



AMERICA'S SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMITTEE
April 10, 2025
Room 1228/1327 of the Legislative Building

The America's Semiquincentennial Committee meets on Thursday, April 10, 2025 at 2:00 PM. The meeting was held in Room 1228/1327 of the Legislative Building. Members present were: Representative Hugh Blackwell, Senator Ted Alexander, Dr. Cary Poole, Mr. Kyle Luebke, Mr. Jason Luker, Hon. Charles Neely, and Ms. Tanzy Wallace.

Presenters included:

1. Paul and Kim Norcross, SAR & DAR
2. Patrick Daly, Author and Historian for Patrick Henry

Sen. W. Ted Alexander, presiding.

Senator Alexander called the meeting to order.

Senator Alexander: Calling to order the meeting of America's Semiquincentennial Committee on the year of our Lord, April 10, 2025, and we're in room 1228.

Senator Alexander: I think you're going to be very excited today from the presentations that we have and the information that Dr. Kickler and Grace have to present to you today. We'll get into that in just a minute. Before I start any of those kinds of things, let me go through some of the preliminary things. I want to thank our Sergeant of Arms who are serving today from the House. If you would, just raise your hand. David Leighton and Thomas Terry, thank you. And then also from the Senate, we have Linda Matthews. Where's Linda at? Yeah, there you are. And Archie Smith, back there in the back. Thank you all for being here today and helping us keep things moving. We're very appreciative. We will have some public comment period. We've got some people signed up toward the end. We will allow for some public comment. We're also being live streamed, so just put on your radio voice. We also have with us today, I'll just recognize Matt Lanetti, from the Senate Pro Temp. staff, and I will also recognize some of our other guests as they come up.

You have before you, a gift from our Lieutenant Governor. This was, I guess, a buck stone kind of cast metal flag, and I think it was very nice, and I really appreciate her sharing that with members of the committee, and then also with members of the committee, one of our speakers, Patrick Daly, you see his book before you, and he might, if you're really nice to him, at the end of the event, might autograph it for you, too. And I think he has some extras as well with him. We also will, at the appropriate time, we have some folks from the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources here, just raise your hand. Thank you for being here, and we'll hope to hear a little bit of an update, anything you want to tell us during the public comment section. Really appreciate that.

And today, on April 10th, 1986, Haley's Comet came to its nearest point to the Earth. Who knew that? Nearest point of the Earth. On 1986, on April the 10th. Were you born then? Oh, okay. You missed it. Kyle missed it. Okay. And then, I don't think you were here then, either. Probably not too many of us around here were here in 1925, when F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote *The Great Gatsby*. So, I don't think, I hope, well, it might be good if you were. But, anyway. All right. So, I also want to recognize my co-chair here, Representative Hugh Blackwell. We have been very busy as a committee, or as committee chairs, and our director, Troy Kickler, and Grace Obsitnik. We have been quite busy, and I think you're going to see why in a little bit. But, before we go on to other things, we need to approve our minutes for March 13th, 2025. I think those were all mailed out to you in advance in your packets for the members of the committee, and it would be appropriate at this time if any member would like to move to approve the minutes.

Committee member Kyle Luebke moves to approve the minutes.

Second by committee member Jason Luker.

Senator Alexander: All in favor of approving the minutes, say aye.

Committee members: Aye.

Senator Alexander: Any opposed, like so. Okay. So, the minutes are approved. So, now we have two presentations. Very special presentations today. We have, and I'll let Paul, when you come up, you introduce everybody else that's with your group, if you would. But, we have Paul Norcross, who's with the Sons of the American Revolution, and also with him, Kim Norcross, who's with the Daughters of the American Revolution, and they have an extensive background in real estate development. Paul is the founder of one of the oldest and largest schools in the United States. Paul is the founder of one of the oldest and largest schools in North Carolina. Is that right? You are. Both of you are. Okay. And Kim, being with the Daughters of the American Revolution, she's with the Guilford Battle Chapter, and she is board chair for the Cardinal Academy Charter School in Cary and Wendell Falls, and she's also committee chair for her DAR Chapter's Constitution Week. So, I'm going to let them make their presentation today, and then after that, we'll introduce them. Then, we'll have the next speaker. But, y'all come on up and tell us, and then later on, we're going to have some interesting things to discuss a little further. So, come on ahead.

Mr. Paul Norcross: First of all, I just want to say thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you to the committee, all the members, the co-chairs, to Troy and everybody. Thank you very much for having us here today. We appreciate it. You got a brief intro from Kim and myself, I'm in the SR and SAR, and Kim is DAR and also Mendenhall Jamestown Society, and we've been involved in education in the state for many years, and appreciate the opportunity to speak today. So, very simply, what we want to talk about is celebrating America, the who, what, where, when, why, and how. So, very simple presentation. So, Kim, if you want to kick off the who.

Ms. Kim Norcross: Between the children of the American Revolution, and daughters of the American Revolution, and sons of the American Revolution, and sons of the Revolution, there are approximately 230 chapters with membership close to 9,000 members. There are several other hereditary based organizations, such as the descendants of the Mayflower and Lafayette Society, Sons of Cincinnati, Society of Colonial Wars, just to name a few. In addition to these groups, there are numerous historical societies, museum societies, associations and commissions, museum boards, and so on. If you add up all these groups, there are potentially 15,000 students of this state dedicated to celebrating and passing the great history of this nation. Keep in mind

that a number of these people have a crossover, and many of the members are members of many of those organizations, not just one. Because once they qualify for one, they use that relative, and they keep going to other organizations as well. Like Paul's an example of that. He likes me to say he's an SOB of son of both, SR and SAR. Whatever that net amount is, the large untapped force of the people that cherish this nation and wish to celebrate it. I think there are just so many people that want to come together and celebrate the birthday. A big birthday party is how I look at it.

Mr. Paul Norcross: So on to the next, the what, as it were. Many nations have existed longer than we have, but they have had significant structural and cultural transformations. We're the only nation on the planet that has existed under the same governing documents and structure for close to 250 years. So how does one celebrate this once in a lifetime world historical event? So in South Carolina, a state with less than half of our population and GDP, are planning to spend over \$17 million on the semiquincentennial celebrations from now through independence and ratification. They have a strong collaborative program and interaction with many historical organizations. In North Carolina, there are efforts underway through this committee, America 250 NC and others, to provide data and miscellaneous items, providing multiple viewpoints and approaches to celebrating the anniversary of our nation. In our opinion, what we must do, is have celebrations worthy of the events that we are commemorating. The creation and formation of the greatest nation that has ever existed on the planet. The one that has brought more peace and prosperity to people in the history of the planet. This should be our mission. So the question is, where do you celebrate these events? So North Carolina has approximately 45 Revolutionary War landmarks. This reflects sites with a physical presence. We have approximately 200 documented battles or skirmishes. On a sad note, we only have about 85 markers commemorating these around the state. So that's a discussion for another time on the markers. We have seven museums that distinctly celebrate Revolutionary War history, focused on interpretation and commemoration. We have 25 to 35 public concert venues with capacity of 1,000 or more. Most importantly, of course, we have, to celebrate this nation, we have 3400 K-12 schools, 150 colleges, and 50 universities across this great state. Every single one of these sites, as well as countless others across the state, is a potential location to celebrate the birth of our nation, as well as any other event related to its conception and formation. The next point is from the where is the when. So, a partial list, and I know you've got a longer list, of events that should be celebrated annually across the state--you've got Moore's Creek, you've got Guilford Courthouse Battle, Halifax Resolves, Battle of Alamance, Ramsor's Mill Battle, Mecklenburg Declaration Day, Ratification Day, Independence Day, Patriot Day, Constitution Day, Overmountain Victory Trail, Yorktown Victory Day, Evacuation Day, Bill of Rights Day. You've got so many other things on the calendar and across the state that everybody should know about that we should be celebrating. It just, it should just be a pattern of our daily lives to be celebrating these things that have afforded us the opportunity to have the nation that we've got today. And the why. As our 40th president so eloquently said, "freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it on to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same." So quite simply, it is really our duty and our honor, it is our duty to honor the mothers and fathers of this country who sacrificed and endeavored to conceive, birth, and nurture the greatest nation to ever exist on the face of the earth. One that we are privileged beyond words to benefit from every day. Like our parents, they were not perfect. They were not gods. They were not kings or queens. They were men and women just like us that deserve the respect, reverence, and honor that they sacrificed, fought, and died for. To do otherwise would frankly be inconceivable. So, the whole point of all the people in the state, all the venues, all the opportunities that we have to celebrate and the duty to celebrate. So, again, the hereditary and historical organizations in this state have approximately 13,000 to 15,000 people in them. In military terms, that's considered a division. By the way, this is how many people we have in the 82nd Airborne, and I think we can all attest to how effective

