

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY



AMERICA'S SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

REPORT TO THE 2025 SESSION of the 2025 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

APRIL, 2025

A LIMITED NUMBER OF COPIES OF THIS REPORT ARE AVAILABLE FOR
DISTRIBUTION THROUGH THE LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY

ROOM 500
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA 27603-5925
TELEPHONE: (919) 733-9390

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL	5
COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS	7
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	22
APPENDICES	
<u>APPENDIX A</u>	
MEMBERSHIP OF THE AMERICA’S SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMITTEE	
.....	25
<u>APPENDIX B</u>	
COMMITTEE CHARGE/STATUTORY AUTHORITY	26
<u>APPENDIX C</u>	
LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS	27
<u>APPENDIX D</u>	
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION.....	29

This page intentionally left blank

TRANSMITTAL LETTER

February 28, 2025

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 2025 REGULAR SESSION
OF THE 2025 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The AMERICA'S SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMITTEE, respectfully submits
the following report to the 2025 Regular Session of the 2025 General Assembly.

Sen. W. Ted Alexander (Co-Chair)

Rep. Hugh Blackwell (Co-Chair)

This page intentionally left blank

COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

The Committee on America's Semiquincentennial Committee met three times after the 2024 Regular Session, and one time, to date, during the 2025 Regular Session. The following is a brief summary of the Committee's proceedings. Detailed minutes and information from each Committee meeting are available in the Legislative Library.

April 16, 2024, 1:00 pm

The first meeting of the committee was held on Tuesday, April 16th, 2024, at 1:00 PM in Room 1027/1128 of the Legislative Building, with Senator W. Ted Alexander, presiding.

Seven Members present were: Sen. Ted Alexander, Rep. Hugh Blackwell, Dr. Troy Kickler, Mr. Kyle Luebke, Mr. Jason Luker, Hon. Charles Neely, Dr. Cary Poole. Sen. Ted Alexander, presiding.

Sen. Alexander called the meeting to order, introduced himself and had each of the members introduce themselves and give an introduction, and their historical interests in North Carolina.

Senator Alexander gave an introduction regarding how Rep. Blackwell and himself view how they see the direction of the committee...

This committee has been designated by the General Assembly to take a lead in North Carolina's commemoration and celebration of our nation's Semiquincentennial observance/250th. Some remember the nation's Bicentennial in 1976 and the overwhelming outpouring of pride in our heritage, renewal and resurgence in all things history, particularly relating to the Revolutionary War, the formation of our country in 1776 and the Declaration of Independence—our birth certificate if you will. For almost two years everything from carpet, wallpaper, songs, dinnerware, clothing, all were Colonial and part of our celebration. Fireworks, concerts, patriotic shows, church picnics everything spoke to the pride which we all held dear for our shared American experience and the freedoms we enjoyed.

Then again many may remember in 1984 when N.C. celebrated its 400th anniversary of our founding, marked by Charles Kuralt and Louis McGlohon's special song, book and video "North Carolina is my Home." And the TV commercial: "I like calling NC Home." Many histories were commissioned and written, again more specifically with love and pride of the Old North State. It is the hope of Rep. Blackwell and Sen. Alexander that the efforts of this commission, along with others, will prepare NC to celebrate the important role our state played in the formation of our country, and to give opportunities for our citizens to express their patriotism, their pride, to cultivate even more historical research and preservation of important sites and properties, and trails, associated

with the formation of our country, and to produce some long lasting “markers for the future. We want this to be a unifying theme for our citizens. In that vein the GA is seeking ideas, recommendations and has set up a portal to solicit these from across the state. We want to look for ways we can create new celebratory venues as well as value add to existing things already in play--to help draw attention to our 250th birthday. We may very well harken back to some of the successful things we saw then and look for some new ways/new media we didn’t have then.

Both Rep. Blackwell and Sen. Alexander stated that, and he is certain you as committee members, share our optimism for the future of our country, largely because of the goodly heritage surrounding the formation of 13 individual colonies under the rule of a distant king into one constitutional republic under God, indivisible with liberty and Justice for all.

A portal has been set up on the General Assembly website for people across North Carolina to join in with their ideas. Sen. Alexander extended the floor to Rep. Blackwell who recognized Deans Eatman from the Department of Cultural Resources who was in the audience. Directions to access the portal should be accessible by the end of the meeting via the committee website. Sen. Alexander introduced the first presenter, Prof. Andrew. J. Taylor, Director of the Free and Open Societies Project, NCSU, who took the podium. He had a Power Point presentation (attached). He talked about the crucial role of North Carolina in America’s drive toward independence. He ended by suggesting the committee talk about the state’s pivotal role, talk about the important battles in the southern campaign, NC signers of the Declaration of Independence, emphasizing important values and what they really mean, talk about shared Americanness which is part of a shared humanity and a respect for institutions and that we want them to function properly because they are important.

Senator Alexander then introduced Dr. Troy Kickler. He talked about America First in Freedom and the reason for the NC slogan. Late October 1774, Edenton Tea Party, the first political act by American women in an organized fashion. They moved for a boycott on tea. Author Iredell wrote to his brother asking what was happening in Edenton? His brother responded he wouldn’t give these women darts. The state flag has two dates on it which are justification for NC to say it is first in freedom. Kickler stated there is no proof the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence occurred but there is evidence of the Mecklenburg Resolves. From 1815 –20 was known as the era of great feelings. May 31, 1776 Mecklenburg Resolves were signed. Then there were the Orange Resolves. These happened across what would be called the State of North Carolina. Different communities were declaring their independence. There is a stone on the back of the Edenton Church that declares their independence from England. The Declaration of Independence recognized what was already happening up and down the seaboard. A man named Samuel Johnson was President of Constitutional Convention. In a defacto way he was US Pres. Being president of the congress. Thomas Burke had an influence on the 10th Amendment and the Bill of Rights. James Iredell was one of the first justices on the US Supreme Court. A leading pamphleteer at the same time of the Federalist Papers. He wrote under pseudo name of James Marcus. NC’s role in the ratification of the constitution: The Constitution was drafted and then submitted to the states to ratify. NC asked why there was not a declaration

