

VIRGINIA SESQUICENTENNIAL OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR COMMISSION
Report of the Executive Committee
April 19, 2007

Members Present:

Senator John H. Chichester, Chair
Speaker William J. Howell, Vice Chair
Delegate Albert C. Eisenberg
Delegate Algie T. Howell, Jr.
Dr. Charles F. Bryan, Jr.

The Executive Committee met on April 9 and April 11 to receive a preliminary report of the Advisory Council and to discuss, consider, and make recommendations regarding allocation of the 2007 appropriations to the Commission.

One of the central points of discussion was whether to recommend that a new facility be built for the sesquicentennial. The Commission began discussing this important issue last November, and asked the Executive Committee to consider the matter in depth.

Several proposals were presented to the Executive Committee, including those from the American Civil War Center at Tredegar, the Museum of the Confederacy, the Virginia Historical Society, and several other institutions. There was widespread agreement that the eyes of the nation will be on Virginia during the Civil War sesquicentennial, and that its impact on tourism, economic development, and education will be enormous. Moreover, the Executive Committee reiterated its commitment that the commemoration should be inclusive of, and meaningful to, all Virginians. On the matter of construction of a building specifically for the sesquicentennial commemoration, however, the Executive Committee's recommendation is that a new facility not be constructed, for the following reasons:

- **Saturation**: Virginia is rich in Civil War resources. There are hundreds of Civil War museums, battlefields, and other sites throughout the Commonwealth. Many of them, like the American Civil War Center, Pamplin Historical Park, Fort Monroe, and the new *USS Monitor* Center are nationally recognized and critically acclaimed. Visitors would be well served by the Commission's role of promoting, unifying, and coordinating these institutions.
- **Sustainability**: Museum attendance nationwide has been in steady decline since 1999. In response, many museums have had to close or merge collections. Whether the public can support another Civil War facility for the long term is of major concern.
- **Maximizing resources**: The Executive Committee considered whether funds allocated for the sesquicentennial are best spent in bricks and mortar - constructing another building - or in coordinating, unifying, and supporting those that already exist. It was determined that the state's resources should support the latter option.

- Geographic diversity: The Advisory Council made a plea that the commemoration be geographically accessible to the public. The Civil War impacted every area of Virginia, and citizens and visitors should be provided with information that makes it easy to see sites and hear stories throughout the state.

The Executive Committee submits the following recommendations to the Commission for consideration:

1. Coordination: The Commission will lead the linkage, coordination, unification, and support of existing museums and sites, in lieu of building a new facility. The Commission will promote Civil War museums and sites through films, computer kiosks, maps and brochures at Visitor's Centers, and locations throughout the state. The goal will be to make it easy for visitors and citizens to identify and plan visits around the Commonwealth.
2. Traveling museum exhibition: The Commission will work with the Virginia Historical Society (VHS) to develop a major statewide traveling exhibition, rich in artifacts, documents, and high-tech components, which would open at the VHS in Richmond in 2011, and then travel during the next three years to Roanoke, Abingdon, Lynchburg, Fredericksburg, Winchester, Manassas, and Hampton.
3. Mobile (tractor trailer) exhibition: The VHS and Library of Virginia will work together to develop a traveling Civil War 150 tractor trailer exhibition, featuring a few key artifacts and documents, plus high-tech maps and displays. This concept is based on a highly successful program for the statehood bicentennial in Tennessee in 1996. The tractor trailer exhibition would travel to every county seat in Virginia with much fanfare and publicity.
4. Grants: Establish a fund to award competitive grants for a variety of Civil War 150 programs, including teacher workshops, in-school activities, conferences, exhibits, speakers' bureaus, etc.
5. Digitization project: Launch a major initiative to collect, catalog, preserve and digitally scan Civil War documents and artifacts (coordinated by VHS and the Library of Virginia).
6. Fundraiser: Authorize the Division of Legislative Services to hire a Development Officer effective July 1, 2007, to raise private funds, and seek grants and in-kind contributions for the special, non-reverting Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Fund. On the advice of Legislative Services attorneys, since contributions to the state are tax deductible, it is the recommendation of the Executive Committee not to establish a separate 501(c)(3) organization at this time.

Adopted by the Commission
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7. Web Developer: Send out a Request for Proposals (RFP) to contract with a Web Developer to establish, maintain, and host a comprehensive, interactive website throughout the commemoration period.