they can be with that unit. We need to forge a mechanism tying the patriotic hereditary organizations, or PHOs, and the historical organizations together to celebrate and cherish the incredible men and women that forged this great nation, working in concert with representatives from the executive and legislative branches of the state. Through the collaboration, we should raise funds, sponsor events, major events, celebrating the founding of our nation. We should provide a centralized data portal for all of these groups to highlight and promote events, reenactments, and positive educational opportunities that support and celebrate our history in a positive light across every city, county, and district. The portal will highlight data providing the PHO data information, encouraging membership, facilitating membership, and participation in these respective organizations. This should be a platform to provide materials and training on the U.S. and state constitution for students from kindergarten through 12th grade, secondary, and post-secondary education. We should provide a platform for these organizations to grow from a division of 15,000 to a core of 30,000, active members in these organizations to celebrate America. So in short, we have a small army of people out there that are dedicated to our history and preserving our nation. And with such a short window until July 4th, 2026, in order to have a deserving memorial to these people in our nation, we should kind of rally the troops, get them together, and we've got members of the Sons of the Revolution back here, and get all of these groups together in an organized, structured fashion to kind of put the troops out there to coordinate with this committee and the state to get a lot of activity going and to honor our nation.

Ms. Kim Norcross: And my group alone has 250 members, so if you take those different organizations, you've tapped into a lot of the citizens in North Carolina that want to help.

Mr. Paul Norcross: So this is a battle cry for us, like our founders, to celebrate them and to honor their achievements. So, I like to make things brief. So, I don't know if questions are later or how that works, but...

Senator Alexander: Yeah, anybody have any comments? Members of the committee? We will come back to them for a discussion. Thank you all so much for your presentation. I appreciate it. And we'll be revisiting you very shortly. At this time, we have a really good friend of mine, Patrick Daly, whom I've known for, what, 30 years or more? Something like that, maybe. Who is the former museum director of the Patrick Henry National Memorial. Also, more recently, well, over the last 30 years, has been with the Hickory Landmarks Commission. And Patrick is recently retired from that position as their executive director. And he's also served as the secretary-treasurer of the commission to commemorate Patrick Henry's 250th birthday. And Patrick is an expert on Patrick Henry, Patrick Daly. Patrick has written an outstanding book and has spoken widely about the life of Patrick Henry and he has provided members of the committee with that copy, like I said. And maybe at the end, he might be willing to autograph it. But I'm going to ask Patrick now, I've asked him also to talk a little bit about Patrick Henry, whatever he feels like is important. And he may throw in some instances of his interactions with North Carolina. So, Patrick, come on up and just feel free to speak your presentation today.

Mr. Patrick Daly: Thank you, Senator Alexander, and thank you all for having me here to speak to you today about Patrick Henry and the American Revolution. And I also wanted to mention that where I'm from in Catawba County, we recently put together an exhibition at the Historical Museum on the American Revolution. And thanks to a grant from NC 250, and so we're very grateful for that. And I was on the committee, and it's getting a lot of attention, a lot of people coming to visit and seeing the exhibit there.

Patrick Henry is, of course, I may be a little biased, but I will say that he is one of the greatest orators and public speakers in American history. A lot of people knew him as the voice of the American Revolution. He was a statesman, inspirational leader all his life, but an inspirational

leader for the American Revolution. His oratorical background goes back to his childhood days when he listened to Isaac Davis, who was a Quaker minister and had great oratorical skills in Hanover County, Virginia, and it inspired him to become such a speaker. And when he was young, he became a lawyer and honed his skills as an orator at that, using his law practice. I would say that the 1765 Stamp Act and the Virginia Resolves are what catapulted Patrick Henry to national acclaim. He was a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses at that time, and he introduced seven resolutions against the Stamp Act, which was I guess, forced upon American colonists without their consent. And so his resolutions were protest resolutions. And with his oratorical skills, he was defending it, and many of the Burgesses thought he was very extreme in his oratory and accused him of treasonous talk. But he responded forcefully. He said, "If this be treason, make the most of it." And it had the desired effect across the colonies and led to resistance, I guess would be the best word. In September 1774, he became a member of the First Continental Congress, which met at Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia, and he was a delegate with George Washington and Richard Henry Lee. And he helped draft a petition to the king, and signed what was known as the Continental Association. But the interesting thing about Patrick Henry at that time was he was the first person to speak at the First Continental Congress because the delegates were basically getting organized and weren't sure what direction they were going to go. But he made this rousing and moving speech in which he urged unity as they were deliberating, saying that, "I am not a Virginian but an American." And it helped launch the Continental Association. In March 1775, he attended the Second Virginia Convention in Richmond, and you had escalating tensions at that time in our colonies. And you had the Boston Massacre, you had the Intolerable Acts passed by Britain. But at that convention in Richmond, everyone wanted peaceful negotiations, but he didn't. He said that, it was time for armed conflict with Britain, and he urged Virginians to act at that point. And he made this very rousing speech, which we all know became one of his most famous ones, in which he said, "I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death." And it became a battle cry during the American Revolution for a lot of soldiers as well. Two months later, in May 1775, he was elected to the Second Continental Congress, which was the group, of course, that signed the Declaration of Independence. But on his way to Philadelphia, a messenger reached him, and he returned to Virginia to become a military commander. Things were getting bad in Virginia at that time, and he felt like he needed to fight. He became commander of the Virginia Militia and colonel of the First Virginia Regiment. He served just a short time, probably two or three months in that position, but that included one potential battle that he was involved with. It was a march on Williamsburg when the colonial governor, Lord Dunmore, was taking 15 barrels of gunpowder to a ship offshore for 'safekeeping', as he called it. But it roused the public and the soldiers, as Patrick Henry, 150 of them, were marching on Williamsburg. Although, the governor did eventually pay for the gunpowder, it kind of diffused the situation, and there was no actual fighting or battle at that time. But, Patrick Henry became, once again, more celebrated for what he had attempted to do, and Lord Dunmore eventually declared Patrick Henry an outlaw, and ordered him captured, and if he was, he would have been hung. Very shortly after, in 1776, he was elected three terms as war governor of an independent state of Virginia. Many felt that he wasn't a military experienced person, and so they felt that it would be best for him to serve in another capacity, and overwhelmingly he was elected for three consecutive terms, and it was an interesting job, being governor in 1776 to 79, and he supported George Washington's Continental Army. That was probably the main, main goal, was to provide the army with soldiers and supplies, and he created Virginia's first navy. He exposed a plot in 1777 to overturn George Washington as commander-in-chief and replace him with Horatio Gates. And Patrick Henry passed along an anonymous letter about that effort to remove Washington as commander-in-chief, and he passed it on to George Washington. And so they determined that it was from General Thomas Conway, and George Washington immediately put down the revolt against him, and he was forever grateful for the rest of his life for Patrick Henry and what he had done for Washington and the army. As governor, he also authorized the George Rogers Clark Expedition.