of rights when every state had a bill of rights? NC and Hillsboro decided to neither reject nor ratify the document. The minutes of the ratification debate are some of the best. They would hire transcribers. Then the federalist would edit them. NC had a lighter editorial hand giving the minutes a more robust documentation. The Union was formed but NC had not yet ratified until 1789. Hugh Williamson and his ideas of the impeachment process are in the document. He wanted senators to only serve six years while others wanted them to serve for life. It was said “No one said so much yet said so little” in describing him. Dr. Kickler suggested history tours with lectures, particularly in each county where people can learn about the history of the county, they live in. Keep videos, lectures short due to the short attention span of people.

Senator Alexander asked everyone to think about their ideas how to celebrate and introduced Kellie Nothstine, Assoc. VP for Student Life at Campbell University. Kellie stated she is an educator, so she thinks about how to educate people. She is also a woman, so she thinks about how to engage and educate her children. She enjoys things that are engaging, so this is the perspective she comes from. Her first idea is to not be afraid of social media because you are going to have to engage in them. Think about QR codes. Is there a video and story she can scan while she’s taking care of children. The second piece is, to encourage people to go to sites. Have people in costume. Finally, there has to be an experience element to it—an Instagram able moment” so it can be photographed and sent. It encourages more learning. She recently went to Williamsburg and loved it. The kids loved the musket shooting and still talk about it. They need things they can hold or touch, i.e., pottery, people in costume, old fife and drum music, crafts at a festival. Take a horse and carriage ride with people who can talk about the times. Have different stages on side streets, one act plays. A festival over multiple days, with fireworks, of course. She is thinking of a cocktail party at the History Museum with the 1776 theme, with a documentary, highlighting NC people. Fun and different people want to go to and then you sneak in the educational part. Who are the women behind the scenes in our state. Highlight the women’s involvement—a tea party. Something people can go to and do. Civility has been lost. Have a panel about civic virtue and bring in student. Conversations about how it’s been lost and how we can get it back.

Senator Alexander reiterated what the three speakers brought out and to think about how we can proceed. He opened the conversation to the public. Hon. Neely suggest Deans Eatman with the Department of Cultural Resources identified himself and spoke. According to Eatman the Department is excited about the meeting today. They just had a kickoff Halifax Co. Sarah Koonce is with him today and they hope to have a meeting with the committee in the future about everything they are doing.

Sen. Alexander recognized Rep. Blackwell who anticipates Cultural Resources giving a full presentation at the next meeting because it was too short of notice for them to present at this meeting.

Sen. Alexander opened the room to the members for their ideas and how we will translate these ideas. Hon. Neely asked how the committee will be opened to comments. Sen. Alexander replied that it will be done through the portal. Mr. Luebke suggested that

the committee will need reach out to different stakeholders, so they are aware of the portal, i.e., HBCU's. Hon. Neely would like Cultural Resources to give names, contact information for museums as another stakeholder. Rep. Blackwell said that we do not need to let grass grow under our feet in moving forward with this. Suggested meeting on a Friday in May and asked if the committee may be open to this due to the availability of meeting space and time or to meet offsite in Raleigh or elsewhere, or a historic place.

Dr. Kickler also suggested the committee meeting keep up its momentum. There are antecedents like the Halifax Resolves, tea party, because things will accelerate. Dates leading up to the Revolution.

Mr. Luebke said we want to awareness and excitement by going to New Bern or Greensboro to have these meetings.

Rep. Blackwell suggested if something resonated with a member, please share so we can put it together into an organized effort and not just separate great ideas.

Mr. Luker said there are probably a lot of historical sites that have already made plans we need to know about.

Rep. Blackwell suggested Mecklenburg Resolves are an important part and Mr. Luker agreed it would be a good to try to put the debate on the road. Sen. Alexander announced that the portal is now open and to please share it with your constituents. A link will be sent to the speakers. He stated we need to be reminded about these things and who we are as a country.

Rep. Blackwell stated we had a glitch lining up speakers for today but hope to have a woman with the Frederick Douglass Society who will be speaking in the future.

The committee then heard presentations from the following speakers during the public comment period of the meeting:

1. North Carolina and the American Founding

Prof. Andrew J. Taylor

Director of the Free and Open Societies Project

North Carolina State University (NCSU) North Carolina

2. First in Freedom

Dr. Troy Kickler, PhD.

Co-editor of and contributor to North Carolina's Revolutionary Founders (2019), faculty at NCSU from 2007-2010 and 2014, and Liberty University since 2017

3. Spilling the Tea: How to Properly Celebrate America's Independence

Kellie Nothstine, Assoc. Vice President for Student Life

Campbell University

August 22, 2024, 2:00 PM

The committee held its second meeting on Thursday, August 22, 2024, in Room 1028/1327 of the Legislative Building, with Representative Hugh Blackwell, presiding.

Members present were Senator Alexander, Representative Blackwell, Dr. Troy Kickler, Dr. Cary Poole, Mr. Kyle Luebke, Mr. Jason Luker, and Hon. Charles Neely. The three presenters included Sarah Koonts of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Clarence Henderson, and Randell Jones.

Rep. Blackwell and Sen. Alexander shared tentative plans for the next committee meeting set for September 19 and other upcoming events related to America's Semiquincentennial. Rep.

