

THE CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.
The Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.



USA
250

orange county

America is the perfect idea;
the United States of America
is a work in progress

A Historic Milestone

July 4, 2026, will mark the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the birth of the United States, the cornerstone of freedom and self-government.

“We 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.”



History of Celebrations

On July 4, 1826, President John Quincy Adams celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in the nation's Capitol, unaware that its author, Thomas Jefferson, had died early in the afternoon at his home in Virginia and that his father, John Adams, would die hours later at his home in Massachusetts.

The President recorded his thoughts that “on that day while every heart was bounding with joy... amid the blessings of freedom and independence... the hand that penned the ever-memorable Declaration, and the voice that sustained it in debate... were called before the Judge of All.”



Thomas Jefferson



John Adams



J. Quincy Adams



President U. S. Grant (1876)

“A proclamation inviting the people of the United States to offer “devout thanksgiving to Almighty God for the blessings which have been bestowed upon us as a nation during the century of our existence, and humbly to invoke a continuance of His favor and of His protection.”



President Calvin Coolidge (1926)

“There is something beyond the establishment of a new nation, great as that event would be, in the Declaration of Independence which has ever since caused it to be regarded as one of the great charters that not only was to liberate America but was everywhere to ennoble humanity.”



President Gerald Ford (1976)

“It is good to know that in our own lifetime we have taken part in the growth of freedom and in the expansion of equality which began here [Independence Hall] so long ago...Each generation of Americans, indeed all of humanity, must strive to achieve the aspirations of the Declaration anew.”

Why We Celebrate

Our nation is currently experiencing deep divisions and declines in civic literacy, civil public discourse, and civic engagement.

- ✦ A majority of Americans in only one state can pass the citizenship test required of all immigrants applying for U.S. citizenship.
- ✦ Three fourths of Americans believe incivility has risen to crisis levels, and even more believe incivility in government is preventing action on important issues.
- ✦ Public confidence in government is near historic lows, and eighty percent of Americans have “far too little” or “too little” confidence in each other.

The 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address these issues.

By learning from our past and each other, reflecting on our founding principles and shared heritage, celebrating our achievements, and looking to the future, we can collectively work towards a more perfect union.

“We cannot learn from each other until we stop shouting at each other – until we speak quietly enough so that our words can be heard as well as our voices.”

- Richard Nixon



“Knowledge will forever govern ignorance and a people who mean to be their own Governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.”

- James Madison



Mission Statement

To engage the citizens and residents of Orange County in commemorating and celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the birth of the United States by:

- ✦ **Exploring** the history and fundamental principles underlying our constitutional government.
- ✦ **Advancing** the historical ideals and aspirations embodied in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.
- ✦ **Inspiring** the American spirit through recognition of our shared heritage, common rights and responsibilities, and respect for each other.
- ✦ **Equipping** our citizens and residents to engage in the civic life of their community without regard to ethnicity, national origin, religion, or political affiliation.
- ✦ **Reflecting** on the origin of Orange County, its history as an important part of the history of California, and its contributions to the development of the United States.
- ✦ **Celebrating** with our friends, families, local governments, and organizations to listen to and learn from our history and each other to make a lasting impact for generations to come.

“Civility is not a sign of weakness...let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us.”

- John F. Kennedy

Reflecting on Our Past, Investing in Our Future

USA250-OC is a two-year, non-partisan, non-sectarian initiative to engage and bring together a wide array of educational, business, labor, local government, civic, faith, ethnic, arts, media organizations, and institutions. Each group will make its unique contribution to the education and edification of the people of Orange County.

All efforts are dedicated to the purpose of commemorating and

celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the birth of the United States, and its founding principles.

We focus on the structure of government embodied in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, their enduring impact, and the historic role of the people of Orange County in the history and development of the United States.



Chairman, Orange County Board of Supervisors

Honorary Chairman

The Honorable Donald P. Wagner

"USA250-OC provides the perfect opportunity for the people of Orange County to come together to reflect on the history of our country and the principles on which it was founded, to share our common rights and responsibilities as Americans, and to advance the ideals and aspirations embodied in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights."



Vice Chairman, Orange County Board of Supervisors

Honorary Co-Chairs

The Honorable Doug Chaffee

"As we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, we reflect on our nation's past and focus on what we hope to accomplish in the future. USA250-OC honors our nation's ideals and offers opportunities for all Orange County residents to celebrate this historic milestone."



The Honorable Katrina Foley

Orange County Supervisor,
Fifth District



The Honorable Vicente Sarmiento

Orange County Supervisor,
Second District

Community Partners

Endorsement of the goals of USA250-OC by community leaders and institutions throughout Orange County is important to its success.

Leaders in the arts, education, business, labor, civic and faith-based organizations, cultural entities, local government, the media, and other segments of

the community can encourage their colleagues and sister organizations to engage in activities consistent with their own on-going business or activities while commemorating the founding of the United States, its underlying principles, our common rights and responsibilities, and Orange County's historical role.



Jeff Ball

President & CEO,
Orange County Business Council

“With a focus on Economic Development for Orange County, OCBC is proud to support and promote USA250-OC, recognizing the value to our businesses and workforce in remembering our founding principles. Our businesses and non-profits, along with their leaders, play an important role in promoting civic literacy, civility, and civic engagement.

This celebration of the 250th anniversary of our country's birth is a valuable opportunity to reinforce those values in pursuit of a more perfect union.”

