
Committee Meeting

of

SENATE LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

“The committee will take testimony from invited guests on New Jersey history and the State’s role in the American Revolution, in recognition of the semiquincentennial of the United States’ independence”

LOCATION: First Presbyterian Church
42 Broad Street
Elizabeth, New Jersey

DATE: August 4, 2026
1:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senate President Nicolas P. Scutari
Senator Andrew Zwicker, Chair
Senator M. Teresa Ruiz, Vice Chair
Senator John J. Burzichelli
Senator Jon M. Bramnick
Senator Robert W. Singer



ALSO PRESENT:

Madelynn K. Correnti, Esq.
Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aide

Matthew Peterson
Senate Majority
Committee Aide

Alex Solomon
Senate Republican
Committee Aide

Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
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SENATE PRESIDENT NICHOLAS P. SCUTARI: First of all, good afternoon everyone; my name is Nicholas Scutari; I have the pleasure of being the President of the New Jersey Senate; and I call this special Senate Committee convened to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States to order.

Will the Office of Legislative Services please call the roll?

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Bramnick.

SENATOR BRAMNICK: Present.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Singer.

SENATOR SINGER: Present.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Burzichelli.

SENATOR BURZICHELLI: Present.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Zwicker.

SENATOR ANDREW ZWICKER (Chair): Here.

MS. CORRENTI: Chairman Scutari.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Here.

OK. All members present and accounted for.

Thank you all for being here today to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the New Jersey Legislature, which convened on the steps of this very building, this very week, 250 years ago. Today, we gather to commemorate the founding of our nation, to reflect on New Jersey's indispensable role in the American Revolution, and particularly the City of Elizabeth, and, to recognize some of the people, places, and events that helped shape our country's history. It is especially fitting that we hold today's commemorative hearing here in the City of Elizabeth, and I want to give

special thanks to Mayor Christian Bollwage for cooperating and hosting today. (applause)

Elizabeth was the home to New Jersey's first Colonial Legislature, back when the Senate was called the Legislative Counsel. Elizabeth was also home to many prominent figures in our state's early history. Mayor Bollwage wasn't here then, but he's here for some time now, and I want to thank him for really working with us, and helping us to get this day together, a lot of logistics, and the Mayor has been an integral part of that, and recognizing the City of Elizabeth for their rightful place in history. Thank you, Mayor, for everything you've done.

It is equally fitting that we're meeting here in this historic Hope First Presbyterian Church dating to the 17th century. This was the first organized church in New Jersey that conducted worship in the English language. During the Revolutionary War, that church hosted gatherings of American Patriots and Revolutionaries. As we entered the church this afternoon, we walked through the state's largest colonial burial ground. And, many times-- And, I've walked by this place thousands of times growing up, and I usually couldn't get in here, the gates were locked, so, really special for me to be able to finally breach the gates and get in here. But, it's the state's largest Colonial burial ground, the final resting place of many Elizabeth residents and Revolutionary War soldiers who sacrificed in the fight for every American's independence. Their service reminds us that the freedoms we enjoy today were secured for extraordinary courage and sacrifice.

Before we begin, I would like to again-- I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Mayor Christian Bollwage and the City of Elizabeth for their partnership and for all their work in helping organize today's program.

And, I also wanted to thank the Siloam Hope First Presbyterian Church for so graciously opening its doors and hosting today's hearing, as well as the many staff whose hard work made today's event possible. And, I think it's extraordinary that we're able to do it on the exact week 250 years ago. The Assembly tried it; they did it earlier apart; they were a little premature. We're right on time, 250 years this week. We are privileged to be joined by an outstanding panel of distinguished guests today, and I want to recognize them. And, I look forward to hearing from their remarks.

First and foremost, we have our-- We are honored to have our Lieutenant Governor here, Dale Caldwell. (applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: Our Majority Leader, Teresa Ruiz.

SENATOR M. TERESA RUIZ (Vice Chair): Perfect timing. (applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: The Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner, Ed Potosnak. (applause)

Sara Cureton, the Executive Director of the New Jersey Historical Commission. (applause)

Professor Maxine Lurie of Seton Hall University. (applause)

And, Dr. Linda Caldwell Epps of Rutgers University. (applause)

And, I also want to thank all the Senators that came here during their summertime off, to come here for this special Committee. After those remarks, the Committee will take ceremonial votes on several resolutions, commemorating this occasion. I'd also like to recognize and thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle for joining us today. I've already introduced them: Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz; Senator Andrew Zwicker is here, thank you Senator. (applause)

Senator John Burzichelli all the way from South Jersey.
(applause)

Senator Robert Singer from Ocean. (applause)

Senator Jon Bramnick from right here in Union County.
(applause)

Thank you all for your participation in this commemoration.
With that, it is my pleasure to introduce our first speaker, and my good
friend, the Mayor of the City of Elizabeth, J. Christian Bollwage. (applause)

MAYOR J. CHRISTIAN BOLLWAGE: Thank you--

Thank you very much, Senator Scutari. The Senate President,
members of the New Jersey Senate, welcome back to the City of Elizabeth.
As the Senate President said, it was 250 years ago this week that the
Declaration of Independence was read on the steps of this church,
announcing to the Patriots of the City of Elizabeth of the vote that was taken
in Philadelphia on July 2. Elizabeth was originally was one of New Jersey's,
as you know, earliest settlements; played a key role in the American
Revolution. Our founding fathers traveled to this building, to these halls,
through the City of Elizabeth. George Washington spent many a day here in
the City of Elizabeth, actually had lunch at Boxwood Hall -- Katherine Craig
is here as the State Curator -- had lunch in April of 1789 on the way to
become the first President of the United States. Elias Boudinot, who lived in
that house, was actually the third President from the United States under the
Articles of Confederation, and then became one of the earliest senators from
the State of New Jersey, representing us in the halls of Congress. Decisions
that were made here helped lay the foundation for Democratic institutions
that continue to serve our state today. Elizabeth has always been a city of

resilience, and, while the city has changed dramatically over 250 years, our values remain the same of opportunity, perseverance, civic pride, and community. Elizabeth is one of our most diverse cities in the entire state. Our 250th celebration, our responsibility is to preserve these stories and educate our young people. Elizabeth is the story of America.