Blackwell provided updates on the search for a staff director in addition to funding for the committee to help plan committee events offsite. Sen. Alexander made note of a packet given to committee members about the American Bicentennial and the 450th anniversary of North Carolina. He encouraged committee members to review the packet to come up with ideas for the semiquincentennial activities for North Carolina.

Rep. Blackwell then introduced Sarah Koonts, Director of the Division of Archives and Records at the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Ms. Koonts then presented the goals of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources for the American Semiquincentennial and their current resources to help achieve those goals.

Rep. Blackwell then opened the floor for questions from the committee. Mr. Luebke asked if the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources plans on going to any events or festivals to promote America 250. Ms. Koonts said that the Department plans to use a small camping trailer to travel to various festivals around the state such as New Bern to publicize America 250.

Dr. Kickler asked how the Department defines "true freedom." Ms. Koonts explained that she believes it is "a recognition that in 1776 there was a limited group of people that could even vote or have a voice in government, but that rights and freedoms expanded over time; and that's basically how we're interpreting the 250th."

Rep. Blackwell Then introduced guest speaker and civil rights activist, Clarence Henderson. Mr. Henderson spoke on his experiences with the Woolworth sit-in in Greensboro during the civil rights movement and how those experiences relate to the values of the founding of the United States and our constitution.

Seeing no questions, Rep. Blackwell thanked Mr. Henderson for his presentation and then introduced guest speaker, Randell Jones, author and historian. Mr. Jones spoke on North Carolina's role in the Battle of Kings Mountain and provided additional background on the Overmountain Victory Trail.

Rep. Blackwell then asked for discussion or questions from members of the committee and noted the need for planning events across North Carolina. Mr. Luker shares various plans underway in Mecklenburg County and at the Charlotte Museum to promote America 250th including interactive exhibits. Rep Blackwell asks Mr. Luker to provide legislative staff and his legislative assistant (Jacob Kuhn) with a list of suggestions to pass along to an executive director that the committee hopes to hire to help plan future events and meetings.

Mr. Luebke suggested creating a "passport" similar to that used during the bicentennial celebration that can be used to collect various stamps from locations of importance and also suggests ideas for planning future events at locations of important events such as New Bern or Charlotte.

Rep. Blackwell asked that members record their ideas for plans or meetings outside of Raleigh for when the General Assembly is not in session to allow the best availability for all members of the committee. Rep. Blackwell noted the proposed next meeting date of September 19th along with an optional reception after the meeting.

Sen. Alexander thanked members of the committee and the presenters for being in attendance. Senator Alexander presented the idea of using the presentations and ideas from the first two meetings to start planning events outside of future committee meetings and asked members to continue to share ideas and suggestions. Rep. Blackwell asked committee members to share any suggestions for potential presenters at future meetings. There followed a discussion of developing a timeline of anniversaries to plan future events around.

September 19, 2024, 2:00 PM

The committee held its third meeting on Thursday, September 19, 2024, in Room 1228/1327 of the Legislative Building with Senator W. Ted Alexander, presiding.

Members present were: Sen. Ted Alexander, Dr. Troy Kickler, Mr. Kyle Luebke, Hon. Charles Neely, Dr. Cary Poole, and Rep. Hugh Blackwell attended virtually.

Senator Alexander called the meeting to order. He noted on this day in history in 1777, America won the first Battle of Saratoga and September 19, 1779, on this day George Washington published his farewell address. He did not take up the presidency for a second term which astounded everyone at the time.

Sen. Alexander recognized the staff and sergeant-at-arms and noted Rep. Blackwell was joining the meeting via Zoom online. He noted there would be three 15 to 20 minute presentations and then to work on member's suggestions they would like to see implemented. Sen. Alexander also noted that suggestions can still be made on the Semiquincentennial portal. He pointed out that the American Battlefield Trust is holding a reception that committee members are invited to attend after the meeting. He asked members of the committee to introduce themselves for the benefit of those joining the meeting via online.

Sen. Alexander introduced Mike Leonard, Senior Advisor for the Conservation Fund who has been involved in conservation and preservation and has won many awards in relation to his conservation and preservation work.

Mike Leonard noted he was a partner at Womble law firm for about 45 years representing Fortune 500 companies. Then he was a conservation volunteer for many years and then got on the Board of the Conservation Fund. They purchased the land where Flight 93 went down, costing them about \$5 million, and held it for five years until the National Park Service could buy it from them. There was a golf course at Gettysburg, which included a lot of the first days' battle that went bankrupt, and they purchased the golf course. It is now owned by the National Park Service and on and on and on, he stated "that is the business of the National Conservation fund." Mr. Leonard talked about the importance of North Carolina's role in the Revolution. Mike is the decedent of two North Carolinian's who were killed in the Revolution. One was a patriot named Valentine Lienhart who was murdered in his home by Tories three weeks after the surrender at Yorktown. The Tories "figured the deal was done" so they rode around killing Patriots at night. The other was Martin Shuford who was killed in the Battle of Ramsour's Mill (in modern day Lincolnton, North Carolina). He was a Tory and is buried on that Battlefield. Mike Leonard helped put a marker on his grave. Mr. Leonard lives in a house that was built in 1770 that Lord Cornwallis stayed in for a night and is called the "Cornwallis House." He said