Kris Murray

Executive Director, Association
of California Cities - Orange County

“The 250th birthday of the United States is the perfect opportunity for the cities of Orange County to encourage their citizens and residents to reflect on our shared rights and responsibilities, our nation's founding principles, and the continued journey to our more perfect union.”

Richard Stein

President & CEO,
Arts Orange County

“The arts, in its vast array of forms, can bring to life the incredible story of our nation's founding. Through music, dance, visual arts, and theater, they will be important contributions to the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the United States.”

Charlie Zhang

Founder,
Orange County Music and Dance.

“Whether natural-born citizens, citizens by choice, or visitors in the United States, we all enjoy the self-evident truths asserted in the Declaration of Independence - that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and that government rests on the consent of the governed. On this 250th anniversary, we should all reflect on and celebrate these principles.”





USA250-OC Is For Everyone

Orange County is made up of 3.2 million unique people from a wide array of different cultures, races, religion, and points of view. We can learn about our country's history and each other as we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the birth of the United States. We can unite, without uniformity, as we reflect on our past and prepare for the future as we continue on the journey toward a "more perfect union."

In 1776, as the thirteen North American colonies were declaring independence from Great Britain, the Spanish were establishing Mission San

Juan Capistrano in what was to become Orange County, California. Stories of people on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts during that historic time and the 250 years that followed were both inspiring and troublesome, represented achievements and struggles, and, in each case, an opportunity to learn and to share what it means to be an American.

There are innumerable opportunities for Orange Countians of all ages and backgrounds to participate in USA250-OC, creating their own projects and finding dozens of ideas and resources on USA250OC.org.

Just a few of these ideas include:

- ✦ Planting a Liberty Tree
- ✦ Composing a patriotic poem or song
- ✦ Organizing a neighborhood picnic and talk about USA250-OC
- ✦ Joining USA250-OC's "Did you know" Campaign.
- ✦ Sponsoring student art, speech or poster contests
- ✦ Offering incentives in the workplace to complete short, online courses on the Constitution
- ✦ Reading the Declaration of Independence as a family
- ✦ Spending ten minutes a day studying our Founding documents
- ✦ Reading biographies of the Founders
- ✦ **And so much more...!**

USA250-OC's Strategy of Public Engagement

Online by serving as “USA250-OC communications central” to:

- ✦ Engage the community through a dynamic website and robust social media.
- ✦ Serve as a comprehensive resource and access to a broad range of online historical resources.
- ✦ Maintain a calendar of Orange County USA250-OC events and activities.
- ✦ Develop strategic partnerships with digital media publications, news providers, personal interest shows, and online digital coverage of significant social events to promote USA 250-OC.



On Air by partnering with legacy television and print media to:

- ✦ Educate, inform and Inspire through reporting, editorials and opinions
- ✦ Promote programs dedicated to the theme of USA250-OC



In the Community to drive community engagement.

Serve as a catalyst and resource to encourage the people and organizations of Orange County to actively participate in USA250-OC.

- ✦ Identify and promote events and activities already in progress
- ✦ Stimulate creativity
- ✦ Integrate the experiences of all Orange
- ✦ Countians regardless of race, religion, national origin, gender or political affiliation
- ✦ Explore the origins of Orange County and its contributions to the United States
- ✦ Incorporate USA250-OC themes into national, cultural and other days of recognition
- ✦ Host seven signature events
- ✦ Participate in fairs and festivals
- ✦ Build a sense of community around USA250-OC celebrations
- ✦ Manage a Speakers' Bureau



Be Part of the Celebration

We encourage organizations, businesses, families, and individuals to join us in this historic celebration.

Together, we can honor our past, understand our present, and shape our future

**Your support can make a difference.
Together, we can inspire a new era
of civic engagement and unity.**

Donations

Your financial support will enable us to develop and host educational programs, community events, and much more.

Every contribution helps us bring this celebration to life and reach more people.

Volunteer

We welcome volunteers to help organize and host events, manage our social media, and assist with outreach efforts.

Your time and skills can make a significant impact.

Spread the Word

Help us expand our reach by sharing our mission with your network.

Whether through social media, word of mouth, or local community groups, your voice can help us inspire a broader audience.

By becoming a partner, you can help us create impactful programs and events that educate, inspire, and unite.



Meet the Team



Co-Chair

Jo Ellen Chatham, Ph.D.,

Executive Director
Center for Civics Education
Concordia University Irvine

“Our government is based on the “consent of the governed,” that is, “we the people.”

This unique bond unites us around the aspirations, rights, and responsibilities declared in the Declaration of Independence and established in the Constitution. It is for us, “the people,” to understand and live up to principles embodied in those documents, respect each other as citizens, and engage in the civic life of our community and the nation.

It is to these concepts - civic literacy, civility, and civic engagement - that USA250-OC is dedicated.”



Co-Chair

Jim Byron,

President & CEO
Richard Nixon Foundation
American Civics Campaign

“As the Richard Nixon Foundation continues its campaign to advance American Civics education, celebrating the 250th anniversary of America’s founding provides an opportunity to increase the scope of our educational efforts while redoubling our commitment to teaching history, our country’s founding principles, and the rights and responsibilities we hold as Americans.

Only by teaching the enduring American values of individual liberty, self-government, and free enterprise will we ensure the continued success of our system of government.”

Scott Carpenter

Director of Public Engagement
and Strategic Communications

Virginia Suveiu

Legal Advisor

Michelle Barto

Creative Director

Maribel Marroquin

Director of Development

Eric Véjar

Digital Creator



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