored to have with us the very accomplished Illinois State Senator, Toi Hutchinson, president of the National Conference of State legislators, Madam President.

State Legislatures Greetings

The Honorable Toi Hutchinson, Illinois State Senator and President of the National Conference of State Legislatures

The Honorable Toi W. Hutchinson:
Good afternoon, distinguished guests, General Assembly and State of Virginia, Speaker Cox, my NCSL family. When the group of 20 burgesses convened here in Jamestown on this day in 1619, little did they know that they were establishing a template for self-governance that would endure for 400 years, a form of representative democracy practiced by billions of people worldwide. What a privilege it is for us to be on these very grounds to mark this monumental moment in political history, to honor that moment in time and celebrate the legacy that their experiment left behind and to affirm the enormous potential that representative democracy still provides for our future. Generations have passed since that midsummer day, a day I imagine was probably just as hot and humid as this one.

From that humble beginning, evolved the system of American democracy of which the legislative institution is the cornerstone. Then 1619 marks also the first time Africans were brought to the colonies and laid groundwork in 1662 for the house of burgesses law that created a system where children were either born free or bind, determined by the status of their mothers, which laid the cornerstone for that peculiar institution of slavery itself in these United States. That evolution is breathtaking. From that rudimentary gathering of a handful of landowning

white men to professional legislative bodies filled with the best and brightest of every race, every creed and every gender.

Legislatures now serve as the place where ordinary, hard-working Americans become extraordinary ambassadors of their neighborhoods, their cities and their towns and strive together to secure the blessings of liberty. Legislatures are where innovation and experimentation flourish, where people come together to solve vexing problems and where the voice of the people is expressed in self-governance. I'm here today as the president of the National Conference of State Legislatures, representing over 7500 American state legislators and more than 30,000 legislative staff. It is a tremendous honor to be here.

NCSL also began as an experiment nearly 45 years ago. Our formation was the product of intensive study, debate and compromise and the members and staff of this organization remain as committed to its founding today as they were then. We were founded on the belief that our powerful, cohesive voice representing legislatures is essentially to shaping federal policy. We were founded on the principle that the bonds that unite us are stronger than the differences that divide us and we were founded in the conviction that legislative service is one of democracy's worthiest pursuits. I am proud. I'm proud to stand here with you today. I'm proud that in 2009, at the age of 36, I was duly elected to represent my district in the great state of Illinois in a country where my grandparents didn't have a constitutionally protected right to vote until they were 34 and 35.

I'm proud that as a woman of color, a mother, and an American, I'm proud because we as a people fought for and died for, protected and nurtured the nascent idea born in this place so many years ago and have worked tirelessly to ensure its survival and further its success. I am proud because despite the many challenges and setbacks this country has faced, America is still a place where our right to self-governance is not taken for granted, where we can challenge our government and debate our principles and the institutions which provide for that right are held dear and most of all, I am proud because our state legislatures remain places where we come together even in the most divisive of times to find solutions to the problems that plague us and serve the people of the United States.

So, on behalf of the nearly 7500 state legislators across this country who understand that our service is our legacy, who understand that legacy as described in the amazing American Broadway play, Hamilton, legacy are the seeds planted in a garden you may never get to see. The institution of the legislature, the article one branch of our three co-equal branches of government, needs to be protected for it is as strong and as fragile as democracy itself and absolutely worth fighting for. Thank you.

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:

Thank you, Senator Hutchinson, for your strong leadership on behalf of state legislatures, law makers and staff. Now, for the purpose of welcoming today's keynote speaker, we are pleased to have with us our former Capital Square colleague who presently serves in Washington DC, the United States Congress, representing America's first district, the Honorable Robert J. Wittman,

United States House of Representatives, First Congressional District of Virginia. Congressman Wittman?

The Honorable Robert J. Wittman:
Well, thank you folks and good morning.

Audience:
Good morning.

Introduction

The Honorable Robert J. Wittman, United States Representative from Virginia

The Honorable Robert J. Wittman:
And welcome to America's first district and welcome to Jamestown, the home of so much of our history. It was here where a small group of adventurers established the very foundation of this nation, a nation built on democracy and the rule of law. Mr. President, you made all Americans proud earlier this summer when you traveled to Normandy to recall and honor the sacrifice made there by so many young American patriots, many from right here in Virginia.

Your eloquent words touched us all, and what you said there has such resonance for our anniversary gathering today that I want to read a passage from your remarks, speaking of the D-Day heroes, you said, "More powerful than the strength of American arms was the strength of American hearts. These men ran through the fires of hell, moved by a force no weapon could destroy, the fierce patriotism of a free, proud and sovereign people. They battled not for control and domination but for liberty, democracy and self-rule. They pressed on for love and home and country, the main streets, the school yards, the churches, the neighborhoods, the families and community that gave us men such as these."