We were founded in 1664, the first English settlement, and this Presbyterian Church congregation dates back to 1600s. Elizabeth endured multiple British raids because of our location, across the Arthur Kill from Staten Island. The famous Battle of Springfield in June of 1780 started when British troops landed at Elizabeth Point, and marched its way west, through the City of Elizabeth, up Elizabeth Avenue, what was then called Water Street. Their objective to capture Washington's Army in Morristown was stopped at Hobart Gap in Springfield. We earned the title "the Crossroads of the Revolution." And, that was New Jersey, and Elizabeth was part of that. And, under the Articles of Confederation, as I said, Elias Boudinot being the third president of this country. We served as a principal landing point during the war because of our short distance from Staten Island. And, over the last 360 years of being a city, we've welcomed generations of Americans. And, in 1776, we helped build a new nation. I want to thank Jennifer Costa and Wanda Lundy from the Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Division, who helped play a major role in putting this together, and Dan Hurley of your staff who did a great job in coordinating. I want to thank the members of City Council who are here on my left, as well as members of the Union County Commissioner Board that are here as well, and members of our Elizabeth Board of Education. Together we worked to make Elizabeth a better community, and this is the first time that the New Jersey Senate has

come back to the City of Elizabeth in 250 years; and, we thank you for taking your time out of your summer vacations to join us.

Senator Scutari, thank you for putting this together. Thank you.
(applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: Mayor, thank you so much for those remarks and for hosting us today. Really, the Mayor was an integral part of having us come together in the City of Elizabeth; I couldn't thank him enough for hosting us today and helping this become a reality with all the logistics. I really, truly appreciate it. The Mayor already recognized some of our local officials who helped put us in these positions -- at least me -- our Commissioner Board, members of City Council, members of the Board of Education. All outstanding public servants, I want to thank them for what they do and appreciate them (indiscernible).

Next I would like to invite our-- We are honored to have our Lieutenant Governor here today. Not only serves as Lieutenant Governor, but he is also the Secretary of State, and has a church not far from here in Plainfield, Dr. Dale Caldwell. (applause)

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR DALE G. CALDWELL, Ph.D.: Thank you very much.

I want to begin by thanking Senate President Scutari, Majority Leader Ruiz, members of the New Jersey State Legislature, Union County and the City of Elizabeth, and everyone that's joining us today on this very historic moment. I'm honored to be here today as Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State, but really as an American with a lifelong curiosity about our shared history, and I commend you for recognizing this at this historic place in Elizabeth. And, one of the things I've learned is how historic

Elizabeth is. Most people don't understand that, even my university, Princeton, was founded here in Elizabeth, which is, which is-- (applause) --amazing.

As you know, New Jersey was the crossroads of the Revolution. When George Washington crossed the Delaware, he did it to come where? Here, in New Jersey. New Jersey was the site of our first major victory with the Battle of Trenton. We were the first state to ratify the Bill of Rights, and New Jersey unanimously ratified the U.S. Constitution. Today, the U.S. is the longest-lasting modern democracy in existence. It may be the longest lasting, but, it's certainly not static. The American Revolution was really about change. Our system is brilliant because it is a system that was designed to change, to evolve, based on the will of the people. So, over the last 250 years, we have most certainly evolved against the backdrop of the ideals set out in the Declaration and the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The ideals include life, and liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It included the goal of equality and justice and the right to self-determination. Over the years, our nation has engaged in a constant dialogue, sometimes contentious, but always inspirational. This tension is our history; it's what democracy is all about. A whole nation investigating challenging questions, but it's about investigating these questions on the state level, as well. As representatives of the people, New Jersey's lawmakers grapple not just with practical business, but with philosophical issues in every session.

So, together over the last 250 years, we've worked towards our ideals with varying levels of success, for different people in different communities, with real-life consequences. Many Americans have faced the complex fight to access the rights and privileges of citizenship. Many

Americans still do encounter barriers and hurdles to be able to exist, work, and live with dignity, and be treated fairly and equally under the law. This work to ensure that America lives up to the promise of our founding is an essential part of the American story. It's also an important part of my personal story. As many of you know, my dad marched arm-in-arm with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the civil rights movement. I also had a chance to get to know John Lewis and some other civil rights leaders. And, I therefore take the idea of "we the people" very, very seriously. It is deeply patriotic to look at our history with clear eyes, acknowledging both the very good, and the very bad, and demanding that our country do better. To do this effectively, we need to not just know history; we need to understand and learn from it. We have to make a conscious effort to learn from the whole history, which includes moments of triumph and success. If we don't do that, we miss the opportunity to facilitate healing through a process of reconciliation.