that the History of the Revolution was first written and told by the major universities of the time. They told it from a New England point of view which has dominated the history of the Revolution. He said that it is not necessarily a bad thing people are going to write things from their point of view; however, he sees the importance of telling the Revolution from the point of North Carolinians. He believes if we don't, we will miss the boat in this state. We do need to tell the sad stories but cannot ignore or forget the inspiring stories, stories of extraordinary people who made a huge difference. They laid a framework that was flexible enough for 250 years. When the country started out, white men who did not own property could not vote in this state. That changed by the time Andrew Jackson became president. His election reflected that, it disturbed people, and he was accused of being the "common man's" president. But he was an incredible figure. It provided this framework to allow this country to adjust and thrive. He wants to highlight some high points about our history. The Tories and Patriots slaughtered each other all over the state. It was civil war and civil war at its worst. But there were two turning point campaigns in our history. One was the Battle of Kings Mountain. Over the Mountain men, after Patrick Ferguson, his troops were loyalists, threatened to come over the army with the British force and attack the mountaineers and they did what they learned to do they came over the mountain hunting him. They were not going to let him come over the mountains and attack them. And they caught up with him at Kings Mountain. He made a huge mistake there. He was far enough ahead of the Patriots that he could have gotten to Charlotte where Cornwallis was and avoided losing his force but instead, he had too much arrogance, too much hubris, so he decided to stand on the mountain and "defeat these ruffians." That didn't work out like he planned. But it meant that Cornwallis had to turn around and leave North Carolina after he came in the first time and go back to South Carolina and recoup. Cornwallis came back in 1781 and that led to a campaign that is not as well know called "The Race to the Dam." He likes telling the story as it appeals to 14-year-old boys. At the Battle of Cowpens in South Carolina, Daniel Morgan, who was the great hero of Saratoga, one of the few battles in the war where the American force ran the British off the battlefield in a panic, some of the best regiments in the British Army. Cornwallis didn't like that, so he did two things. He never let Tarleton command infantry again because of his bad leadership, decimating a highly trained British regiment. The worst defeat the British Army suffered anywhere. Then Cornwallis takes off chasing Morgan. Morgan's Army is smaller. He's desperate to get into Virginia. Cornwallis wanted to trap Green. It was winter and the rivers were up and there were no bridges. The first time Green almost succeeded was at the Yadkin. That massive bridge on I-85 is where this occurred. The Trading Fort. Cornwallis is hot on Green's tail. Green sent William Washington, George Washington's second or their cousin, up and down the Yadkin. Green got his army across four hours before Tarleton got there. If they had gotten there six hours earlier, they probably would have been destroyed. Because of that, Cornwallis had to go 70 miles further than Green up to the Shallowford then back towards Greensboro. In the meantime, Green held

up for a day to rest at the Guilford Courthouse. While there, Daniel Morgan described to him his strategy for smashing Tarleton. Green and Morgan walked around the battlefield at Guilford Courthouse and Green said he could do the same strategy there, use the same tactics. Morgan had to go back to Winchester since he suffered from terrible sciatica after becoming angry at a British officer and hitting him, so they lashed him 500 times trying to kill him. They didn't succeed. So, Greene leaves Greensboro heading for the Dan River. Cornwallis lost two days. But he was a hard driver and made up for those two days. George Washington said he was the best General in the British had in the Colonies. Green only got across the Dan River almost eight hours before Cornwallis got there. A story full of suspense and hairbreadth escapes. Green did the most amazing thing of all. He got supplied, got more men and more reinforcements and began hunting Cornwallis. His plan was to lure Cornwallis into attacking him on that battlefield he had pick out. He lured Cornwallis into attacking him there. Cornwallis lost so many men trying to keep Green from keeping the field that Cornwallis had to give up his campaign. That campaign was one of the most brilliant strategic retreats ever. Without that result, the colonials, the patriots, would have lost the revolution. These are stories that need to be told. William R. Davie is known as the founder of UNC-Chapel Hill. But when he served in the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Madison picked him to be the guy who would introduce the motion that saved the Constitution. The delegates were completely locked. Madison came up with the idea of saying the Senate would be two for every state, the House would be by representation. They believed North Carolinians would be angry at them because they would want the Senate to be by representation but decided it was done. Only North Carolina and Rhode Island rejected the Constitution because it did not have a Bill of Rights-only N.C and Rhode Island did that. The next year in 1789 they approved it. Hugh Williamson was N.C.'s ambassador to the United States. He lived in Philadelphia and was not a member of Congress. Another extraordinary story of Samuel Johnson and William R. Davie, one of the first cases in American and British jurisprudence, in which a court overruled a piece of legislation as unconstitutional was in North Carolina. The lawyers in the case that argued for the unconstitutionality of seizing Tory's property were Davie and Samuel Johnson and they won. These were important Revolutionary war leaders who also argued constitutionality in court. These stories need to be told.

Sen Alexander remarked about the names we hear, towns, etc., and take for granted and yet they really mean things in our history. Sen. Alexander also noted that Rep. Blackwell was attending the meeting via the web and at some point, wanted him to feel free to make comments. Sen. Alexander introduced Rep. Ed Goodwin to talk about the Edenton Tea Party on the eastern part of the state.

Rep. Goodwin talked about Ms. Penelope Barkum, quite a different type of human being than you would think. She ended up being very wealthy. Came from a nice family, born in 1728, and first female activist in the United States.

She used her secret sauce to convince her husband not to do something. She told her friends, who were on her side, to do the same thing with their husbands. Their husbands were afraid of getting in trouble because they were primarily customs agents, mostly on the British side. Back then, the boats came into Edenton and unloaded. We used to load up the barges and sent them to Maryland. Ms. Barkum and her friends talked to their husbands and told them they did not want goods coming off the British ships into Edenton, particularly tea. She is now recognized on markers in Edenton as the first female political activist. Fifty-one women signed the proclamation in Edenton to protest in 1774, known as the Edenton Tea Party boycotting British goods and services being brought in. Rep. Goodwin talked a little bit about Sassafras and Sassafras tea with its health benefits and finding Samuel Johnson's wedding carriage in the barn. The first organized political activity was done by women as they influenced their husbands and boycotted the British. Ms. Barkum had a "handful of husbands", and she owned a pile of land. He learned this from his parents and grandparents and great-grandparents. She was always revered and elevated for what she had done. They didn't go to the length they did in Boston, but they were able to make their customs agent husbands stop. Her house is being used by Edenton and is right down on the Edenton Bay overlooking the water. They don't tear down houses in Edenton, they fix them. Sen. Alexander noted that the oldest known house in North Carolina is located in Edenton, which was only discovered about ten years ago.

Sen. Alexander reiterated that we have a lot of history out there that we have not focused on, and it is our goal to highlight and call attention to various aspects of our history in North Carolina and what needs to be preserved.

Sen. Alexander acknowledged Dr. Cary Poole to give an update on his work with the Gaston County 250 committee. Last January, they came up with a list of several dozen names. They spent March and May writing a Resolution to their County Commissioner to be recognized as the official 250 committee which was granted. They spent June and July writing a grant, and that was awarded for \$10,000. They have six standing committees and meet monthly. They have invited you to come and speak about Historic Preservation. He will be staffing a tent for Mountaineer Days and giving out their material. They are doing an introductory movie about the founding of Gaston County that will go out to the local schools. Sen. Alexander noted that he hoped we would see hundreds of these things happening throughout North Carolina. Counties may not know what they want to do so he would like other counties to replicate what others are doing.

Senator Alexander moved to start working on long-range planning, trying to capture the things that have been heard over the past several months and formulate a plan. We cannot guarantee everything will be done, particularly

dealing with funding but we want to come up with a list, review them, and see if there are categories these recommendations can be put into in an understandable format.

Sen. Alexander recognized Representative Neely.

Rep. Neely:

Whatever we do needs to have the ability to perpetuate itself. Need to find ways to carry on the memory of the revolution. Founding was imperfect but laid the foundation for what continues to be striving to perfect the union.

1. Annual reading of the Declaration of Independence similar to Connecticut's. Several people read each sentence in churches and on courthouse steps. It gets people involved all over the State. We could create a tradition that will continue well into the future. Get local high school bands, mayor, local politicians, historians, etc.
2. Expanded highway marker program
3. Evaluate areas where further research or writing could be done and published on historic sites
4. Review DNCR requests for funding and see if the committee should endorse any of them. For example, refurbishing the statue of George Washington at the State Capitol.

Dr. Kickler:

It would be cool to use NC as a lens to talk about national history. Keep the emphasis local and get people excited about their community, but in doing so tell a bigger story.

1. Lesson plans aligned with **DPI** standards (telling the good and the bad).
2. Teacher workshops within the community to help them line up with standards.
3. Blog - this day in history. Someone should keep a timeline of events.
4. 3-5 minute YouTube documentaries about things that happened.
5. Lecture series - professors who are knowledgeable - keep it local.

Mr. Luebke:

1. On the 250th NC website only 36 of our counties have committees. We need to incentivize counties to participate. Maybe split counties up among members, or have the potential committee staff do it.
2. DNCR should have at least a tent at major festivals across the State and have them focus on what happened in that particular region.
3. Connecting with history departments at colleges/Universities across the State to have a writing contest - unique things/stories across the community, especially from Black or Indian populations.
4. Publications, websites, etc., should be in Spanish, too.

Dr. Pool:

Requested that railroads paint cars with a bicentennial theme. Dan Gurley has contacts with Great Smoky Mountain RR. Also, could have companies put up signs in their windows or at the checkout that they support it. Rep. Neely: Could do trucks, too.

Rep. Blackwell:

1. Keep in mind the idea of educating youth and young adults who may be the rustiest on their history as it relates to the establishment of US and the Revolutionary war. Focus on finding ways to introduce the history and sacrifices that were made - if we could get it on the universities' campuses and in our high schools.
2. The timeline would be a useful tool if we wanted to coordinate an activity with historic events. Identify exciting speakers and have these people go to high school classrooms and tell the stories. Tell the stories of the names (Davie, Burke, etc.)
3. Develop programming with the symphony
4. Outdoor dramas - recruit actors to do reenactments
5. Highway markers
6. Look to Indians to hear their stories

Sen. Alexander:

1. Celebratory events by county, speakers, lecture series, books that we could commission, reading of the Declaration of Independence, travelling exhibits
2. Permanent markers - not just the road signs, but also preservation of historic sites, historic designations, creation of heritage trails
3. Value added - tourism, license plates, symphony performances, comprehensive directory of sites, encouraging high school bands
4. General Assembly actions - Have an America's 250th logo on members' stationary, exhibits in the chambers and hallways, proclamations, money for projects, revolutionary war founders and a directory online, proceedings of this committee.

Senator Alexander recognized a person in the audience, Luke McKnight state and local government relations Associate with the American Battlefield Trust, to say a few words or comments. The Trust is a national non-partisan, non-profit organization that saves battlefield land from the civil war, Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, and they have saved 60,000 acres of hallowed ground nationally and over 3,000 here in North Carolina. Additionally, they educate the public about what happened there and why it matters. They are thankful to the NCGA for the appropriation to preserve battlefields. They will be unveiling a 20 minute video that covers the history of North Carolina from 1770 to 1865. He encouraged members to look at their YouTube videos. They are also developing a North Carolina Revolutionary War Trail with sites and battlefields connected by a driving trail and on-site interpretation, preserving them forever, so younger generations can become

interested in American History and engage them. It's an outdoor classroom and hallowed ground where people died.

Sen. Alexander opened the floor to anyone who wished to comment. Rep. Blackwell expressed regrets about not being able to attend the reception and be at the meeting but feels it was very productive. Sen. Alexander thanked everyone for their ideas and speaking and adjourned the meeting.