"They were sustained by the confidence that America can do anything because we are a noble nation with a virtuous people praying to a righteous god." Mr. President, the liberty, democracy and self-rule to which you paid such tribute, the cause for which so many made profound sacrifice, traces its roots here to this place. It was here in a little church, in a little fort, in a struggling colony that the light of liberty was first lit on these American shores. It was here that representatives first gathered to give voice to the will of the people, a government driving its power from the governed.

On this day, 400 years ago, Governor Yeardley called for the first representative legislative assembly, marking the beginning of representative democracy that is now the great United States of America. They did not know that they would succeed in this great experiment of democracy but through ingenuity, perseverance and idealism, the founders of Jamestown created a movement, the one that has brought us here today. All that we have become and aspire to be today in this great and diverse American democracy could not even have been contemplated on that hot summer day but what was unleashed was a powerful idea, the idea that free people can govern themselves. The idea that created a great nation and it changed the world.

Mr. President, your presence today as the leader of our great nation says something profound and powerful about the importance of this place, about the national and international significance of this anniversary. We are grateful that you have come to help us tell that story to a listening world. Reflecting on the birth of our nation allows us to see how far we have come as a nation and as a commonwealth. When the small group of British settlers landed in this place, they could not have imagined what they were about to set in motion.

Just in this area, we have the second oldest university in the country that educated the founding fathers in this nation. We have the largest naval base in the world and our oldest NASA field center. We are so blessed to call this place home. As a former member of the House of Delegates, the chamber that is the direct descendant of that first legislative gathering, I'm especially grateful to be on this stage here this morning. When the Speaker of the House formerly presents you to this venerable body in a few moments, you will become the first president of the United States to address this Virginia General Assembly in its entire illustrious 400-year history.

This is the highest of honors and a singular distinction that will live on in history, but we too are honored. We are honored by your presence and we are honored by your recognition of this 400th anniversary. It is a worthy moment that stands in significance and remembrance by all Americans, all who live in this land of freedom and enjoy its blessings because of four centuries of service and sacrifice. Mr. President, welcome. Thank you so much for your leadership and for taking the time to be here with us today.

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:
The assembly will be at ease just for a sec.

Ladies and gentleman, the Commonwealth is honored to have with us, on this historic occasion, and it is my privilege, the Speaker, to now formerly present to the Joint Assembly, the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump.

Keynote Address

The Honorable Donald J. Trump, President of the United States of America

The Honorable Donald J. Trump:
Thank you very much. Please, make yourselves comfortable. I want to thank you, Speaker Cox. It's a true privilege to be back in the great Commonwealth of Virginia, and it's a tremendous honor to stand on these historic grounds as the first president to address a joint session of the oldest lawmaking body in all of the western hemisphere, the Virginia General Assembly. Congratulations.

On this day, 400 years ago, here on the shores of the James River, the first representative legislative assembly in the new world convened. By the devotion of generations of patriots, it has flourished throughout the ages and now that proud tradition continues with all of you, to every

Virginian and every legislator here today, congratulations on four incredible centuries of history, heritage, and commitment to the righteous cause of American self-government. This is truly a momentous occasion.

I want to thank the Governor of Virginia for inviting me to speak at this very important event, and with us this morning are many distinguished guests and officials from across the Commonwealth including Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax-

The Honorable Justin E. Fairfax:
Thank you very much.

The Honorable Donald J. Trump:
Speaker Kirk Cox. Thank you, Kirk.

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:
Thank you. Thank you as well.

The Honorable Donald J. Trump:
Senate Majority Leader Tommy Norment. Thank you, Tommy. And members of the host and other federal, state, local, and tribal leaders all with us today, thank you very much. We're also very thankful as well to have with us Secretary Ben Carson. Ben, thank you very much, wherever you may be. Thank you, Ben. And Acting Director, a person that you know very well, Acting Director, Ken Cuccinelli. Spent a lot of time with you folks and there's a lot of respect for you. And the terrific people at the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service, I want to thank you all for being here with us. It's a great honor.

I also want to recognize everyone at American Evolution and the Jamestown Settlement, the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, the Jamestown Rediscovery Project and Preservation Virginia, thank you very much. What a great job you do, thank you. The fact is that each of you has helped protect and preserve our national treasures here at Jamestown and it's a great debt. We owe you a great, great debt. Thank you. What a job!

On this day in 1619, just a mile south of where we are gathered now, 22 newly elected members of the House of Burgesses assembled in a small wooden church. They were adventurers and explorers, farmers and planters, soldiers, scholars, and clergymen. All had struggled, all had suffered and all had sacrificed in pursuit of one wild and very improbable dream. They called that dream Virginia.

It had been only 13 years since three small ships, the Susan Constant, the Godspeed and the Discovery set sail across a vast ocean. They carried 104 settlers to carve out a home on the edge of this uncharted continent. They came from God and country. They came in search of opportunity and fortune and they journeyed into the unknown with only meager supplies, long odds and the power of their Christian faith.