As you know, the New Jersey flag has the words liberty and prosperity on it. Two of my favorite sayings are, "Liberty is never more than one generation away from extinction," and, "Poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere." We must therefore do everything we can to preserve the highest forms of liberty and prosperity. Our State Legislature understands that nothing bonds a community together more than a shared history. We gain a deeper understanding of our values by not just retelling familiar stories, but rethinking them. And, so, at the Legislature's direction, the New Jersey Historical Commission launched RevolutionNJ to thoughtfully commemorate the 250th. I could not be more proud of Sara Cureton and our Historical Commission and the other departments. We've

been blessed with civil servants all across the state sharing their talent, expertise, and commitment, helping us to celebrate our grand successes, and acknowledge our challenges and opportunities. New Jersey has endless fascinating stories to tell, well-known accounts of famous leaders in great battles, and long overlooked stories of ordinary people. Our state's own rich, diverse past provides a lens through which we can explore great things of American history that still influence our lives: The history of colonization; agriculture; industry; African American history; women's history; the history of science; faith; innovation; art; and so much more. There's no better place than New Jersey to commemorate this semiquincentennial.

As we mark this important milestone today, I commend the State Legislature, and our many departments and divisions for inspiring our fellow New Jerseyans to renew our commitment to the ideals of the Declaration. I thank them for inspiring us to reflect on our shared past in rich, meaningful ways, and build thoughtful unity as we embrace the present and move forward with reinvigorated vigor of a brighter future together. So, on behalf of the Governor, myself, and the people of New Jersey, we thank you for your service and leadership. May God bless America; may God bless New Jersey; and may God bless all of you here today. (applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: Thank you, Lieutenant Governor.

OK, because this is a hearing, I'll entertain any questions or comments from any of the members regarding the Lieutenant Governor's testimony. (no response) OK, seeing none, I'll move on to our next invited guest and witness. The next person is our Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Ed Potosnak. Commissioner, thank you. (applause)

ED POTOSNAK: Thank you, and good afternoon. It's wonderful to be here, Mayor, thanks for the warm welcome. To the folks who call this church home, thank you for welcoming us.

It's quite beautiful, not only an occasion, but the setting and how it's been decorated really reminds us of what this year is all about, coming together to understand our shared past and how we pave, together, a brighter future for future generations. So, my name is Ed Potosnak; I am acting Commissioner at the Department of Environmental Protection. I'm here with Assistant Commissioner for our Parks, Forests, and Historic Sites, John Cecil, and our Director of the Legislative Affairs, Bryana De Veaux. So, if anyone has questions about anything I'm saying, they'll be certain to get back to you with really good answers.

But, as we know, the 250th, the semiquincentennial, is an important milestone for America. It means we have more work to do, but New Jersey, as we heard so many times, is the crossroads of the Revolution, between Philadelphia and New York. So many things happened here, that in my role of Commissioner at the Department, I'm learning so much about our past. It doesn't help that my educational background is actually in chemistry, not the social sciences and history. But, I'm amazed at how well we've done at preserving that past, but also the call to action to do more. So, I'm going to talk a little bit today about the things we've done to prepare for this year and the celebrations ahead.

Our historic sites are at the center of many of the stories of America. Our state, as we know, is called the crossroads of the Revolution for good reason, because New Jersey served as a critical route for the British and Continental forces, and the site of more Revolutionary battles than any

other state in America. And, that's something to be said for us. And, our role in the Revolution is not one that visitors to New Jersey can only explore; but, there are many layers of that history that helped shape the nation as we know it today. What makes New Jersey uniquely New Jersey are the stories at the center of these sites, the stories that our historic sites tell us. Each of these sites reflects a distinct community, an individual chapter in a singular perspective. Earlier this year, we announced over \$130 million that we've invested in over 30 different historic sites across our state. These are visitors' centers and improvements to these projects. These are State-owned assets. And, there's no better moment than to step up to this occasion and get this work done, and that's exactly what we've been doing. So, from the Proprietary House in Perth Amboy, which was once home to William Franklin, who is the son of Benjamin Franklin and New Jersey's last Royal Governor, who was tried for treason and excommunicated to Britain -- and, I think Benjamin Franklin stopped talking to him and cut him out of his will - - that happened right here in New Jersey. And, then, also Washington Crossing State Park where George Washington crossed the Delaware River on that fateful Christmas night, to the King Indian Tavern (*sic*), where New Jersey completed its transition from a colony to a state. These places connect each of us to the pivotal occasions in American history.

And, that story doesn't end with the Revolutionary War. In fact, from the Industrial Revolution to present day, New Jersey's historic sites reflect the innovation, resilience, and (indiscernible) of the people of New Jersey that helped to build our country. And, right here in Elizabeth is Boxwood Hall; it's a historic site home to Elias Boudinot, President of the Continental Congress when it ratified the Treaty of Paris, and Jonathan

Dayton, the youngest signer of the U.S. Constitution. Today, we're making important improvements to Boxwood Hall, including an ADA accessible restroom and a ramp, allowing the site to be accessible to residents of any physical ability. And, in Somerville, I had a chance to get out to Wallace House, which is a historic site that's undergoing renovation. It served as George Washington's headquarters during the Middlebrook winter encampments in 1778 and 1779. And, they are nearing completion with \$4 million of exterior renovations, that includes repairs to the rooves, the chimneys, the clapboards, the windows, the foundation, as well as improved drainage and more ADA accessibility. But, this work is also about more than just fixing up or straightening up the physical building itself. It's also about getting preservation done right, and that's something that New Jersey's really stepping up. So, just as we've managed our forests to ensure that long-term health and diversity exists in them, we've approached historic preservation the same way. It's not only about the structure and how it looks; but, it's also about how it functions. Does it function the way it was built? And, that's why projects like the Wallace House emphasize traditional techniques and sustainable materials, while preserving the craftsmanship that was used to construct these historic places originally.