Note: After the meeting, Dr. Kickler submitted, via email, the following suggestions he did not include during the meeting due to concern for time. His suggestions are being included in these minutes for reference to be used by the person hired to implement the committee's suggestions.

Dr. Kickler

These are ideas for outreach to schools, etc., and different age levels--elementary, middle, and high school. I have worked with groups in the past who have offered such opportunities. The committee can judge, or the committee can seek advisory boards of public and educators to help be judges.

1. Poetry contest
2. Essay contest
3. Best video (3-5 minutes).
4. Best song
5. Lesson plans for various age groups (adults write them but reach out to school children).
6. Heritage projects that help preserve a historical landmark--cleanup of historic building, etc. Of course, under scout or educator supervision.
6. Recommended Reading List
7. Fun, interactive quizzes. Nothing to be graded, per se, but something that can help instruct on the founding. A few groups have done this with other civic topics, but nothing NC and AM Rev specific.

Numbers 1-4 offer many cool possibilities, Race to the Dan ballad or poem or video, Edenton Tea Party, Loyalist David Fanning, Battle of the Horseshoe, Harlowe Boys, Importance of Salt, Inoculation Protests, to name only a few examples.

March 13, 2025, 2:00 PM

The committee held its fourth meeting on Thursday, March 13, 2025, in Room 1228/1327 of the Legislative Building with Representative Hugh Blackwell, presiding.

Members present were: Sen. Ted Alexander, Representative Hugh Blackwell, Mr. Kyle Luebke, Hon. Charles Neely, Ms. Tanzy Wallace, Mr. Jason Luker.

Representative Hugh Blackwell, presiding, called the committee to order.

Chairman Blackwell introduced sergeants-at-arms, legislative staff and new public member, Ms. Tanzy Wallace, and new committee assistant, Grace Obsitnik.

The September 19, 2024 committee minutes were approved by the committee. Chairman Blackwell introduced Sarah Koonts with the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to provide an update on the department's work on the America's 250 program, including a new children's book and digital exhibit described in further detail on Handout #1.

Chairman Blackwell introduced Jeffrey Morse, Director of Development for Foundation Forward, Inc. to give a presentation about building Charters of Freedom settings across North Carolina that display copies of national founding documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Mr. Neely asked Mr. Morse about what other activities Foundation Forward is working on relating to the 250th celebration and asked for additional details on the process of installing Charters of Freedom settings, including cost estimates and locations for settings.

Chairman Blackwell introduced Executive Director Dr. Troy Kicker to discuss working plans for the committee. Dr. Kickler initiated discussion on future plans for the committee. (see Committee Working Plan document handout.)

There then followed discussion of budget details and possible funding requests for the committee to accomplish its goals set forth in the Committee Working Plan document. Chairman Blackwell mentioned the possibility of hiring actors to travel across the state to visit schools and portray founding fathers to help educate students on the 250th celebration.

Mr. Neely discussed historical markers for significant geographical locations that have yet to be identified. Senator Alexander suggested that committee members submit requests for historical markers and other ideas to Dr. Kickler who could then develop price estimates. Mr. Luebke suggested that the committee consider ideas and events undertaken by Virginia and South Carolina's Semiquincentennial Committees. The members then discussed future meeting dates, budget specifics, additional suggestions for future meetings and upcoming events relating to the 250 celebration.

Deans Eatman and Sarah Koonts with DNCR gave feedback to the committee's ideas and answers to specific questions from the committee members.

Kara McCraw, Director of the Legislative Analysis Division, and Dr. Kickler discussed the committee's budget authority to pay for activities relating to the 250 celebration.

Senator Alexander moved to adopt a working document for the committee's actions, Mr. Neely seconded the motion. Without objection, Chairman Blackwell declared the document adopted.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

1. Upcoming Events and Committee Plans

The NCGA's America's Semiquincentennial Committee is actively preparing for a series of events in celebration of America's 250th anniversary. Efforts are underway to organize events that will honor North Carolina's history and its contributions to the United States' Founding, with particular emphasis on historical anniversaries, including the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, Halifax Resolves, and the Declaration of Independence. The committee members discussed ways to participate in these celebrations, including planning statewide events to engage local communities.

The Committee recommends that the General Assembly and committee members actively engage in reviewing the provided materials to generate creative ideas for commemorating the Semiquincentennial, particularly in line with North Carolina's historical significance. Additionally, further focus on planning events in different locations throughout the state will ensure broad participation and representation.

2. Partnerships with the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

The Committee considers the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources a valuable resource for America's 250th celebration.

The Committee recommends a coordinated approach, when appropriate, in promoting Semiquincentennial events across the state. Support should also be given to mobile initiatives to increase public awareness in communities, such as in western North Carolina, that may not have easy access to large-scale events.

3. Historical Presentations with a Focus on Local Communities

The Committee recognizes that the state of North Carolina has an engaged citizenry with unique yet multiple and fascinating historical accounts. Clarence Henderson, a civil rights activist, shared his personal experiences during the Woolworth sit-in in Greensboro and its connection to constitutional values. Additionally, Randell Jones, a historian and author, pointed out North Carolina's pivotal role in the Battle of Kings Mountain. These presentations emphasized the importance of sharing multiple perspectives throughout history. Other presenters emphasized why North Carolina is known as "First in Freedom" and the ideas that inspired Americans in general and North Carolinians in particular to declare their independence.

The Committee recommends that future meetings and events include speakers who can provide various historical perspectives in a celebratory and unifying way. The Committee also recommends showcasing these histories to tell how the United States is distinctive.

The committee also recommends that local history studies be conducted and to showcase how communities played not only a role in the founding of the state but also the nation.