George Rogers Clark was a captain appointed by Governor Henry, and he served in western Virginia, which was Kentucky at that time, or Kentucky at this time, but back then it was part of Virginia. So he was stationed there with his contingent, and he came to Williamsburg and asked Patrick Henry for permission to conduct a military campaign in what was then, the old Northwest Territory. There were British forts along the Ohio River, and he thought he could capture them. And so Patrick Henry gave him the permission. He had 175 to 200 men that marched along the Ohio River. They actually did much greater than expected. They captured British forts. They captured two large British held cities called Kaskaskia and Vincennes. And when he was all done, after a year and a half of the Illinois campaign, he had acquired the entire Northwest Territory for Virginia at that point. In the Peace of Paris in 1783, that land was ceded to Congress, and later to the United States under the Constitution, but to give you an idea of how big the territory was, it included present states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and parts of Minnesota. Patrick Henry collaborated with North Carolina Governor Richard Caswell, whom he met at the Continental Congress, and they became good friends. And, of course, when Governor Caswell was also a war governor in North Carolina here, they corresponded quite a bit. And in one instance, it stands out in terms of a collaboration. The Congress under the Confederation asked Patrick Henry, because he had started a small Navy, if he would send those ships for a naval attack on East Florida, which the British were occupying at that point. But he didn't have enough boats, and he asked Governor Caswell to help him out there. Caswell provided a very large gunboat that would have helped out, but the whole thing was unsuccessful, because Patrick Henry's flotilla of boats were sunk by the British, and Governor Caswell's gunboat sprang a leak and sunk. And so it didn't happen. But, Patrick Henry then went to serve in the House of Delegates in the Virginia General Assembly. Four years he was there during a time of increasing danger in the South with the threat of Cornwallis' Southern Campaign, and Cornwallis sent a contingent to Richmond to destroy the city and capture the General Assembly, the entire assembly there. They got word of it, fled Richmond, Richmond burned. They ended up in the mountains. And Patrick Henry, among others, escaped, barely escaped, with his life. But there were a couple delegates who did not quite make it. They were captured and they were hung. Patrick Henry played a pivotal role in the transition from the Confederation of States to the United States on the Constitution. I won't dwell on that. I wrote a whole book--most of it is about that time after the peace and after the transition. But he had other North Carolina connections. He was a friend of William Blount in North Carolina. He was governor of the Southwest Territory, Blount was. And he was a founder, of the state of Tennessee. And Patrick Henry owned land in North Carolina, and two children with their families actually moved here while he was living in south side Virginia at the time. So, I'll end there with just a comment. Historians usually don't deal in ifs, but it's certainly hard to say where we would be today as a free nation without Patrick Henry. Thank you very much.

Senator Alexander: Thanks Patrick. And before you sit down, I'll just ask any of the members of the committee if there are any comments, questions that you might have of Patrick. Thank you. I thought that was very interesting. I had never heard most of all of that, because all we most often hear is his famous speech in Richmond, St. John's Church, I believe. St. John's Church in Richmond. Yeah, but anyway. OK, thank you. We appreciate very much your comments there.

Senator Alexander: So we're going to ask our executive director, Troy Kickler. You just remain seated there and speak in the microphone. And we've got several things that we want to attend to. And before I do that, I wanted to recognize, I did mention Representative Blackwell earlier, but did you have anything you wanted to say in advance or you wanted to wait until the end? OK. And also, we have in the legislative analysis, Kara McGraw, who's been helping us a lot lately. So we'll talk further later. But anyway, okay. So Dr. Kickler, you want to go ahead and kick us off here?

Dr. Kickler: Sure. Yeah. In front of you, committee members, sent two or three days ago, is the legislative report, which we're required to do, at least one anyway, we're required to do, and then some suggestions for a legislative proposal. I'll briefly go over these and then potentially turn it over to legal to explain some of what the changes are that we are suggesting. But anyway, the findings and recommendations, pretty much encapsulate what the committee has talked about prior to this date, and so came up with six different findings and then some recommendations that we are making. Briefly, basically what we're doing as a committee, we're trying to find, I'm just going to summarize this instead of read it verbatim to you. The committee is going to recommend that committee member, well, we recommend that we will look into North Carolina's role in the American founding and different types of events, and we'll explain some, I'll provide some updates later in the meeting. When appropriate, we can partner with the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources on these events to celebrate America's 250th birthday. We've talked about this on numerous occasions. Our events, our presentations, will include speakers that focus on the local aspect of history to try to get communities to appreciate their county, their towns, their community's role in not only the founding of the state, but also the founding of the United States of America. And we want to do so in a celebratory and unifying way. As has been mentioned before, this is America's birthday. It's time to celebrate and celebrate the good things about the United States of America. Number four is what I've also mentioned before, the variety of ways and local events that we can have, educational programs, exhibitions, public commemorations, there's a lot of things that we can do, and then considering the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, we can have an emphasis on many of these events can be in the western part of the state, which would also draw attention to the western part of the state, potentially increase the tourism dollars. And then the intangible that you can't really measure, we've talked about this before, that you can't really measure in a spreadsheet, but to increase morale, in the state, too. There are events that are being planned for the western part of the state to make, again, to increase morale. Again, number five, all of these kind of dovetail in a way, as you probably figured out, the development of educational programs and resources. Workshops, interactive exhibits at museums, which I know Committee member Luker will talk about one that he's heavily involved in later on in the meeting. And then support for historical preservation and public engagement that's number six. We want to remind people, again, repeating myself here, but I think it's important to remind people of not only the state's role in the founding of the United States of America, but local communities' roles in the founding of the United States of America. I mean, goodness, for instance, you got, people talk about the Halifax resolves, but you got the Mecklenburg resolves, Rowan County resolves, Tryon resolves, Orange County resolves, it can go on, and all this predated the Declaration of Independence on July 4th. So I will refrain from turning it into a history lesson, I get sort of pumped, excited about this history. But then you can see the current statutory authority that we have, that's Appendix B. Appendix C is the legislative proposal that we have. And you can see that that gives the committee more authority. Chair Alexander, do you want to explain more or turn it over to legal to talk about it?

Senator Alexander: I can talk a little bit about that when you're, we'll come back and go ahead and finish up everything else and all that.

Dr. Kickler: And then that, so that is, in my opinion, a very significant part of the report. That's going to be submitted and you can see that it gives the committee authority to do all kinds of activities. The ability, yes. that's a better word. The ability to do all kinds of activities and they're listed there, especially under section 1410 D number three. A lot of them are listed there. And the last part of this is the supporting documentation and Grace went and found the names of the previous presentations, some of the media coverage that was done on some of these presentations, committee meetings and then some of the literature that was distributed during some of these meetings. So that's the report that's in front of you and of course it includes the

minutes from the previous meetings as well. But the meat of it, I think starts with findings and recommendations.