A great example is the use of linseed oil paint. Many of us know this as flaxseed; you might take it as a supplement. But, this was a mainstay product that was used in painting at that time. I'll get a little chemistry on you in that when we use latex paint, we actually trap in the water, and many of our historic sites have seen that type of application, and are worse off because of it. So, we're trying to reach back in time and take a lesson from our ancestors, and use the materials they used, which are more sustainable

and protect the structure. And, so, rather than trapping that water inside and destroying the wood, this will be ready for future generations. It helps protect that structure; it creates opportunities for interpretation; it teaches visitors about those traditional building materials and techniques that were used. And, across the state, these projects are coming to life as they advance through construction to completion, and many of them are already done.

This work is made possible -- and, I think this is a question you might have, is how we're paying for all this -- through a number of State and Federal funding sources, including the Preserve New Jersey Act that was the implementation of the 2014 Constitutional dedication of the Corporate Business Tax for Open Space and Historic Sites. The New Jersey Historic Trust; the New Jersey Debt Defeasance and Prevention Fund; the American Rescue Plan; the Land and Water Conservation Fund; as well as the National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund, all being cobbled together to meet the moment. And, we're also expanding how the visitors experience history, with two new visitors' centers expected to open in the next year. At the Washington Crossing State Park, we're constructing a \$24 million visitors' center, which is going to be amazing; it's New Jersey's gift to America on its 250th birthday. And, it's going to include a state-of-the-art, immersive exhibit experiences. It's going to detail the history, depict Washington's crossing of the Delaware and his troops, and of discreet individuals who helped support the American Revolution. And, one of the highlights that I'm excited to experience myself, will be the Crossing Theater, which is a 4D immersive experience, where you can actually get on the boat and experience what it was like for Washington to cross with his troops at that historic site.

In Camden, at the Walt Whitman House, which is a historic site, we're undergoing a transformative \$15 million visitors' center improvement, as well. The project includes a new visitors' center interpretive center, as well as the restoration of Whitman's historic home. The interpretive center will feature exhibits on the life and work of our poet of democracy, and expand accessibility so visitors of all abilities can experience the site as well.

And, at Liberty State Park, the most visited State park in our parks system, we are advancing all kinds of restoration efforts, but particularly I want to talk about the train shed, which was once used by the Central Railroad of New Jersey, and also played a vital role in our immigrant journey. After arriving at Ellis Island, many immigrants, like my grandparents, who traveled here by ferry to New Jersey, passed through that Central Terminal, and entered the train shed to board trains and buses bound for destinations across our country, beginning their new lives in America. It was designed by the architect A. Lincoln Bush, and constructed between 1912 and 1914, in the largest Bush-type train shed ever built. And, the restoration is going to help stabilize those structures; preserve them; restore them; and replicate the historic features. Also, via gathering place, we can't even imagine what folks will do underneath when they're completed. The train shed is going to help future generations better understand the immigrant experience, and the role New Jersey played as a gateway to opportunity.

So, we're also preserving those stories that have often been overlooked. Last fall, we celebrated a ribbon cutting for the restoration of New Jersey State Parks' first African American historic site. It's the Dr. James Still Office in Medford. Dr. Still was known as the "Black Doctor of the Pines;" was a self-taught physician who provided care to people throughout

the region; and was brother of the abolitionist William Still; and one of the founders of the Underground Railroad. We're now developing interpretive exhibits and a plan to share Dr. Still's story with visitors and future generations. And, these are just some of the examples that are underway across New Jersey; 30 projects, we could go on, but I know time is limited.

So, we're also bringing those stories to life through tours. Through living-history programs and reenactments, like we experienced this morning, that could help engage every visitor. So, coming up in December, our large-scale reenactments -- mark your calendar -- commemorating the 250th anniversary of Washington's Crossing on Christmas night across the Delaware in Washington Crossing State Park, as well as the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Princeton at the Princeton Battlefield State Park. And, those who want to celebrate on their own, we launched New Jersey State Park Celebrate 250 Challenge. And, this is a year-long initiative which encourages New Jerseyans to explore the outdoors, stay active, and celebrate this historic milestone by visiting New Jersey's 41 State parks, 11 State forests, five recreation areas, and more than 50 historic sites and districts. We also released a coloring book based on New Jersey State historic sites; and, the Senators have one at the dais, although I don't think we brought crayons, but you can find them available for free at our State parks, which is another great reason to visit.

But, the 250th anniversary does not end just this year. You think the excitement is over and hearings like this won't be necessary? No; in fact, the Revolutionary War continued until 1783, which means New Jersey's history site, and all of our sites, are going to continue our special programming and commemorations through 2033.

So, we can't wait to join you as you explore our state. So, as we celebrate the 250 years of independence, I encourage everyone to get out there and experience these places for yourself. Walk the grounds where history happened. Explore buildings where decisions were reached, and hear stories from the people who helped shape our nation. And, we look forward to welcoming you every step of the way to these special places where history was made. New Jersey State parks, our forests, our historic sites will allow you to learn something new, experience these stories for yourself firsthand and gain a deeper understanding of our contributions, not only to our nation, but to the world.