4. Statewide Involvement and Local Events

The Committee discussed the need for local engagement and county-level participation in the Semiquincentennial celebrations. For example, Dr. Poole shared the success of the Gaston County 250 committee, which has developed several initiatives, including a film for local schools and a booth at Mountaineer Days. This local committee provides an example for statewide replication. Such an effort would emphasize the importance of community involvement and foster pride in local communities' contribution to America's beginning.

The Committee recommends encouraging counties to establish their own committees for the Semiquincentennial, fostering grassroots participation. Local events, such as educational programs, exhibitions, and public commemorations, should be encouraged to ensure that every community has the opportunity to contribute to the celebrations. The Committee encourages partnering with various local historical societies, museums, schools across the state, with an immediate emphasis on events in western North Carolina.

5. Long-Term Legacy and Educational Initiatives

The Committee deems it important to create a lasting legacy through the Semiquincentennial celebrations. Proposed initiatives include the annual reading of the Declaration of Independence and expanding the highway marker program to highlight significant Revolutionary War events in North Carolina. Committee members also recommended symphonic programming and television programming for posterity. Committee members also suggested using North Carolina as a lens to discuss national history, with an emphasis on local stories.

The Committee recommends the development of educational programs and resources, including teacher workshops, interactive exhibits, and online content, to ensure that the history of the American Revolution is accessible to all age groups and in various media formats. Engaging youth, particularly through school programs and social media, will help sustain interest in this critical part of American history.

6. Support for Historical Preservation and Public Engagement

The Committee pointed out throughout multiple meetings the importance of creating historical markers, the preservation of battlefields, and the development of heritage trails to highlight North Carolina's role in the Revolutionary War. The American Battlefield Trust also emphasized the importance of preserving and interpreting historical sites for future generations. The Committee also considers various non-profits such as Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of the American Revolution, North Carolina

Symphony, and State Employees Credit Union, to name only a few examples, to be potential partners.

The Committee recommends advocating for increased funding and support for the preservation of key celebratory events and preservation across North Carolina. Additionally, partnerships with businesses and non-profit organizations should be leveraged to maximize the impact of these preservation efforts and engage the public in understanding the historical significance of America's Founding and North Carolina's contribution to the nation's beginning.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

2025-2026

President Pro Tempore of the Senate
Appointments:

Sen. W. Ted Alexander (Co-Chair)

- Mr. Kyle J. Luebke
- Mr. Jason E. Luker
- Hon. Charles Batcheller Neely
- Dr. Cary F. Poole
- Ms. Tanzy Barrow Wallace

Speaker of the House of Representatives
Appointments:

Rep. Hugh Blackwell (Co-Chair)

COMMITTEE CHARGE/STATUTORY AUTHORITY

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

39 **AMERICA'S SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMITTEE**

40 **SECTION 14.10.(a)** There is created the America's Semiquincentennial Committee
41 (the Committee).

42 **SECTION 14.10.(b)** Membership. – The Committee shall be composed of seven
43 members, as follows:

- 44 (1) Three members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, one of
45 whom shall be a member of the Senate and the remainder of whom shall be
46 members of the public.
47 (2) Three members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives,
48 one of whom shall be a member of the House of Representatives and the
49 remainder of whom shall be members of the public.

H259-PCCS50044-MHxr-6

House Bill 259

Page 405

General Assembly Of North Carolina

Session 2023

- 1 (3) One member jointly appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate
2 and the Speaker of the House of Representatives who shall be a noted historian
3 with expertise regarding the American Revolution.

4 **SECTION 14.10.(c)** Terms; Chairs; Vacancies; Quorum. – Members appointed shall
5 serve until the Committee terminates. The Committee shall have two cochaurs which shall be the
6 legislative member designated by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the legislative
7 member designated by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The Committee shall meet
8 upon the call of the cochaurs. Vacancies shall be filled by the appointing authority. A quorum of
9 the Committee shall be a majority of the members.

10 **SECTION 14.10.(d)** Duties. – The Committee shall (i) study means for the State to
11 celebrate the two hundred fiftieth anniversary of the founding of our nation and (ii) report the
12 means and anticipated costs of the celebratory events to the General Assembly.

13 **SECTION 14.10.(e)** Compensation; Administration. – Members of the Committee
14 shall receive subsistence and travel allowances at the rates set forth in G.S. 120-3.1, 138-5, or
15 138-6, as appropriate. The Committee may contract for consultants or hire employees in
16 accordance with G.S. 120-32.02. The Legislative Services Commission, through the Legislative
17 Services Officer, shall assign professional staff to assist the Committee in its work. Upon the
18 direction of the Legislative Services Commission, the Directors of Legislative Assistants of the
19 Senate and of the House of Representatives shall assign clerical staff to the Committee. The
20 expenses for clerical employees shall be borne by the Committee.

21 **SECTION 14.10.(f)** Reports; Termination. – The Committee shall make an interim
22 report to the 2025 Regular Session of the 2025 General Assembly and a final report to the 2026
23 Regular Session of the 2025 General Assembly no later than January 14, 2026. The Committee
24 shall terminate on January 15, 2026.

25 **SECTION 14.10.(g)** This section is effective when it becomes law.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

ERROR PROCESSING HEADER.

Opening and saving the Document Properties OR checking the document out will rebuild the header.

1 **PART #: AMERICA'S SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMITTEE**

2 **SECTION #.(a)** Section 14.10 of S.L. 2023-134 reads as rewritten:

3 **"SECTION 14.10.(a)** There is created the America's Semiquincentennial Committee (the
4 Committee).

5 **SECTION 14.10.(b)** Membership. – The Committee shall be composed of seven
6 members, as follows:

- 7 (1) Three members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, one of
8 whom shall be a member of the Senate and the remainder of whom shall be
9 members of the public.
10 (2) Three members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives,
11 one of whom shall be a member of the House of Representatives and the
12 remainder of whom shall be members of the public.
13 (3) One member jointly appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate
14 and the Speaker of the House of Representatives who shall be a noted historian
15 with expertise regarding the American Revolution.

16 **SECTION 14.10.(c)** Terms; Chairs; Vacancies; Quorum. – Members appointed shall
17 serve until the Committee terminates. The Committee shall have two cochaurs which shall be the
18 legislative member designated by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the legislative
19 member designated by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The Committee shall meet
20 upon the call of the cochaurs. Vacancies shall be filled by the appointing authority. A quorum of
21 the Committee shall be a majority of the members.

22 **SECTION 14.10.(d)** Duties. – Within funds appropriated, The the Committee shall
23 have the following duties:

- 24 (1) ~~(i) study~~ Study means for the State to celebrate the two hundred fiftieth
25 anniversary of the founding of our ~~nation and nation.~~
26 (2) ~~(ii) report~~ Report the means and anticipated costs of the celebratory events to
27 the General Assembly.
28 (3) Plan, execute, and coordinate events and activities that celebrate the
29 semiquincentennial in any of the following ways:
30 a. Maintaining a Website, social media, web-based or phone-based
31 application, or commercial advertising that provides information on
32 the semiquincentennial and events celebrating the semiquincentennial
33 throughout the State.
34 b. Creating and presenting educational materials and hosting educational
35 contests for elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools.
36 c. Creating visual, auditory, or written content about the
37 semiquincentennial.
38 d. Partnering with any of the following on events, activities, or publicity
39 for the semiquincentennial:
40 1. State entities such as the North Carolina Symphony, University
41 of North Carolina Center for Public Media, and the Department
42 of Natural and Cultural Resources.
43 2. America 250 NC federal, State, and county committees.
44 3. Nonprofits, historical, cultural, and business entities.

45 4. Any other entities the Committee deems appropriate.
46 **SECTION 14.10.(e)** Compensation; Administration. – Members of the Committee
47 shall receive subsistence and travel allowances at the rates set forth in G.S. 120-3.1, 138-5, or
48 138-6, as appropriate. The Committee may contract for consultants or hire employees in
49 accordance with G.S. 120-32.02. Within appropriated funds available, the Committee may

1 contract to execute duties specified under subdivision (3) of subsection (d) of this section. The
2 Legislative Services Commission, through the Legislative Services Officer, shall assign
3 professional staff to assist the Committee in its work. Upon the direction of the Legislative
4 Services Commission, the Directors of Legislative Assistants of the Senate and of the House of
5 Representatives shall assign clerical staff to the Committee. The expenses for clerical employees
6 shall be borne by the Committee.

7 **SECTION 14.10.(f)** Reports; Termination. – The Committee shall make the
8 following reports to the General Assembly:

- 9 (1) ~~an~~ An interim report ~~report~~ to the 2025 Regular Session of the 2025 General
10 ~~Assembly and a final report to Assembly by July 1, 2025 on planned events~~
11 ~~and expected costs for the semiquincentennial celebrations.~~
12 (2) An interim report to the 2026 Regular Session of the 2025 General Assembly
13 by March 31, 2026 on the outcome of any executed events or plans, as well as
14 further plans and expected costs for the semiquincentennial celebrations.
15 (3) An interim report to the 2027 Regular Session of the 2027 General Assembly
16 on the outcome of any executed events or plans, as well as further plans and
17 expected costs for the semiquincentennial celebrations.
18 (4) A final report to the 2028 Regular Session of the 2027 General Assembly no
19 later than January 14, 2026; January 15, 2028, on the outcome of any executed
20 events or plans.

21 The Committee shall terminate on ~~January 15, 2026; January 15, 2028.~~

22 **SECTION 14.10.(g)** This section is effective when it becomes law."

23 **SECTION #.(b)** This section is effective when it becomes law.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

April 16, 2024

1. North Carolina and the American Founding

Prof. Andrew J. Taylor

Director of the Free and Open Societies Project

North Carolina State University (NCSU) North Carolina

2. First in Freedom

Dr. Troy Kickler, PhD.

*Co-editor of and contributor to North Carolina's Revolutionary Founders (2019),
faculty at NCSU from 2007-2010 and 2014, and Liberty University since 2017*

3. Spilling the Tea: How to Properly Celebrate America's Independence

Kellie Nothstine, Assoc. Vice President for Student Life

Campbell University

August 22, 2024

1. America 250 NC Report

NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

2. American Revolution II: A Living Commemoration

*The North Carolina American Revolution Bicentennial Commission
(NCARBC)*

3. North Carolina Bicentennial Outline

*The North Carolina American Revolution Bicentennial Commission
(NCARBC)*

**4. The effect of our Charters of Freedom on the 1960 Greensboro
Woolworth Sit-In Movement Presentation**

5. OVNCST: North Carolina Has A Great Story to Tell Presentation

March 13, 2025

1. Charters of Freedom Presentation: Foundation Forward, Inc.

Jeffrey Morse

2. WORKING PLAN for AMERICA’S SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

3. The Edenton Tea Party Resolves THE ONLINE EXHIBIT Handout

North Carolina Office of Archives and History

Online Articles of Committee

1. The Carolina Journal: March 17, 2025

NC250: Semiquincentennial Committee meets to discuss anniversary of American Revolution

2. The North State Journal: October 3, 2024

NCGA America 250 Committee sets up suggestion portal / The North State Journal

3. The Carolina Journal: April 17, 2024

Legislature is mapping plans for America’s 250th anniversary celebration coming in 2026

4. The North State Journal: April 25, 2024

NC legislative committee holds first America 250 meeting / The North State Journal