

1 **RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY**
2 **(SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL) OF THE UNITED STATES OF**
3 **AMERICA**

4 2020 GENERAL SESSION

5 STATE OF UTAH

6
7 **LONG TITLE**

8 **General Description:**

9 This concurrent resolution recognizes and commemorates the 250th anniversary, or
10 semiquincennial, of the United States of America.

11 **Highlighted Provisions:**

12 This resolution:

- 13 ▶ recognizes the foundational, historical, and political significance of the signing of
14 the Declaration of Independence by the Second Continental Congress on July 4,
15 1776; and
16 ▶ requests that the Governor organize a commission to plan, encourage, develop, and
17 coordinate a statewide effort commemorating and celebrating the 250th anniversary
18 of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

19 **Special Clauses:**

20 None

21
22 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

23 WHEREAS, the United States Declaration of Independence from Great Britain was
24 adopted by the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776; and

25 WHEREAS, the Declaration of Independence was drafted by a committee of five
26 representatives that included John Adams, a leader in the push for independence, and Thomas
27 Jefferson, who did most of the original drafting of the document; and

28 WHEREAS, the purpose of the Declaration of Independence was to announce formally
29 that the 13 American colonies were at war with the Kingdom of Great Britain and would
30 henceforth regard themselves as 13 independent, sovereign states, no longer subject to British
31 rule; and

32 WHEREAS, the Declaration of Independence justified the independence of the United
33 States by listing the colonial grievances against King George III and asserting certain natural
34 and legal rights, including the right of revolution; and

35 WHEREAS, John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail after the Declaration of
36 Independence's signing that he believed that Independence Day "will be celebrated, by
37 succeeding Generations as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated as the
38 Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized
39 with Pomp and Parade, with shows, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations
40 from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more"; and

41 WHEREAS, after ratifying the text on July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress
42 issued the Declaration of Independence in several forms, sending a copy to each colony, King
43 George III of England, and General George Washington and ordering an official copy, which
44 was eventually placed on display at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. in February of
45 1924; and

46 WHEREAS, one of the original copies of the Declaration of Independence was
47 displayed in the Utah State Capitol in February and March of 2002, as a centerpiece to the
48 Cultural Olympiad of the 2002 Utah Winter Olympics, and viewed by over 40,000 people; and

49 WHEREAS, the Declaration of Independence contained principles that are of major
50 significance in the national heritage of the United States, including individual liberty,
51 representative government, and the attainment of equal and inalienable rights; and

52 WHEREAS, perhaps the most memorable sentence in the Declaration of Independence,
53 a sentence that was especially significant to President Abraham Lincoln during the American
54 Civil War, states: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that
55 they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life,
56 Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"; and

57 WHEREAS, President Lincoln considered the Declaration of Independence to be the
58 foundation of his political philosophy, calling it "a rebuke and stumbling block to tyranny and
59 oppression," and explained that the Declaration of Independence is a statement of principles
60 through which the United States Constitution should be interpreted; and

61 WHEREAS, the Declaration of Independence inspired many similar documents in other
62 countries, including the Declaration of Flanders, issued during the Brabant Revolution in what

63 is modern-day Belgium, and documents issued during other independence movements in
64 Europe, Latin America, Africa, and New Zealand; and

65 WHEREAS, the lands that would become Utah were the homelands of Native
66 American tribes, including the Utes, Shoshone, Paiute, Goshutes, and Diné at the time of the
67 signing of the Declaration of Independence; and

68 WHEREAS, in the same year the Declaration of Independence was signed, the Spanish
69 territory of New Spain sent two Franciscan priests, Atanasio Domínguez and Silvestre Vélez de
70 Escalante, to find an overland route from Santa Fe to central California, the two priests thereby
71 becoming the first documented European explorers to travel through Utah; and

72 WHEREAS, all Utah citizens benefit from the principles espoused within the
73 Declaration of Independence, as well as the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights,
74 and studies have found Utah is one of the most patriotic states in the nation; and

75 WHEREAS, the Utah Territory's first governor, Brigham Young, stated regarding the
76 Declaration: "We as a people have more reason to respect, honor, love and cherish the
77 Government of the United States, and her Constitution and free institutions than any other
78 people upon the face of the earth"; and

79 WHEREAS, Public Law 114-196, passed by the 114th United States Congress and
80 signed by the President on July 22, 2016, establishes the United States Semiquincentennial
81 Commission and encourages similar state and local efforts to coordinate with the national
82 effort:

83 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
84 Governor concurring therein, recognizes the foundational, historical, and political significance
85 of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and requests that the Governor organize a
86 commission to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of
87 Independence on July 4, 2026, to be staffed and administered by the Department of Heritage
88 and Arts.

89 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall be inclusive and composed
90 of members with an interest in the celebration, expertise in related fields, and who represent
91 broad demographic and geographic diversity.