And, so, I want to thank you, today, Senator, for your partnership, all of you on the Committee, and all that you do to make New Jersey such a special place. Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: First, Acting Commissioner, before you go, any questions regarding the testimony? (no response)

Seeing none, before you go, I just want to thank you for your service, not just as Acting Commissioner, but in your previous life as the head of the Conservation Voters. And, on occasion, I've had the opportunity to be Acting Governor of the State of New Jersey, and the first time that I was, you helped with my two days as Acting Governor, and we passed a resolution signed to law, and bike path commemoration, and I appreciate you making those days special for me, and hopefully for the people of the State of New Jersey. So, best of luck, thank you for your testimony, Commissioner.

MR. POTOSNAK: Thank you, Senator. (applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: Our next speaker -- and, you can read about her -- is Sara Cureton, the Executive Director of the New Jersey Historical Commission.

Please come forward. (applause)

SARA CURETON: Good afternoon.

Thank you, Senate President Scutari, and members of the State Senate, for the invitation to join you here today. And, most importantly, for taking this time to reflect on the Revolutionary events of 250 years ago, and New Jersey's central role in them. Now, it's an honor to gather in this beautiful historic church, which is steeped in Revolutionary War history. Many of you know of Rev. James Caldwell, the pastor here during war, who tragically lost his wife, Hannah, to bullets fired by a British soldier during the Battle of Connecticut Farms. Many of New Jersey's Patriot leaders knew this church very well, and some of them are buried here, including Rev. Caldwell and his wife. Now, anniversaries like this semiquincentennial offer an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of those who came before us, to reflect on the many roads that have brought us here today, and, where would like to travel in the future. In 2018, this legislation -- or, Legislature, I should say -- wisely passed legislation directing the New Jersey Historical Commission to formulate and implement a program for the observance of the historical aspects of the 250th anniversary of the independence of the United States, and of the first Constitution of this state. We have been laser-focused on this task ever since. Our goal has been to develop engaging programs that could be enjoyed throughout New Jersey, but also to encourage commemorative activities in every county and municipality. I hope all of you, and all of you, have had a chance to attend and enjoy some of the 250th

celebrations and activities in your own communities this past July. And, I hope they'll continue to support them through the duration of the anniversary period.

Now, one of the many tasks we undertook was to identify some large themes in state and national history that we and partner organizations around the state could explore for the 250th. The most challenging part of this exercise was picking which themes to exclude, because New Jersey's history is truly a microcosm of our larger national story. For example, what we know as in New Jersey today has welcomed people from around the world for centuries. This land, part of Lenapehoking, has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples for over 10,000 years. European settlers began arriving in the 17th century, including Dutch, Swedish, and the English, later followed by many others. Europeans also brought with them enslaved and free Africans. So, while we know New Jersey is a state with a highly diverse population today, British troops arriving on our shores 250 years ago would also have found a great variety of people living here as the Revolution started.

Now, New Jersey is also a state of industry and innovation. Alexander Hamilton helped establish the first planned industrial city in Paterson. Trenton became known as the Staffordshire of America; glassmaking factories thrived in South Jersey. The Stevens family helped make the state a transportation hub, building steamboats, steam ferries, and the Camden and Amboy Railroad. And, Johnson & Johnson introduced the Band-Aid in the 1920s, earning the everlasting gratitude of parents and elementary school teachers worldwide. Now, our history of innovation truly exploded during the 20th century. Thomas Edison continued to roll out new technologies, building upon his staggering empire during the 19th century.

Innovations in mining, batteries, phonograph technology, and motion pictures were born from his laboratory in West Orange. The American film industry took root in Fort Lee, and the Radio Corporation of America -- better known as RCA -- led the world in the development of radio and television. Perhaps most significantly, the transistor was developed at Bell Labs, literally transforming the way the world communicates. New Jersey's history also reflects the most troubling aspects of our national story. The institution of slavery was definitely here, and that wonderful monument that you can see outside this church is testimony to that. It was most prominent in the east, or what we now know as North Jersey. And, by 1800, the enslaved African American population reached a peak of over 12,000 persons. The Gradual Emancipation Act of 1804 brought freedom to many, by 1820, free Blacks outnumbered the enslaved for the very first time. Yet, the law required those born to enslaved parents *after* July 4, 1804, must remain in service to their mothers' enslavers for 21 years, for girls, and 25 years for boys. But, our state history also includes many examples of the larger national movements toward equality and justice. New Jersey's Thomas Mundy Peterson was the first Black man to cast a vote after passage of the 15th amendment. Alice Paul, who grew up in Mount Laurel, was a leader in the fight to pass the 19th amendment, an effort that succeeded, and she was also an author of the Equal Rights Amendment, because she championed until her death in 1977.

So, New Jersey certainly has more than 250 years of amazing history to tell. But, we also must take a moment to remind ourselves and our many visitors of the indispensable role New Jersey played during the American Revolution, as we already heard, more battles and skirmishes took place here than any of the other 13 original states. Washington spent 25%

of his time here, leading the pivotal battles at Trenton, Princeton, and Monmouth. If we are good stewards, and you've heard some wonderful updates about the stewardship ongoing now, and if we continue that into the future, visitors will be able to visit these remarkable sites in the years to come. And, while July 4, 2026, is now in our rearview mirror, the most pivotal moments in New Jersey's Revolutionary history are yet to come, including the battles of Trenton, Princeton, Monmouth, and Connecticut Farms.