Upon reaching Cape Henry, at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay in 1607, a long time ago, the first men of the Virginia Company erected a cross upon the shore. They gave thanks to God and asked his blessing for their great undertaking. In the months and years ahead, they would dearly need it. The dangers were unparalleled. The Jamestown settlers arrived in America amid one of the worst droughts in over seven centuries. Of 104 original colonists, 66 died by the year's end. During the third winter known as the starving time, a population of up to 500 settlers was reduced to 60. By spring, those who remained were in search of whatever they could get to survive and they were in dire trouble.

They left Jamestown deserted. They just sailed away never to come back but they had not gone far down the James River when they encountered the answer to their prayers, ships bearing a year's worth of supplies and more than 300 new settlers. As we can see today on this great anniversary, it would not be the last time that God looked out for Virginia. Together, the settlers forged what would become the timeless traits of the American character. They worked hard. They had courage in abundance and a wealth of self-reliance. They strived mightily to turn a profit. They experimented with producing silk, corn, tobacco, and the very first Virginia wines.

At a prior settlement at Roanoke, there had been no survivors, none at all. But where others had typically perished, the Virginians were determined to succeed. They endured by the sweat of their labor, the aid of the Powhatan Indians and the leadership of Captain John Smith. As the years passed, ships bearing supplies and settlers from England also brought a culture and a way of life that would define the new world. It all began here.

In time, dozens of brave, strong women made the journey and joined the colony and in 1618, the Great Charter and other reforms established a system based on English Common Law. For the first time, Virginia allowed private land ownership. It created a basic judicial system. Finally, it gave the colonists a say in their own future, the right to elect representatives by popular vote. With us today in tribute to that English legal inheritance is the former clerk of the British House of Commons, Sir David Natzler. Thank you, David. Sir David, we are thrilled to have you with us. Thank you very much for being here. Thank you very much.

At that first American assembly in 1619, the weather was so hot that one legislator actually died. Mercifully, the session was cut very short, but before adjourning, the assembly passed laws on taxation, agriculture and trade with the Indians. With true American optimism, the assembly even endorsed a plan to build a world class university in the still rugged wilderness. It was a vision that would one day be fulfilled just miles from here at one of America's earliest educational institutions, the esteemed College of William and Mary. Great place. Great place.

As we mark the first representative legislature at Jamestown, our nation also reflects upon an anniversary from that same summer four centuries ago. In August 1619, the first enslaved Africans in the English colonies arrived in Virginia. It was the beginning of a barbaric trade in human lives. Today, in honor, we remember every sacred soul who suffered the horrors of slavery and the anguish of bondage. More than 150 years later, at America's founding, our Declaration of Independence recognized the immortal truth that all men are created equal, yet it

would ultimately take a civil war, 85 years after that document was signed, to abolish the evil of slavery.

It would take more than another century for our nation, in the words of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., "To live out the true meaning of its creed and extend the blessings of freedom to all Americans." In the face of grave oppression and grave injustice, African Americans have built, strengthened, inspired, uplifted, protected, defended and sustained our nation from its very earliest days. Last year, I was privileged to sign the law establishing a commission to commemorate the arrival of the first Africans to the English colonies and the 400 years of African American history that have followed. That was an incredible day. That was an incredible event.

Today, we are grateful to be joined by that commission's chairman, Dr. Joseph Green. Thank you, Dr. Green, please. Thank you. Thank you very much, Dr. Green. In the decades that followed that first legislative assembly, the democratic tradition established here laid deep roots all across Virginia. It spread up and down the Atlantic coast. One fact was quickly established for all time, in America, we are not ruled from afar, Americans govern ourselves and so help us God, we always will.

Right here in Virginia, your predecessors came to Williamsburg from places you all know very well. They were names such as George Washington from Fairfax County; Thomas Jefferson from Albemarle County; James Madison from Orange County; James Monroe from Spotsylvania County; Patrick Henry from Louisa County; George Mason from Fairfax County; George Wythe, it's a great name, from Williamsburg; and Richard Henry Lee from Westmorland County. Incredible names. Incredible names.

Self-government in Virginia did not just give us a state we love. In a very true sense, it gave us the country we love, the United States of America. So true. Thank you very much. When Madison drafted the first amendment to our Constitution, he drew inspiration from Virginia's statute for religious freedom. As John Adams wrote in Philadelphia just before the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, "We all look up to Virginia for examples." Great. That's great.