Senator Alexander: Thank you, Dr. Kickler. What Dr. Kickler alluded to, I'm going to draw your attention to page 26 first. If you would look at page 26. Page 26, you see currently the, what has formulated this committee. This is in statute. And you see what it has now. And you see the date of January 15, 2026 as being the termination date. This is what we have as of this moment. What we have been discussing with Representative Blackwell and Dr. Kickler and others is that we, as a committee, have a very short, limited time period. Cultural Resources is doing some outstanding work and they have been working on planning for several years now and are going to be doing some tremendous things. Our committee has sort of another kind of effort and that is more of the celebratory types of things but also incorporating history as we discussed. So, what we wanted to do was put before you this as a proposal and it is only that at this moment because the time is short. We don't have time to bring you things wrapped up in a package like normally we would like to do. But as of right now, we have worked with legislative analysis to come up with a proposal that we feel like would basically give us the ability to do many things that are enumerated on page 27 and 28. And I can go over those if you wish, but it basically means that we will be able to expand sort of just from a committee that meets and does a report, to doing some more actual events. Now, this is probably the time to talk about how do we do these. We have staff. We have an executive director and we have an assistant through Troy and Grace. We have a committee. But, we are not currently empowered to do a lot, we can't spend money, we can't do a lot of things that may be required if we are going to do celebrations correctly. So what we have done, we have been in discussions and again, please keep in mind and I know I'm on air, but we are all in this kind of working this thing through. But, what we have kind of hit upon is we, as a legislature, I don't think we're really well suited to do the kinds of things that a nonprofit can do. And so what we are basically talking about today is proposing to work with a nonprofit, that they can accomplish, enter into agreements, spend money, raise money, do this kind of thing that we really can't do. But we can advise and we can and will have given them a road map of the things that we adopted earlier, you remember the laundry list of things that we want to work on, and then we have the staff ability to help---staff and be a liaison to a nonprofit. So our proposal is, and we've had some discussions, quite a bit of discussions with the Sons of American Revolution, the Daughters of American Revolution, they have a ready made network all over the state of folks who are very interested, very enthusiastic about celebrating our 250th birthday. And they are willing to step up to the bat. And, essentially, and you help me if I'm incorrect on this, essentially form a new nonprofit, incorporate, I don't think this has ever been done before, all of those different groups that you talked about earlier, a new nonprofit, they can do that very quickly, get incorporated as a new nonprofit. And each of those nonprofits, I believe, has agreed to put some money into that nonprofit. And then they will, in turn, also be able to go out and solicit to other organizations, foundations, groups, and companies for the kinds of things that we ultimately, we have discussed that we want to do, one of which is a large celebration, you know, utilizing the North Carolina Symphony and other things. Have I stated that correctly, Representative Blackwell? Have I misstepped? This is essentially what we are looking at doing. I think what we would like is some discussion from the committee. I don't know that we necessarily have to take a vote, but I would at least like a consensus of the committee that this is sort of a direction that we would like to move on. Because, again, time is short. We do have a very willing and able group here that is willing to start fairly quickly getting things together in terms of raising money and doing things like that. Again, we are kind of prohibited from doing that sort of thing. But they are able. And then we would, in turn, allow the executive director, this will be our state's, I guess, in essence, contribution, is allowing our staff, our committee, to work with this group. And we would work very closely with that nonprofit. And hopefully it will be things that we will do not only for at least this group, would do things not only for our independent state 2026, but they have the ability to carry things on through,

which we don't really have statutorily, all the way through, perhaps the constitution, the 250th anniversary of the constitution. But, that is sort of where we are as of this moment. And I guess my, I haven't discussed it with y'all in any detail, but I would like if you have any comments, questions. And Paul, you're here along with your wife. And we can have a little bit of a discussion now as to, you know, what your thoughts are.

Senator Alexander: Go ahead, Kyle.

Mr. Kyle Luebke: So first off, I like the idea. I'm just always a strong proponent of a lot of transparency surrounding these types of things. And so the first thing, the first question I would have is the legislative proposal I see gives the ability for the committee to contract out, maybe expend certain funds that we have with this entity. If so, or even if not, if so, I think that it would be helpful just that, you know, maybe quarterly the committee receives a report from the newly formed nonprofit detailing expenditures, what programming, who they're working with, et cetera.

Senator Alexander: That is an excellent point. And do you mind, Kara, can you give a little bit of a discussion about what we as a committee can and cannot do? However, to address Mr. Luebke's concern, I believe that the newly formed nonprofit that we seek to work with plans to have an accountant who is going to be specifically toward making sure everything is, of course, done in accordance with what, you know, good practices. And also, they would be able to provide us with that report that you're asking for. I think that is an outstanding and actually a really necessary part of what we're doing here, to see that. For the public as well, they need to see that. Do you mind, Kara, mentioning some of the things that?

Ms. Kara McCraw: Sure. Kara McCraw, legislative analysis. So, under the current law, because the committee was set up really more of a study component, it doesn't have the authority to independently contract, or to raise funds. Under the provision that's in your packet, this is a within funds appropriated. so it would be within funds appropriated by the General Assembly would have this authority to do this sort of planning and execution of events. There is a statute currently under the General Assembly's statutes that does forbid committees from receiving outside funds, and so the concept of the nonprofit would be that another group would do fundraising and would potentially coordinate and put on events with advice from this committee. There are different ways that that can be set up. But that's something really for you all to sort of discuss is how you'd like to approach it. Whether receipt of funds from this committee would require the new nonprofit to provide any additional information or things like that, which sometimes in the past the General Assembly has required from nonprofits it's working with.

Senator Alexander: Does that answer your question? Any other comments? And I appreciate that analysis on there. Representative Blackwell, Chairman Blackwell.

Co-Chair Representative Blackwell: I want to follow up on Mr. Luebke's comment, not being my intention to create unnecessary paperwork or so forth. The committee is only going to be in existence for a fairly short time even if we extend the termination date. And so that this committee remains engaged, I think it might be helpful to get something from the nonprofit on a monthly basis that we could distribute to the committee members. We don't necessarily have to meet, I guess we haven't been meeting every month. But it would be good to know because sometimes what you're spending money on tells you what people are doing, but also the report could sort of give us a preview of upcoming things, because we've all had interests that we have and maybe want to be alert for whether the nonprofit is following through on some of those ideas or whether we may want to reiterate or add something to it. So if we could find a way that's not

burdensome to get maybe a monthly report, I think that might be helpful to this committee, as I say, so that we're not bystanders.

Senator Alexander: I'm going to allow Paul Norcross to to speak a little bit, too, and you can give a little bit of your assessment.

Mr. Paul Norcross: One main thing that we always talk about, OPM, other people's money, you never want to touch it. So the premise of raising funds would go into this entity, and there's an accounting firm that we work with, that I think they handle the books for approximately 200 not-for-profits, so they're very well versed in dealing with 501c3 and transparency. They deal with a lot of charter schools and other publicly funded entities. So they're very familiar with transparency. So having a monthly statement posted on the website would be kind of a standard. And so it would be all monthly statements published online, and these guys are very good at what they do.

Senator Alexander: Thank you. You can stay up here in case we have some more questions. Let me give an example of how this kind of would work, for an example. We've said that there are several projects that we would like to undertake, including working with the symphony. I think working with the, tell me the exact name, Jeff, Freedom Foundation Forward with the monuments and so forth that they do. Those are the kinds of things that we have said that we would like to try to do. We have said that our staff, our committee is limited in doing certain things only allowed by statute. Now, what we propose, and we cannot guarantee anything other than that we will propose this to the legislature, is that we have somewhat more ability to do stuff. That's a really technical term. But we will be able to do more things. But, even then, as Kara mentioned, we will not be able to approach a group and say, can you give money to help fund Jeff's program or the symphony or some other group or some other thing. However, a nonprofit can. And then we can say, here are the things that we would like to see accomplished. And they, in turn, we will give them a list. And they, in turn, have agreed that they feel like this is the kind of things that they would like to do. They probably have some other things, too. But they will take our working list and try to work on those along with the things that we're able to do within the legislature. We will do those things that we're allowed to do by statute. And our contribution, again, will be first the staff ability to maintain, keep things going, stay on it every day, make sure that logistics are carried out and that kind of thing. And then, it's our hope, we, again, do not know, but we will also put in a request for monies through the legislature, that will help us do more specific things as a committee. But, even then, it will not be probably, we will not be able to do the kinds of things that a nonprofit can do and is very eager to do. They have a very motivated group of people across the state who are really willing and ready to undertake some of these projects. So does that, for instance, with the, let's say if we approached, the symphony or something, they could approach group A, group B, would you help donate to make this event occur? The legislature can do something, perhaps, but they will be ones that can make that happen. And then they would report and then they would be very transparent, as you said, that they would be keeping up with them on a more regular basis. And that would be through the staff here and then through our meetings periodically as we meet. Does that make sense? Have I given a pretty decent idea? You got anything else, Representative Blackwell?

Co-Chair Representative Blackwell: Thank you. I've got another question for Ms. McCraw. On this restraint on our raising, asking money, is there an ethical restraint on individual members of the committee or Senator Alexander and I in referring potential donors to the nonprofit?

Ms. Kara McGraw: I think that's probably a new question that hasn't come up before, and is one that it might be wise to get an Ethics Advisory opinion on, there are restrictions on members of committees fundraising because it creates a conflict of interest. This is slightly different, but

because it's tangential to it, I think it would be safer to get an Ethics opinion because I don't think it's a question that's come up before.

Co-chair Representative Blackwell: Is that something that you could ask for on behalf of the committee members so that we are not, or do we need to request it, one of us individually, Senator Alexander, or I?

Ms. Kara McGraw: I think either one of you would need to request the LEC for you, and then for the other members of the committee it would be to the SEC.

Senator Alexander: Can you help us draw that up?

Ms. Kara McGraw: We can work with you to look into the question and try to see how it would best be framed.

Senator Alexander: Okay, very good, because we want to make sure that we do everything, certainly in order. Go ahead.

Co-chair Representative Blackwell: Because it seems to me it would be helpful if we could say we can't or we're not doing this, but if we run into people because we're on the committee, to at least be able to maybe even ask them if they're interested to contact them or at a minimum to refer them. Of course, I guess there's maybe some sort of ethical line between encouraging it and just being a point of reference.

Ms. Kara McGraw: And I will say, obviously, as I think you all well know, under the ethics law, once you have an advisory opinion that would advise you on that, if they affirm it would be okay, then as long as you stay within the bounds of that letter, you're protected.

Senator Alexander: And that's what we want. Mr. Luebke?

Mr. Kyle Luebke: In relation to the, and this might be a question for you as well, in relation to this, because branding is now a thing, how would our branding work for different things maybe that the nonprofit would put on?

Senator Alexander: Good question. I think they're willing to adopt this, the branding that we have. And they are, as well as, this says General Assembly, but they also think you're willing to do similar kinds of branding. And you may want to address that as well.

Mr. Paul Norcross: So, this is the Celebrate America Foundation. So the main thing is just celebrating America. So all the organizations that are affiliated with it, which would be this branding, SAR, DAR, SR, and so on, it's kind of an amalgamation. So yes, this would obviously be front and center, because the premise being that we would want to have a non-voting ex-officio representative from the House, from the Senate, from the executive branch, and some other people that represent other organizations on as ex officios as well, so that there's crossover, but there's a line.

Ms. Kim Norcross: We look at it like it's a big birthday party, and we want everybody to feel like they are a part. We're not here to do any branding or any of that kind of stuff. We want to take your lead, and we just want to go with that and help support this, because we believe in America, and we feel like that this is a birthday party that we want everybody to feel like they can be a part of.

Mr. Paul Norcross: Yes, that's the anchor. As long as we're following proper ethical rules.

Ms. Kim Norcross: So anything that you have that you really want used, I don't think that we're going to have a problem with that at all. This is something that you make the calls, and we will help follow through with it.

Senator Alexander: I guess we're the brains, and they're the brawn.

Ms. Kim Norcross: That's right. Look at it like that.

Mr. Paul Norcross: The DAR knows how to raise money. Yeah.

Senator Alexander: Any other questions regarding... Tansy, go ahead.

Ms. Tanzy Wallace: Yeah, just a point of clarification. You mentioned funding that would come to the legislature.

Senator Alexander: The legislature? Yeah. There's a possibility that we will ask the legislature to see if we can approve monies for this committee, which would allow us, if we are able to get this proposal, it would allow us to do things specified under this proposal. There are things we cannot do, raise money, that kind of thing. However, there are things we could do under this, and the money that we get from the legislature could be used for these things, or... I think, as we see fit, we could partner with other groups and use that money for these kinds of activities.

Ms. Tanzy Wallace: Yeah, I was just wondering an example of how it would be. You said these things...

Senator Alexander: I'm sorry, the items enumerated on pages 27 and 28 in your report.
Representative Blackwell.

Co-chair Representative Blackwell: I just want to clarify on that point, too, with Ms. McCraw. If we get an appropriation from the legislature to this committee, within the parameters specified in the appropriation, we might be able to pass the money through to the non-profit with respect to their carrying out, let's say we wanted them to handle doing the highway markers, or we wanted them to work with the symphony, and we wanted to contribute to the cost of the symphony traveling. Is there a problem with us passing money through to them? For those purposes?

Ms. Kara McGraw: The language that's included in the report was not drafted to contemplate the relationship with the non-profit, so I would probably consider this a work in progress, and it may need to be further modified to address that. It's really set up for this committee to be doing it, but in light of the desire to work with the non-profit, it probably would need some further reworking to make that more palatable, because right now, it just talks about partnering. It doesn't provide for pass through or for grants to another entity.

Co-chair Representative Blackwell: But constitutionally or otherwise, if the legislature approved it, we could do the pass through?

Ms. Kara McGraw: It would be unusual, because the General Assembly committees are generally considered advisory, and there is a, I think it's a 1981 North Carolina Supreme Court Advisory Committee that a committee of the General Assembly is not authorized to act on its own, because the General Assembly is elected as a body. So it would be a little bit unique for it

to be a grant making organization. What might be better is for the General Assembly to give a direct grant to that non-profit, because that's the body acting as a whole.

Co-chair Representative Blackwell: Is it a problem for this committee to contract with, if it's not a grant, but to contract with an entity for the performance of services or to carry out certain function?

Ms. Kara McGraw: I think that's possible. We'd probably want to go in and tighten up the language a good bit to make that very clear. Normally, the General Assembly does sometimes do RFPs for studies. Those are often handled either through the LSO, but we would probably need to add some additional language to make that possible.

Co-chair Representative Blackwell: It seems to me that something of that sort might be helpful, if it's possible, to give us a little flexibility so that we don't have two separate groups trying to operate that maybe the non-profit might be sort of the operating arm and, as Senator Alexander so well said, that we could just be the brain.

Senator Alexander: Representative Neely.

Hon. Charles Neely: How are both South Carolina and Virginia conducting their operations? Do we know?

Senator Alexander: I'm going to turn to Dr. Kickler. Are you familiar with way they have been operating?

Dr. Kickler: I haven't studied it in great depth. I can speak a little bit on South Carolina. They put in a request for \$17 million. They have for events that would be, Grace and I looked at this the other day, I assume that would be excluding operating costs before events, they've been given \$5 million.

Hon. Charles Neely: I've heard a lot more, you've heard five. I've heard actually more than that, but they've got a real operation down there.

Dr. Kickler: As of what I saw, they have to have more because they have five full-time staffers. But that's just for money for events.

Hon. Charles Neely: Are they doing that through an external nonprofit or are they doing it through the state?

Dr. Kickler: I'm afraid to elaborate on that because I don't know enough to say.

Hon. Charles Neely: Does anyone from Cultural Resources know?

Senator Alexander: Anybody back there from Cultural Resources? You can feel free to speak into the microphone. Just state your name and who you are.

Ms. Anne Evangelista: Anne Evangelista with the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Our understanding is that is through the state with South Carolina.

Senator Alexander: And it's really important, I think, to remember that our efforts are kind of to amplify, being adjunct, I suppose, or in addition to the many things that Cultural Resources are

doing and will be doing and they have a lot of good stuff planned. And our kind of focus is a little bit more narrow. Go ahead.

Hon. Charles Neely: Follow-up question for Mr. Norcross Do you all anticipate, how are you going to set up your non-profit, what are you going to do about your governing body, are you going to bring in other historical organizations?

Mr. Paul Norcross: Yes, so the premise, the original premise is that you'd have four, quote unquote, like the security council, four permanent members as it were, somebody representing the SR, the SAR, the DAR, and the CAR, and then three kind of rotating seats, also on the executive board, which would be, it could be Cincinnati or Lafayette or one or the other, but on a rotation. And then you would have three ex-officio members, non-voting, which one from the House, one from the Senate, one from the executive branch, and then an additional seven member, ex-officio members, which would be representing, say, this couple people from this board, maybe from a historical society, maybe from other different foundations, so that you've got a really broad base of people represented. And again, the premise being that the list that you've got in this committee, the charge, up through the celebration of the Fourth of July next year, it's like this would be the mechanism to raise the funds to give you the freedom and be able to exercise and perform the different functions that need to be performed with the 10,000 or 15,000 people that we have members. And for selfish reasons, we'd like to make that 30,000 people and members, because for example, the attorney that we use and the accounting firm that I'm talking about, both of those guys are descendants from the Mayflower. And they're not members of any hereditary organization. That's like criminal. So, I mean, this is an opportunity to get people like that into the fold and get them engaged into this process. I mean, that's from a selfish standpoint. From our groups is to really ramp up the membership of younger, engaged people.

