



**STATE OF TENNESSEE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT**  
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**MARK EZELL**  
COMMISSIONER

**BILL LEE**  
GOVERNOR

December 21, 2023

Tennessee Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial  
Via Email

Dear Commission Members,

The Department of Tourist Development respectfully submits this report in accordance with Public Chapter 384, passed in 2019, relative to the Tennessee Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial Commission's accomplishments in 2023.

In 2023, the Tennessee 250th Commission held a productive set of planning sessions to meet the goals and mandates of Public Chapter 384. We focused our activities on the Commission's two overriding responsibilities:

- Plan, coordinate, and implement a program to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States in the year 2026, specifically highlighting the role of Tennessee and Tennesseans in and the events succeeding the historical event; and
- Coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies on infrastructural improvements and projects to welcome regional, national, and international tourists. To improve the Commission's visibility and communications, we established a preliminary program website, [tn250.com](http://tn250.com).

In planning for the upcoming commemoration, members of the Tennessee 250th Commission met in May in a budget planning session. Commissioners discussed recommendations from the 2021 public input meetings as follows:

- Statewide focus on Tennesseans and Tennessee events that have shaped American democracy from the Revolutionary era to the present;
- Tennessee 250th Trail with interpretive markers;
- Educational programs, workshops, and educator materials.
- Robust website and social media tools; and
- Adequate state funding, staffing, and a grant program.

While the recommendations for state involvement covered an extensive range, most often, the public requested:

- Commission staff be available and located at the Department;
- Restoration projects necessary for National Register-listed properties and state-owned historic properties and/or public sites or museums;
- Funding for a trail system;
- Need for comprehensive databases of cemeteries where Tennessee patriots are buried and assessment of those cemeteries that need restoration and/or repair;

- Creation of a Tennessee 250th Passport that residents and visitors can take to places and events across Tennessee and have the passport stamped;
- Funding for digitizing primary sources and under-utilized archival collections so students, teachers, and researchers could better access invaluable documents;
- And funding to restore valuable community objects such as the Liberty Bell replica from Memphis' bicentennial celebrations.

Budget planning reviewed the public recommendations to inform the budget request. A budget was compiled and then approved at the August Commission meeting. This budget request was subsequently submitted to the administration for review. The Commission remains ready to coordinate and implement a program once funding is received.

In coordinating nationally, a Tennessee delegation was asked to participate at the *Common Cause for All* meeting in Colonial Williamsburg in March. This meeting, hosted by the Virginia 250 Commission, was a collaborative discussion for the America 250 commemoration in 2026. The following were in attendance from Tennessee: Commission members Dr. Warren Dockter and Chairman Ashley Howell; Tourism representative Andi Grindley; National Civil Rights Museum representative Noelle Trent; and Sycamore Shoals State Park manager Jennifer Bauer. The Commission is also involved with regular updates and discussions with the America 250 Commission and a roundtable of the states on America 250 that is convened by the American Association of State and Local History.

Commission member Dr. Carroll Van West gave the remarks at the September Gathering event at Sycamore Shoals State park. Dr. David Chaffin and Dr. Warren Dockter also participated and Chairman Howell was in attendance to commemorate the Overmountain Men at Sycamore Shoals prior to the Battle of King's Mountain in 1780. In October, Commission member West gave the 250 address to the Colonial Dames of Tennessee in Nashville. Commissioner Robinson represented the Tennessee Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) with an installation of an America 250 marker at Andrew Jackson's Hermitage. Chairman Howell represented the Commission at the event. Chairman Howell also presented on America 250 planning at the Jethro Sumner Chapter of the DAR, the James Robertson Chapter of the DAR, and the Humphreys County Historical Society.

The Commission will continue to build on its momentum in 2024 and look toward necessary funding requests as more concrete plans and activities are developed.

Sincerely,



Mark Ezell, Commissioner

cc: The Honorable Bill Lee, Governor  
 The Honorable Randy McNally, Lt. Governor & Speaker of the Senate  
 The Honorable Cameron Sexton, Speaker of the House  
 Honorable Members, Tennessee General Assembly  
 Ashley Howell, Chairman, Tennessee Commission on the United States  
 Semiquincentennial  
 Commission Members, Tennessee Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial