

**Message on the 406th Anniversary of the First Representative Legislative Assembly in America**

*July 30, 2025*

Four-hundred-and-six years ago, on a sweltering Virginia day, English settlers gathered in a modest wooden church in Jamestown to form the first representative assembly in the New World. This historic moment gave birth to the oldest continuous lawmaking body in the Western Hemisphere and laid the foundation for the most successful attempt at self-government in all of human history.

Seeking prosperity and opportunity in a new land, these early Virginians came together not as subjects of a foreign crown, but as an independent people determined to govern their own affairs. Against nearly insurmountable odds, they enacted laws to glorify God, promote the common good, and answer to the will of the people, addressing matters of taxation, agriculture, and trade with Native tribes. What began humbly in Jamestown has flourished through the ages into a rich legacy of self-government that continues to define the American spirit. As John Adams wrote before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, "We all look up to Virginia for examples."

From town halls to statehouses to Congress and the presidency, the ideals that animated that first assembly—self-determination, representation, popular accountability, and devotion to the common good—still course through our customs and inspire our way of life.

As we stand on the cusp of our 250th year as an independent nation, we pause now to honor the enduring principles of liberty and independence that were born in Virginia, the cradle of American democracy. These principles have guided our country for more than two centuries and will continue to light our way for generations to come.

Today we reaffirm that self-government and hard-fought freedom are our prized inheritance. America is not ruled by tyrants or distant powers; it is governed by a free, strong, and independent citizenry. As the legacy of Jamestown lives on through the Virginia House of Delegates and in the heart of every American citizen, we pay tribute to the heroic tenacity, bravery, and vision of the first settlers. Through their sacrifice, 406 years later, our Nation now stands taller, prouder, mightier, and greater than ever before: united, free, and governed only by the will of our people as one glorious Nation under God.

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