Senator Alexander: Any other questions? Do y'all kind of get the sense of Representative Blackwell, have you got something?

Co-chair Representative Blackwell: I don't mean to go too far afield, but Chuck has caused me to think. I was in the Charlotte airport back earlier this month and they had South Carolina items rolling on the screens as you walk through the terminal about the celebration that's going on down there. It was very well done. Just, yeah.

Mr. Kyle Luebke: That does not help the issue that half of Americans think Charlotte is in South Carolina and not in North Carolina.

Hon. Charles Neely: And the other half think it should be in South Carolina.

Mr. Kyle Luebke: Exactly. The only additional thing I want to add relating to the nonprofit board, even the ex-officio members, just I would like to make sure there's geographic distribution there as well. And it not just be certain people from like maybe the center of the state, but we need to ensure that it has Eastern and Western.

Mr. Paul Norcross: No, you're right. And we've had that conversation. There are people in Wilmington and there are people all across the state, like there are, what, 200 skirmishes. People should be represented from all across the state.

Senator Alexander: Very good. Well, appreciate those comments. Mr. Luker.

Mr. Jason Luker: I guess one of the questions that keeps rolling around in my head is with the cultural resources and everything they're doing with the NC250 and this committee being in connection with that, what is it, you know, as we move forward and we have a shorter time frame than I realize, and since we're looking until January next year, what is the things that we need to actually make sure we're focusing on that the cultural resources needs us to focus on? Because they have a, you know, a long list of different things they're doing, so what is, where's the holes? And how can the non-profit do that kind of work? How can we formulate that? Because I, you know, I don't want us to be stepping on the cultural resources' toes, taking energy away from the projects they're doing. Well, at the exact same time, being able to utilize, I mean, you start talking to the DAR or the SAR to say, hey, we're going to do something, we better have something in plan because that's like moving a, like you used a battalion. You got a battalion of ladies coming. You want to make sure you got it set up. So I guess that's where my real question is. With this set up, once it's kind of moved in, how do we start to facilitate it and what does that look like? What are those key aspects that we can focus on as we kind of move through the rest of this time?

Senator Alexander: I would say that the things that this group will initially focus on are those things which we have discussed and pretty much given the list of those items including the, tell me again, I'm sorry, Jeff, the foundation for, those kinds of things would be the kinds of things that we would go through the list. My sense is, and I may be wrong, is that those are probably distinctly different from the kinds of things that the cultural resources have been working on. We've had some meetings with cultural resources. They've gone over the kinds of things that they're doing in terms of books, celebrations, activities. I don't think based on, and y'all can correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't think the things that we have enumerated are in any way a conflict with what they're doing. And if anything, it just broadens the scope of the kinds of things that we're going to do.

Mr. Paul Norcross: So, good example. I was on a call the other day with 12 people from all across the state for an hour talking about putting a bench in place. So, there are people out there that are willing to work and do things, but maybe the focus should be on something more that comes from Troy's, the wish list, so he can coordinate between the two committees. And then I think it's getting the action plan out to people that want to work, have the money to do it in the time, and just give them a plan of action that's focused and unified.

Senator Alexander: As opposed to a bench, is what I think you're getting at. Yes, Representative Blackwell.

Co-Chair Representative Blackwell: And to further comment on Mr. Luker's comment, which I think is a good one, I would like to think, if Dr. Kickler doesn't mind me putting some more on his plate, that it's a little bit of a function maybe of taking what we know that the department is already planning and you've got your list here and then going over our list and comparing the two lists to see is there overlap, and if so is it appropriate because it adds something more or a greater emphasis? Or, in looking at the two, does that help identify a hole? Maybe there'll be something the department sees that we would like to do. So it's almost like maybe trying to avoid overlooking a good opportunity by having two lists and taking a comparative look at them.

Dr. Kickler: Taking the one list that I handed out in one of the committee meetings, I forget which one, a prior committee meeting, it was a bunch of us, and then was charged to distill it down to what we think might be most important. Done that, working on that, but it would be good to compare with others. And now having said that too, like one might have, for instance, since the two committees, like there could be, I don't know, teacher workshops, for instance. They might have teacher workshops. We have teacher workshops, but we're emphasizing a

different subject. But it's still the same type of event. It's just maybe signers of the Declaration of Independence and somebody else does the battles or somebody does underrepresented groups in the area or something like that.

Senator Alexander: Anything else? I'll give one example, and let's just drop down to, and for the benefit of the folks from cultural resources, we've kind of talked about highway markers and things amongst ourselves. The state already does a highway marker program. What we're hoping and what I think we would like to do is to discuss with cultural resources about the ones that they have in the hopper, so to speak. Am I speaking out of turn? And that we would like to say, okay, here are things that the committee recommends that we'd like to go ahead and try to do during the semiquincentennial. And maybe these are or are not on y'all's list, or maybe we can help find additional resources to do those additional or different resources. I think there's one of the ways that we can intersect and work together. Do you have anything else that you'd like to say on that? Dr. Kickler?

Dr. Kickler: With the help of, at least we have a list of the existing markers that commemorate some aspect of the American Revolution or the founding. And then from that, Grace and I have been compiling a list. We've had like, I mean, the earlier presentation, it's over 200 skirmishes. But the point is, is we've identified at least 46 people, 46 events and/or people that have not been commemorated. And so we're working on that to see. And then trying and looking through them to see, you know, if it's worthwhile to have a marker or a commemoration of some sort, because, yeah, you have to have like some threshold of significance.

Senator Alexander: That's an area that we will try to intersect very closely with cultural resource. That's the kind of thing I think that we're talking about, because there are things that y'all are already doing, want to do. Maybe we can focus in on some of the things that we've talked about here. I think the main thing is, if it's the consensus, that we need to move forward because our time is short, we know that our proposal does extend the period of time for this committee, because obviously if we had to end January of 2026, well, we can't do anything. So, but we want to extend that period of time. We want to at least take a stab at the pages 27, 28 with some modifications. But if y'all have the consensus that this is a direction you would like to go, nothing is set in stone yet, because we just don't have time. I wish we did have the time to wrap it up and sew it to you and give it to you, but we can't. But this is the input that you have given has been very invaluable. And if you would, if I get the consensus that we move forward, then we will do that.

Hon. Charles Neely: Looking for a motion?

Senator Alexander: Yes, please.

Hon. Charles Neely: What kind of a motion?

Senator Alexander: I think that we would just move forward along the lines of what we have discussed, continuing the road of looking into the nonprofit, utilizing them, working with them on these projects that we've talked about. And is there anything else? Also to further address the issues for the legislature that we want to build upon. That's one big long motion.

Hon. Charles Neely: I move that the committee endorse the concept advanced by Mr. Norcross and as so ably summarized by Chairman Alexander.

Senator Alexander: I like that.

Hon. Charles Neely: And so that encourages them to proceed forthwith.

Senator Alexander: Very good. Thank you. We have a motion by Representative Neely. Do we have a second to that motion? Second by Ms. Wallace. So at this point in time, any other further discussion? If not, all in favor say aye.

Committee Members: Aye

Senator Alexander: Any in line? Opposed? Likewise. Thank you. That gives us the opportunity to kind of move forward and we really appreciate that very much. All right. So now we're going to kind of rapidly continue on. But Dr. Kickler has some other things that he would like to, exciting things for you to hear about. I think starting with the logo.