So, throughout the preparations for this anniversary, I've been reminded of the power of the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence: Liberty; equality; justice; self-determination; and the pursuit of happiness. Many have described the American Revolution as a revolution of ideas, ideas that continue to inspire us and people around the world. These ideas are clearly illustrated in our state history, and RevolutionNJ, our partnership with the nonprofit Crossroads of the American Revolution, is highlighting them through the eight-year commemoration of the war. I encourage you to visit revnj.org to learn more about our traveling exhibition currently touring the state; school programs like History Happened Here; award-winning tap and talks; 5k races; and, much, much more. Now more than ever, teaching, exploring, and truly enjoying our history is an essential tool for engaged citizens and vibrant communities. We look forward to continuing this journey with all of you, and our fellow New Jerseyans as we follow the triumphs and travails of the Continental Army to Trenton, to Princeton, to Morristown, to Elizabeth, and dozens of other Jersey towns right up until 2033. Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: Thank you, Director.

You brought up James Caldwell in your remarks, and we have two Commissioners right here, County Commissioners Lourdes Leon and Stan Neron, that are wearing a little replica of Hannah Caldwell, much debate about that over the years, but historically, essentially accurate, and I argue that if we change that pin, a lot of people would have never heard of her, but we all have heard of Hannah Caldwell in that instance.

MS. CURETON: Absolutely.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Thank you so much for being here today, appreciate it, thank you.

MS. CURETON: Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: Our next speaker is Maxine Lurie, Professor of History at Seton Hall University.

Please come forward, thank you, Sara. (applause)

Thank you, Professor. Those are for recording, that's for speaking.

MAXINE LURIE, Ph.D.: I'm sorry, what?

SENATOR SCUTARI: If you want to be heard, that's the one.

MS. LURIE: Yes, I assumed.

I can shout, but microphone helps. Thank you, and thank you, Senators, for inviting me to speak, and thank you everybody who showed up. But -- and, is sitting here, in the heat -- my comments are actually not that long. But, I'm retired, supposedly retired. Seton Hall University has two (indiscernible) actually, of the New Jersey Historical Commission, and thus aware of the many activities that Sara commissioned our work talking about. I've been interested in the history of the American Revolution and New Jersey for well over 50 years. For today's program commemorating the 250th

anniversary of the founding of our nation, I was asked to offer brief remarks on a person, place, or event occurring here, all central to the book that I wrote, *Taking Sides on Revolutionary New Jersey: Caught in the Crossfire*. And, today, I'll concentrate on two men and this church to say something about the war that engulfed the colony and then state for eight long years, meaning -- as was already been indicated -- we can commemorate for another seven.

Elizabethtown, as it was known in 1776, and the First Presbyterian Church, are appropriate places to remember the American Revolution in New Jersey. Here it began as a civil war and ended with efforts at reconciliation. The story can be told by briefly looking at the Rev. James Caldwell, a Patriot and Presbyterian, and the Rev. Thomas Bradbury Chandler, a Loyalist and an Anglican. Supposedly, they so disliked each other and their churches, that they would cross the street to avoid one another. Caldwell -- as already been mentioned -- was known as the fighting parson. He became a military chaplain with the Continental Army. He's been remembered for urging his men in the Battle of Springfield to use paper from the hymnals as wadding in their guns. His wife, also already mentioned, Hannah Ogden Caldwell, was killed during the Battle of Connecticut Farms, when a British soldier fired into the house -- not from outside -- into the house, and she was killed during the Battle of Connecticut Farms. In-- They moved to Union because they actually had fled there for safety; it wasn't safe to for them to remain in Elizabethtown. He died when shot by a sentry under suspicious circumstances; and, the sentry was later caught. Their nine orphaned children were taken in by friends. The members of the congregation, overwhelmingly Patriots, at least 83 men, served in the rebel military and were the government. And, many went on to distinguished

careers during and after the war. For example, Governor William Livingston, General Elias Dayton, and, as mentioned, Elias Boudinot, who besides being president as was mentioned, of the Continental Congress, he was Commissioner for prisoners of war during the Revolution. And, under Washington's administration, he was the Head of the Mint. So, he served numerous (indiscernible) positions both during and over the war.

Also, Jonathan Dayton's already been mentioned; he was the youngest member of the Continental Convention, and there are others as well. Chandler was one of the most vocal advocates for making the Anglican church the established one in all the colonies, meaning everyone would have to pay to support it, no matter what church you belonged to, and appointing a Bishop to oversee it. It was thought that he wanted that position himself. In 1775, he left for England where he became part of the exiled Loyalists community. When the war was over, he was offered the position as the first Colonial Bishop in Nova Scotia, but he refused because he had not seen his family for 10 years, including a daughter who was an infant when he left. He returned to Elizabethtown, where, in the short time before he died, he worked on converting the Anglican Church -- headed by the King -- to the Episcopalian Church, no longer praying for the health of the Monarch at every service. And, that, by the way, was considered treason during the Revolution. The first marriage he presided over after returning was of his daughter, Katherine Chandler to Elias Bailey Dayton, son of the General, and brother of the signer of the Constitution.

Family connections, political ideas, and location, as well as religion, all are factors in the sides people took during the Revolution. In New Jersey, the British saw the Presbyterians as leaders -- as the Revolution's

leaders -- and, they had a point. This and other churches, whatever their denomination, were also important because they were among the few larger buildings of the time. Hence, they were used as barracks and hospitals. In Elizabethtown, the original Presbyterian Church, as well as the academy, and the courthouse, were burned in January 1780 when the British moved through. The war was very destructive. Not all Patriots and Loyalists in New Jersey reconciled after the Revolution. But, some here did. Few churches survived undamaged or destroyed. This church is not the first one built on this site, evidence of the destruction brought by the war. It, like many others, was rebuilt afterwards and then reused over time. Hopefully, Americans 250 years later, can figure out how to get along and how to protect, preserve, and rebuild their institutions. History offers examples. Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: Thank you very much, Professor.