And when Patrick Henry rose to speak his famous words at St. John's Church in Richmond, "Give me liberty or give me death," he spoke in defense of a tradition that began more than 150 years before at Jamestown, right here. It was a heritage those patriots would fight a long war of independence to defend and it is a heritage that countless Americans have fought and died for to secure in all of those centuries since. In our time, we must vigorously defend those cherished democratic traditions that have made our beloved republic the envy of the entire world and it still is as much as ever before and maybe more, our hard won culture of self-government must be nourished, protected and constantly preserved. That is why we must speak out strongly against anyone who would take power away from citizens, individuals and state governments such as yours.

In America, the people will forever rule, the people will forever reign and the people will forever be sovereign. From the first legislative assembly down to today, America has been the story of

citizens who take ownership of their future and control of their destiny. That is what self-rule is all about. Everyday Americans coming together to take action, to build, to create, to seize opportunities, to pursue the common good and to never stop striving for greatness.

Four centuries ago, one early voyager to Jamestown captured the spirit of confidence and daring that has always powered our great experience in self-government. He wrote, "We hope to plant a nation where none before hath stood." That was something. In that hope, the men and women of Jamestown achieved success beyond anything they could possibly have imagined. They started the nation that settled the wilderness, won our independence, tamed the Wild West, ended slavery, secured civil rights, invented the airplane, vanquished the Nazis, brought communism to its knees, and placed our great American flag on the face of the moon. And in a program that's just started, someday very soon, American astronauts will plant our beautiful stars and stripes on the surface of Mars.

But among all of America's towering achievements, none exceeds the triumph that we are here to celebrate today, our nation's priceless culture of freedom, independence, equality, justice and self-determination under God. That culture is the source of who we are, it is our prized inheritance, it is our proudest legacy, it is among the greatest human accomplishments in the history of the world. What you have done is the greatest accomplishment in the history of the world, and I congratulate you. It started right here.

Now, we must go bravely into the future just as those bold explorers first ventured into this majestic land. We must call upon the same scale of imagination, the same thirst for knowledge, the same love of adventure, the same unrelenting courage and the same total determination to prevail. Above all, we must be proud of our heritage, united in our purpose and filled with confidence in our shared, great, great, great American destiny. For in America, no challenge is too great, no journey is too tough, no task is too large, no dream is beyond our reach. When we set our sights on the summit, nothing can stand in our way. America always gets the job done. America always wins.

That is why, after 400 years of glorious American democracy, we have returned here to this place to declare to all the world that the United States of America and the great Commonwealth of Virginia are just getting started. Our future is bigger, bolder, better and brighter than ever before. It's been a great honor for me to be with you this morning. I'd like to thank you, God bless you, God bless Virginia and God bless America. Thank you very much everybody.

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:

We'd certainly like to thank the president for attending our 400th anniversary and his remarks, especially emphasizing our tremendous ideals and freedoms, and I think he said it well when he said nothing can get in America's way if we appeal to our higher instincts. So I want to thank the president very much. So members will rise for the benediction offered by Stephen R. Adkins, Sr., Chief of the Chickahominy Indian tribe. Chief Adkins.

Benediction

The Honorable Stephen R. Adkins, Sr., Chief of the Chickahominy Indian Tribe.

The Honorable Stephen R. Adkins, Sr.:

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be an American. I'll start my prayer in the Algonquin tongue. Great spirit, loving father of all nations, our father, God in heaven, we come today seeking the benediction of your love and wisdom on this historic gathering of elected officials, friends and guests as we adjourn this General Assembly session. We seek your guidance as we continue our journey toward a more perfect union through the very principles of representative government espoused in a similar gathering 400 years ago today. Our prayer is for transparency and forthrightness as we rally around a government of the people, for the people, and by the people.

We pray for genuineness and authenticity as we work through ideological differences and disagreements toward a shared consensus. A place where blurred lines around political parties result in discussions without rancor or ill-will. A place where principles and ideologies are not compromised but rather are clearly understood. At this very time and this very place, cause us to lift up the downtrodden, love the unlovely, enable resilience among the vulnerable, give voice to the voiceless, and reach out to the needy. Empower these leaders and friends to boldly approach your throne of grace and seek your guidance on every decision made and every initiative undertaken.

Bless and guide our president whose actions and decisions have worldwide implications. Let us move forward with optimism, enabling us to embrace the impossible so that we establish a foundation upon which the next 400 years can stand. As we stand amidst a world filled with turmoil and strife, let us be that beacon of life and hope, as well as that assembly four centuries ago. Finally, cause us to recognize that even as you did with Esther in the Old Testament, that perhaps you have placed us here at this time and in this place for such a time as this. Aho. Amen.

Audience:

Amen.

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:

Thank you so much, Chief Adkins. The senator from Lynchburg, Senator Peake-

The senator from Lynchburg, Senator Peake, moves the Joint Assembly adjourn sine die. All in favor of that motion will say aye.

Audience:

Aye.

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox:

Those opposed say no. The motion is agreed to. The joint assembly, on this 400th anniversary of the Virginia General Assembly stands adjourned sine die.