Dr. Kickler: That's right. I'll talk about the logo first and I'll try to be brief yet informative about this. We needed, we thought we needed a new logo to set us apart because some people get the two committees conflated. But we are distinctive. So we used the symbol of the seal that many of, not the seal, but the logo that many, like if you look at the general staffers, they wear a certain button on their lapel or on their name tag. So took that. That was the inspiration for this. And we had like, what Grace, eight or ten different suggestions, but this is just what we chose because it has the patriotic colors to it. It makes it distinct that this is the NCGA's 250th committee. And it also has a North Carolina flag in there. And at Senator Alexander's suggestion, we tried to put some cursive writing in there as well to make it colonial. So that's what we came up with. Because I've been at different circles where people don't know or they don't understand with the NCGA 250th committee, that it exists. It's a separate committee. And I think this visually will help set us apart, yet also express that we are complimentary and we want to celebrate the 250th.

Hon. Charles Neely: And did Chairman Blackwell come up with the Carolina blue sky?

Dr. Kickler: Do you want to take credit for it? No?

Senator Alexander: He wished he had.

Co-chair Representative Blackwell: Good job. Especially having taught at NC State, but there is some red up there.

Mr. Kyle Luebke: I like this. My one, and you probably don't want to critique of it. Me, because of my like symmetry, both flags going one direction. Have you thought about moving the American flag as flying left or is there probably a flag code problem with that?

Senator Alexander: I guess the wind would be blowing the same way.

Mr. Kyle Luebke: I know, but it's just.

Dr. Kickler: We'll look into the symmetry of it. No, I am too a fan of symmetry to the extent that I've been accused of being borderline OCD. Because I adjust all the picture frames. But yeah, I'll look at that. But the main thing is I just wanted something that would make us distinct.

Senator Alexander: We'll have to take into consideration the prevailing winds.

Dr. Kickler: The next part. We've already talked about the highway marker program. So we shall go to the website information and possibly go like the non-profit route. We can have a complimentary website there as well. But we thought because where we're at right now, we try to

get something up in addition to the committee site now. Which you have a copy of it here. And you can see the minutes and stuff. Which is something we're trying. So I'll turn it over to Grace because she's been working with ISD about that.

Ms Grace Obsitnik: So like Dr. Kickler was saying, I worked with ISD. We got a, it's called a theme, so basically the overall framework of the website. Which is great. I am now coding and plugging and chugging away all of the details. Complementary to what Mr. Norcross was saying. Really a place where all events throughout North Carolina can come together. People have it all in one area. So they know what's going on not only in Raleigh or Charlotte, but all around the state as well. So kind of keeping that up to date. You all will be on it. I will eventually ask for photos, so be aware of that. But I'm hoping within a few weeks to have it publishable in that sense.

Senator Alexander: Very good. And this will also house I think the portal we've had open for people to give us comments. To have us suggestions. That is still open on the General Assembly. I'll say that for the purposes of people listening in. We do have a portal on the General Assembly website. Where people can continue to send us thoughts, ideas. You know, that kind of thing. That we may very well end up using. So that even though we have kind of a working list. But it's never, you know, any good idea is welcome. So, that would also then be on this website. Is that correct? And I'm sure we can help cross publicize some of that, some of the activities and so forth by Cultural Resources, too. Okay. What else you got there, Dr. Kickler?

Dr. Kickler: The portal on this website would make it more easily accessible, not buried in a bigger website.

Senator Alexander: It would be highlighted, I guess.

Dr. Kickler: That's right. So I will, with your permission, Senator Alexander, I'll just treat agenda item number nine, I'll just go through the list. One by one, I'll just go through the list. So I had some really interesting and encouraging conversations with some of the groups that are listed under agenda number nine. And I'll tell you a little bit about them to give you an update. This is just a discussion that's taking place based on some of the things that we mentioned earlier about the legislative proposal, and the potential to have a nonprofit. But anyway, met with the North Carolina Symphony a couple times. They are really interested in holding a, and correct me if wrong when they're on the conversation, and a big concert to celebrate July 4th. And in addition to that big concert, they would be willing to send out smaller concerts like a quintet or a quartet to work with, to go into different parts of the state. With the emphasis, I emphasize to them maybe, for instance, just throwing out a number here. If there are 20 smaller concerts, quintets working with the local high school group or chorus or something, maybe eight or ten of them could be in the western part of the state. Going back to awareness, building morale, awareness of the community, and then also maybe increasing tourism dollars to that community as well. And also, so working on getting the specifics of that together. It is, we have a potentially a willing partner it's just all these other things have to be figured out before they are approached with this. That's the idea. And then also, in addition to the symphony, there can be some maybe potentially a prime time, let's just say, artist who is from North Carolina to join the symphony in that occasion. So the idea with the big concert with the symphony. I'll try to, again, be informative but yet be brief, is to have like a narrative, somebody talking, and then you have like period songs. But it's not just going to be, you know, fife and drum. You know, Revolutionary War, campfire songs or something like that. It's also going to be a celebration of North Carolina. And if artists can be there, that's fine. Or you can get the symphony to play cover songs of artists and just don't want it to be a country concert or a jazz concert or a folk or bluegrass concert. But just a mixture of all the genres that have come out of North Carolina which has produced some big

time musicians. And then, but we just don't want that to be a one time event. Everybody feels good about it. And then they go home and they forget about it. Talked to UNC TV. They are very interested in filming this. So it can be for posterity's sake. Not only show on July 4th. But it can be shown Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Halifax Day. You know, just something that coincides with the founding of North Carolina and the founding of the U.S. And we'll learn more next week when we communicate with them again. But symphony is very interested. UNC TV is very interested. On May 21st, if you are in town, the American Battlefield Trust is going to celebrate the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. But it's going to be here in Raleigh. Mr. Luebke. So it will be here in Raleigh, but it will be at the Nature Research Center. In the morning there will be a breakfast just for legislators. And then in the evening from 6:00 to 8:00 PM there will be a screening. Darlene Newman who a lot of her shows, documentaries appear on PBS. It's going to be a screening of her tour of the North Carolina Revolutionary Battlefield. And then there will be food there as well. But that's the Nature Research Center from 6:00 to 8:00 PM on May 21st. They couldn't get the 20th. So we'll get as close as we can to it. And which we will get to here in a minute. We talked with the State Employees Credit Union who I think will be a good potential partner in this. We just have to get these things that we discussed earlier worked out. They're very enthusiastic about the educational component to some of the ideas. The ideas that we had like the educational parts of it. But really they want to celebrate the 250th too. As I mentioned earlier in previous conversation, I've been having conversations with various heritage preservation and geological groups like Sons of Revolution, Sons of American Revolution. Different museums. Local museums as well. They could be partners like the High Point Museum for instance. The Charlotte Museum. And that gives a segue for you Mr. Luker to tell us about what you guys are doing at the museum with the 250th and the Mecklenburg.

Mr. Luker: We're actually beginning the 250th celebration next month, with the 250th of the Meck Dec. We're having an exhibit on the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, that will run through the year. That goes through all the ins and outs of the Meck Dec. The Meck Resolves. It's connection to the rest of the state. The other resolves that Dr. Kickler was talking about. And we're kicking off that event on May the 22nd is the grand opening of the exhibit. So everyone's invited to come to that. Senator Alexander said that we can send something out with an invitation for that. The big culmination though is going to come in April of 2026 when we're going to open up an exhibit on the American Revolution. This is an interactive exhibit. We're teaming up with an organization called Histovary and it's going to be a three gallery exhibit. It's going to take over the entire first floor of the Charlotte Museum. And you will come in, you will be handed a laptop, a little iPad kind of thing called a Histopad. And as you work your way through the gallery, you go up to the different signs or the different imagery and put up the Histopad and the image comes alive. And it becomes a 360 experience at each location. And it goes from the very beginning of the war all the way through the very end of the war. And if we get the funding that we're looking for, we're going to be able to do one exhibit that's dedicated to the Southern Campaign, and that exhibit will highlight the importance of the Carolinas, most notably North Carolina's involvement of the war, how the war was actually won here in the Carolinas. And that exhibit, that portion of the exhibit will last for the duration of the 250th anniversary for the state. The goal is to make the museum have a center point for the celebration of North Carolina's 250th throughout its term, through an exhibit. As far as I know this is the only museum that's trying to do something like this throughout the entire state, to have kind of a port of reference that anybody can come to, learn about the war, learn about its connection to the state, in a very interactive and engaging way.

