

STATE OF FLORIDA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 24-267

(America's Semiquincentennial Celebration in Florida)

WHEREAS, on July 4, 2026, the United States of America will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of our great nation; and

WHEREAS, on July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress officially adopted the Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed America's independence from Great Britain and King George III, an act that profoundly changed not only the course of America's history, but the history of the world; and

WHEREAS, the Declaration of Independence established principles that guide the United States to this day, to wit, that governments derive their power from the consent of the governed and that "[w]e hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"; and

WHEREAS, the southernmost land battles of the Revolutionary War were fought at the Battle of Thomas Creek on May 17, 1777, near present-day Callahan, Florida, in Nassau County, and at the Battle of Alligator Creek Bridge on June 30, 1778, near the town of Crawford, Florida, in Nassau County; and

WHEREAS, the last naval battle of the American Revolution was fought off of Cape Canaveral near present-day Brevard County on March 10, 1783, when the American ships Alliance and Duc de Luauzun were engaged by British ships HMS Sybil, HMS Alarm, and HMS Tobago resulting in an American victory; and

WHEREAS, Florida became a U.S. Territory in 1821 and was admitted to the Union on March 3, 1845, as the 27th state; and

WHEREAS, there are 13 Revolutionary War veterans known to be buried in Florida; and

WHEREAS, the opening sections of the Florida Constitution enshrine the dual principles of self-government and inalienable rights expressed by the Declaration of Independence; and

WHEREAS, the State of Florida, through the Florida Department of State's Division of Historical Resources, protects, preserves, and shares our Revolutionary War heritage through our museums, conservation lab, collections facility, archaeology programs, master site file, and historical marker program; and

WHEREAS, America's 250th anniversary will be a time for celebrating our nation's founding and our historic rise as the most powerful and influential nation on earth; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Public Law 114-196, the United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016, Congress established the United States Semiquincentennial Commission to "provide for the observance and commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States through local, state, national and international activities planned, encouraged, developed and coordinated by a national commission representative of appropriate public and private authorities and organizations"; and

WHEREAS, the Commission envisions a commemoration that will inspire patriotism, educate Americans about our first principles as laid out in the Declaration of Independence and the federal Constitution, spark civic engagement and volunteerism, honor our active duty military and veterans for their national service and sacrifice, generate grassroots celebration planning at the local level, increase tourism, and make a lasting impact for generations of Americans to come; and

WHEREAS, the State of Florida can honor our past and the foundational American values handed down by the Founding Fathers by joining this nationwide celebration of America's 250th anniversary; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to section 20.10(2), Florida Statutes, the Secretary of State, as the head of the Florida Department of State, oversees the Division of Historical Resources and Division of Arts and Culture; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to section 267.031, Florida Statutes, the Legislature provides the Division of Historical Resources the responsibility to "advise and assist, as appropriate, federal and state agencies and local governments in carrying out their historic preservation responsibilities and programs." The Division of Historical Resources is also required to "provide public information, education, and technical assistance relating to historic preservation programs" and "take such other actions necessary or appropriate to locate, acquire, protect, preserve, operate, interpret, and promote the location, acquisition, protection, preservation, operation, and interpretation of historic resources to foster an appreciation of Florida history and culture"; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to section 267.031, Florida Statutes, the Legislature provides the Division of Historical Resources the authority to "make and enter into all contracts and agreements with other agencies, organizations, associations, corporations and individuals, or federal agencies as it may determine are necessary, expedient, or incidental to the performance of its duties or the execution of its powers under this chapter"; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to section 265.2840, Florida Statutes, the Legislature provides the Secretary of State the authority as the Chief Arts and Culture Officer of the State of Florida to be assisted by the Division of Arts and Culture in performance of the powers and duties set forth therein. The Division of Arts and Culture is authorized to "sponsor performances and exhibits;

promote and encourage the study and appreciation of arts and culture; and collect, publish, and print pamphlets, papers, newsletters, and other materials related to arts and cultural programs available throughout the state.” The Division of Arts and culture is authorized to “conduct and support cultural programs and cultural exchanges by coordinating with the appropriate state agencies and other organizations”; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to section 265.8021, Florida Statutes, the Legislature provides the Division of Arts and Culture the responsibility to operate the Major John Leroy Haynes Florida Veterans’ History Program “to collect and preserve the stories and experiences of Florida’s veterans and the State of Florida’s military contributions throughout the nation’s history.”

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RON DESANTIS, as Governor of Florida, pursuant to my solemn constitutional duty to take care that the laws be faithfully executed, and pursuant to the Constitution and laws of the State of Florida, do hereby promulgate the following Executive Order, to take immediate effect:

Section 1. The Secretary of State pursuant to the authority granted by the Legislature as set forth above shall cooperate with the United States Semiquincentennial Commission created by Public Law 114-196, other national and state organizations engaged in commemoration and celebration of the United States semiquincentennial, and other national, regional, state, and local public and private organizations having compatible purposes and, to the extent appropriate, encourage various state agencies and organizations to work cooperatively to promote the semiquincentennial.

Section 2. The Division of Historical Resources and Division of Arts and Culture shall, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State, develop, encourage, and execute a celebration of

the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Revolutionary War, and founding of the United States of America through civic cultural and historical education and programming.

Section 3. The Division of Historical Resources and Division of Arts and Culture shall, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State, promote and encourage as part of its exhibits, electronic media, printed products, scholarship, symposia, and celebratory and commemorative events all the following:

(1) Civic, cultural, and historical education facilitating public understanding of the principles of the Declaration of Independence, the origin and meaning of inalienable rights, Americans' triumph in the Revolutionary War, the meaning of "E Pluribus Unum" ("From many, one"), and America's "Charters of Freedom" (the Declaration of Independence, state constitutions, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights).

(2) Awareness of the necessity of virtue in preserving self-government.

(3) Honoring of veterans of all generations who have served and sacrificed to preserve freedom in America and around the world.

Section 4. A Semiquincentennial Advisory Commission is hereby created to advise and make recommendations to the Governor regarding Florida's commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the United States of America. Members of the Advisory Commission shall not receive compensation for fulfilling their duties as a member. The Advisory Commission shall consist of the Lieutenant Governor and four members appointed by the Governor. The Lieutenant

Governor shall serve as Chair and act as the State's liaison to the United States Semiquincentennial Commission.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed, at Tallahassee, on this 6th day of December 2024.





RON DESANTIS, GOVERNOR

ATTEST:



SECRETARY OF STATE

FILED
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
TALLAHASSEE, FL