Any questions for the professor? (no response)

Seeing none, thank you very much for being here today and we appreciate that. Our next-- Our final invited speaker, actually, is Dr. Linda Caldwell Epps, member of the Rutgers University Board of Trustees. Doctor? (applause)

Thank you, Doctor, that microphone will project your voice.

L I N D A C A L D W E L L E P P S, Ph.D.: OK, OK.

SENATOR SCUTARI: The others are for show.

DR. CALDWELL EPPS: Good afternoon--

SENATOR SCUTARI: We're actually recording this for posterity, so another 250 years though, maybe they'll come back, Mayor.

You'll still be Mayor. (laughter)

DR. CALDWELL EPPS: So, good afternoon and let me welcome all of you to my hometown of Elizabeth. I was born-- (applause)

I was born and raised in Elizabeth, and lived there for my first 22 years of life. And, I'm grateful to be able to say my growing up years here were pretty good, and, at the age of 75, many of my closest friends were my partners in crime during my childhood right here in Elizabeth, for Elizabeth was the kind of place that fostered strong neighborhoods, provided a good, rigorous, and safe school system, and, at least in my neighborhood of Keighry Head, it was a friendly, diverse community of people who truly liked and respected one another. I've met no one of my generation who doesn't profess of a positive Elizabeth growing-up experience, including the wonderful and dynamic writer, Judy Blume.

Although I moved to Newark 50 years ago with marriage, I stay closely connected to Elizabeth as I served as a Trustee of the Elizabeth -- Historical Society of Elizabeth for almost two decades, and have family members and friends, some of them here, who are residents. The name of this church is Siloam Hope First Presbyterian Church, formerly Old First. Before it's Siloam Presbyterian, and Hope Memorial Presbyterian merged with Old First Presbyterian. I spent my childhood and young adult life as a member of Hope Memorial Presbyterian Church, and those people are here today as well. But, I've been to this sanctuary many, many times. As you've already heard, this church was unabashedly Patriotic during the Revolutionary War, and front and center in actively supporting the Patriotic cause. The Rev. James Caldwell is said to have had his gun with him on the pulpit when he preached, for trouble from the British or local Loyalists, and his congregation aggressively tended to the needs of the Continental troops.

Some of you may not know the geography of Elizabeth, and it's already explained and understood that the British were stationed in Staten Island, New York, which is separated from Elizabeth by a narrow road motorway known as the Arthur Kill. It offered to the British convenient access to the Woodyard Farms as, in particular, of Elizabeth, and more importantly, it potentially offered access to Washington's troops, stationed in Morristown and other New Jersey locations.

When I was, I think, in third grade, I learned about the Princeton-educated, fighting Rev. Caldwell, and his wife, Hannah Ogden Caldwell. I'm pleased to say we have an Ogden descendant here with us this afternoon, you may want to raise your hand (indiscernible)-- (applause) -- who traveled here from Idaho to be with us today. Did you not hear all that I just said--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can hear you.

DR. CALDWELL EPPS: -- because I would start all over again.
(laughter)

How proud I was that I also carried the name Caldwell. I asked my parents if we were related to Rev. James Caldwell, and, of course, they said, "No, Linda, you just happen to have the same last name." But, I was insistent that there could possibly be a connection. And, my father insisted that there was no connection. But, through my research and my school library -- that is the library of Marquis de Lafayette School Number 6 here in Elizabeth -- I found out that the Rev. Caldwell was from North Carolina. Now, armed with additional information, my persistence continued for days. My father, not known for his patience, finally gave in and said, "Well, Linda, you never know." I was so naïvely sure my dad had a brother, whose name

was James Caldwell, that there had to be a connection. And, my dad's family migrated to Elizabeth at the dawn of the 20th century from North and South Carolina. You should know that James Caldwell, and his wife, Hannah Ogden Caldwell, as you already heard, were killed in two separate incidents in 1780 and 1781 leaving nine children. But, from his pulpit, and from his horse, Rev. Caldwell spread the word of Hannah's death. And, really, with increased determination, encouraged all the Patriots to fight for independence. Well, my love of history began with this introduction to James and Hannah Caldwell, and through my many years of studying history, I've learned of its complexity, and of our using history to shape public policy and opinion that fuel our perceptions and values and understanding of the who, what, where, and when of our country's narrative. Because, we now know and understand that this little chocolate girl of 9 years of age questions about her relationship to the fighting parson Caldwell were not as ridiculous as we might have thought 65 years ago. Think Sally Hemings.

I was pleased that during this commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, that we have made strides in recognizing some of the omissions and exposing some of the contradictions of our understanding of the American Revolution. And, we have more thoroughly examined our evidence before telling the stories of the Revolution. Some of you might be familiar with Revolutionary War period poet Phillis Wheatley, who wrote prolifically of freedom, while herself, a slave. She wrote, "In every human breast, God has implanted a principle which we call love of freedom. It is impatient of oppression and pants for deliverance." Ms. Wheatley was, as far as I know, the first woman of African descent to have her poetry published in book form. Brought from West

Africa as a child of 6, the Boston family who owned her recognized her genius and promoted her work. She traveled to England and met the Queen on a book tour, and frequently she exchanged correspondence with Commander-in-Chief Gen. George Washington, and she also was granted an audience with him. Her books of poetry were not as wildly known as the Patriotic-laced writings of her contemporary, Thomas Payne, but she did have a substantial audience to the point that we are very well acquainted with her work today.

