RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY
(SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL) OF THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA

2020 GENERAL SESSION
STATE OF UTAH

LONG TITLE

General Description:
This concurrent resolution recognizes and commemorates the 250th anniversary, or
semiquincentennial, of the United States of America.

Highlighted Provisions:
This resolution:

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

Special Clauses:
None

Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:
WHEREAS, the United States Declaration of Independence from Great Britain was
adopted by the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776; and
WHEREAS, the Declaration of Independence was drafted by a committee of five
representatives that included John Adams, a leader in the push for independence, and Thomas
Jefferson, who did most of the original drafting of the document; and
WHEREAS, the purpose of the Declaration of Independence was to announce formally
that the 13 American colonies were at war with the Kingdom of Great Britain and would
henceforth regard themselves as 13 independent, sovereign states, no longer subject to British
rule; and
WHEREAS, the Declaration of Independence justified the independence of the United States by listing the colonial grievances against King George III and asserting certain natural and legal rights, including the right of revolution; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, the Declaration of Independence inspired many similar documents in other countries, including the Declaration of Flanders, issued during the Brabant Revolution in what
is modern-day Belgium, and documents issued during other independence movements in Europe, Latin America, Africa, and New Zealand; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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