Senator Alexander: Very good. Dr. Kickler, you wanted to say something?

Dr. Kickler: That if there are any questions I'd be happy to answer them, I know I've rushed and went through that fairly quickly. But in sum, we're having some great conversations. And I'm

learning that there are some partners who are seemingly ready to go and partner, but we just have to work through some of this.

Senator Alexander: Need to put in the mechanism to do it.

Dr. Kickler: The vehicle that we can use.

Senator Alexander: Any questions for Dr. Kickler? Representative Blackwell.

Co-Chair Representative Blackwell: A couple of comments. One on what Mr. Luker was telling. I mean, that just sounds fantastic. I'm sitting here thinking there's so many people that are not going to get to Charlotte to see that. And I wouldn't want to try to steal your thunder but I wonder how much putting on something like that costs, and whether what you've got could be duplicated and moved to different locations around the state, not necessarily close to Charlotte. so that we're attracting people that you might want to attract. But it seems to me like you've already done all this work, that we could just sort of steal some of those good ideas and maybe duplicate them. Maybe that's something we could persuade our colleagues to you know, if that costs \$500,000 to get a second version of it and to have a traveling show. Maybe we will try.

Mr. Luker: It is an expensive exhibit. The base operation is going to be \$350,000, and to do the addition that is dedicated to the Southern campaign, is any additional \$650,000. But, that's supposed to last for the duration of the 250th. As to it being worked into throughout the state, that is very plausible, since a lot of it is technology based. The only thing we wouldn't be able to do is move any of the objects connected with it--we are looking to being in rifles, we have a sword that was actually used during the war, things of that nature would have to stay in the museum for climate control situations. But there are abilities to make augmentations for it to be used throughout the state.

Co-Chair Representative Blackwell: I think that might be something well worth looking into. The other thing I wanted to say, because I tend to think of music as such a draw for people. doesn't the North Carolina Symphony travel around the state already to put on concerts? And it may be that they are saying they will do one big one and send out these quintets, but as they travel in their normal group, and maybe this has already been discussed, it seems like at a minimum we could perhaps in the 12 months leading up to or in 2026, that in their programming they could at least include something related to that and the director or somebody could say this is the 250th celebration of the nation and in honor of that we are including in our program this...

Senator Alexander: Representative Blackwell that is the kind of thing we can ask Troy and Grace to do.

Co-Chair Representative Blackwell: And the other thing is the Charlotte Symphony and the Western Piedmont Symphony, we could go to those symphonies and ask them to do comparable things.

Mr. Kyle Luebke: I was actually going to say that, because people like to go to big symphony events. So if you could do what the North Carolina symphony is doing and mimic it, or steal it like you just said.

Dr. Kickler: Colleges have lots of different opportunities. In our conversation with the North Carolina Symphony, they do have plans all across the state to take a patriotic show on the road or at least incorporate it into their program. But what we are talking about here is sort of the mini version of the big event that UNC TV has expressed interest in filming. UNC TV did say they

would like it to be in a venue in which they can show images. Hearing sound that is one of the human senses, and also having sight, you know people feeling emotional. So yes, Representative Blackwell they already do have plans for across the state and their are plans to do so next year. And we've been trying to get events in certain parts, like the Western part, and they like the idea of having events in the Western part of the state. Not exclusively, of course.

Senator Alexander: Why don't we do this, I think that wraps up your report. I think it would probably be good at this time to ask cultural resources, if you would be willing, to come on up to the podium, give an update, and discuss things. Also any remarks you might have heard that you would like to talk about or that we have talked about. I will also ask the committee members to be thinking about anything you want this committee to know about, Jason has already given some really good information, but you're working with 250th groups I'm sure, or you've heard some things, let me know or you can let the rest of the committee know. So go ahead and introduce yourself and tell us your position for the record because this is being broadcast live.

Ms. Anne Evangelista: Thank you. Anne Evangelista with the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, thank you so much. A few things I'd like to share with everybody. To go along with your fun fact, Mr. Chair—next Saturday is also the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Lexington and Concord. So, fun fact for the committee to know. This weekend at Historic Halifax State Historic Site, we are having Halifax Resolves Days. This weekend is the 249th—so we're getting close! If anyone's in the area, please feel free to check that out. It is tomorrow and Saturday. Also, the Battle of Alamance—this is their 254th anniversary. The Alamance Battleground Historic Site is having their reenactment on May 17th. We are also, and I have sent out the press release for this, we are in the department joining the effort for "Two Lights for Tomorrow." This is a nationwide effort to recognize the ride of Paul Revere in a fun way. That is all happening on April 18th nationwide. Our contribution is that there will be two lights displayed at the State Capitol, and we have reached out to local organizations as well to see if they would like to join. There is actually a toolkit on our website for that event. Recently, we have also published a couple of new videos. The first is a video listening to a historic costumer at Tryon Palace State Historic Site talking about Revolutionary Era clothing and interpreters at Tryon Palace. We've also launched the America 250 promo video on our website, so please feel free to check that out—it's very exciting! We are continuing work you heard about last month regarding the children's books. We are expecting that *Freedom's How*, which includes the story of the Regulators and the Battle of Alamance, to be coming out in May. We're also continuing work on the *Overmountain Men* book, which is set to come out in September. So we will continue to keep you updated on those. We did also announce at the end of March the awards for the second round of grants for counties. So now in March we added 58 counties to our grant program. So between the two rounds we have awarded \$2.1 million to 74 counties, so it's very exciting. There was a lot more requests out there, but they've done a great job, and we are excited to see what the counties will do with those grants. And then just the last plug is our website which is America250.nc.gov. We have our newsletter so if you ever want to hear about these exciting programs they are there. They is also our calendar of events on the main page of that website as well. But happy to share any more information with anyone, and excited to continue to work with Dr. Kickler and the committee, and thank you for letting me update.

Senator Alexander: Thank you Anne. We're thrilled about the many things that you are undertaking. Are there any questions for Anne or cultural resources?

Mr. Kyle Luebke: This is just a comment, whoever is doing your social media is doing a fantastic job, I at least have it come up two times a day for me, and I try to like all of them, just to get the algorithm going, but they are doing a really good job with that.

Ms. Anne Evangelista: I will let them know, thank you.

Senator Alexander: Anything else from the public? Who would like to make a public comment? Do we have anyone else signed up? Okay, if not, why don't we just see if any of the committee members have anything to report? Let me see what else I have left off. Let me say this, we've had a long meeting today but it has been very productive and this is really important because we have been a little bit behind the eight ball, but I think Representative Blackwell and I both understand that when this committee was formed we didn't have a whole lot of time, but we have been able to make some pretty big strides and just by your agreement and consensus to move forward today to try to work with the various groups that we've talked about today and allow us to kind of continue along that, we've got a logo, we have many good things that we have done. I want to express my appreciation to the members of the committee because y'all stuck with it and we'll continue to stick with it I know because I think we've got some exciting days ahead, some really exciting things planned and we sort of have to slog through some of the stuff earlier on. I also want to thank our our speakers today, Paul and Kim Norcross and then Patrick Daly, and again I think if you'd like Patrick to autograph your book I'm sure he would do that. You all did excellent presentations and we are most grateful for that.

Dr. Kickler: One last thing, Grace or I will be sending you an email to try to see when you're available for the next committee meeting and I know some of you travel quite far but I'm hoping we can have one in May. He said don't commit him and I will not but if it works out for him, Chief Justice Paul Newby wants to talk about the Meck Dec. If it works out he will be part of the next meeting.

Senator Alexander: Housekeeping, I think if you I guess they get mileage or something is that right, except for the members of the committee that will do that, and Representative Blackwell do you have anything else?

Co-Chair Representative Blackwell: No, I think you've said it well. We really appreciate the committee members attendance and I think we're getting started in a much more meaningful way right now.

Senator Alexander: Very good. Thank you so much for all of your being here today and with that we'll close the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting stands adjourned at 3:37 PM.

Presiding

Grace Obsitnik, Committee Clerk