So, I've had decades of experience teaching and lecturing across the state, and when the issue is related to African American participation in the Revolutionary War, I always ask the question, "Did you know that slavery existed in New Jersey?" There has only been one audience out of probably a few hundred where no hands went up, so we've been woefully ignorant of that. The truth is that there was slavery in New Jersey, and there was slavery in Elizabeth, New Jersey. And, the number of enslaved that fought in the Revolution on the side of the Patriots, as well as those of the Loyalists, is estimated to range from 5,000 to 10,000 who fought with the Patriots, with an estimated 20,000 who fought with the Loyalists. Why was the number doubled? Because the Loyalists promptly offered freedom to anyone who fought with them. The Patriots, Washington in particular, were a little slower to catch on. We know that gradual emancipation of the enslaved did not come to New Jersey until 1804. And, even though we had a system of gradual emancipation at the end of the Civil War, there were still enslaved peoples living and serving in New Jersey. We have evidence on the grounds of this historic and magnificent church cemetery and academy of the dictates of the Revolutionary War that our words have often been in (indiscernible).

I worked on a project that started here some 15 or 20 years ago with the then-Pastor Rev. Higgs, asked me to help identify people of African descent interred in the historic graveyard right next to this building. It was his intent to recognize the existence of those people of African decent, enslaved and free, and contribute to the creation and growth of this country, the United States of America, the State of New Jersey, this County of Union, and the City of Elizabeth. And, I'm also happy to say that I was gladly surprised to see a college friend of mine who is here who has a relative whose bones are interred in this cemetery and who is the only image of those nearly 400 people of African descent who are buried here. Jocelyn, raise your hand. (applause)

Those of you who toured the grounds earlier saw the result of those efforts begun by Rev. Higgs and carried forth by Dr. Lundy and others. Finally, recognition of African American life, pre 20th century in Elizabeth, has a symbol of their existence to the 313+ Initiative, and a visible marker that confirms their presence. We must continue in this tradition of discovering, giving recognition to, and appreciation for all, no matter their race, class, or gender, as contributors to the building of our nation, and see to it that we make true the Declaration of Independence that states, "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." We must be ever vigilant in recognizing that if among the objectives of fighting a war for freedom and equality were truly for all humans, our innate natures must be under constant scrutiny. For our capitalistic system to effectively operate means a certain degree of inequality.

Europe, especially during the time of discovery and settlement of what would become the United States, had a culture where 2% of the population controlled the wealth. And, the 98% of the population toiled to keep the 2% on top. I fear we are headed in that direction now and we cannot let that happen. Although our ancestors came to the new world in search of gold, glory, or God, the gold and glory were limited to few, for capitalism requires inequality and racism enshrines it. Our Constitution of enslavement ensured the rise of capitalism.

So, my prayer is that we learn through this commemorative period that we can not only learn and make public a more inclusive narrative to understand the events that set off 1776, and the development of our State of New Jersey, and this new nation called the United States of America. We've come through periods that have challenged our structure. I'm thinking specifically at the Civil War of 1861, and, or, our more recent period of urban uprisings that we experienced in 1964 and lasting until 1968, almost the same length of time as the Civil War. Women are still waiting for their opportunity to truly be considered equal to men. Although the right to vote was given to all by 1924, challenges still exist. On March 5, 1775, Boston rebels lost their lives in the Boston Massacre, even thought to be the precursor to the American Revolution, a revolution fought for independence from the British. Crispus Attucks, a runaway slave of African and Indigenous heritage was the spark. Former New Jersey Governor Hughes, on August 8, 1967, ordered the creation of the Lilley Commission to study the causes of and make recommendation for mediation of urban uprisings in New Jersey. Hughes said, "The life of the land is the pursuit of righteousness, and in a real sense, our mission for New Jersey is the pursuit of righteousness, not only for the

securing of public order, but for the attainment of social justice on which it ultimately depends.”

I’ll end with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who said in his *I Have a Dream* speech, “So, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed. We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men and women are created equal.” Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: Thank you, Doctor.

Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? (no response)
Seeing none. OK.

The next order of business is the Committee will now consider four resolutions before it. Resolution Number 1. The first resolution commemorates the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America, and celebrates the Garden State’s invaluable role in the American Revolution. This resolution will be presented to Rev. Dr. Wanda M. Lundy, who serves as Director of Operations for the Greater Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce, and who is currently leading the 313+ Ancestors Speak project at the church. The Chair will now entertain a motion on the resolution.

SENATOR BRAMNICK: So moved.

SENATOR RUIZ: So moved-- Second.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Moved by Senator Bramnick, seconded by Majority Leader Ruiz. We’ll have roll call on the resolution.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Bramnick.

SENATOR BRAMNICK: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Singer.

SENATOR SINGER: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Burzichelli.

SENATOR BURZICHELLI: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Zwicker.

SENATOR ZWICKER: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Ruiz.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Chairman Scutari.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Yes.

The resolution is adopted, congratulations, thank you very much. (applause)

And, we're going to do the pictures after we do all of those, so this way--

So, we'll do the next resolution. Resolution Number 2. The second resolution, which will be presented to Pastor Carson Washington and Elder Krishna Garlic, honors the Siloam Hope First Presbyterian Church of Elizabeth, pays tribute to its invaluable role in our state's history and recognizes its importance as the first organized English language church in New Jersey.

Can I get a motion on the resolution?

SENATOR SINGER: So moved.

Motion.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Moved by Senator Singer, seconded by Senator Zwicker. Roll call.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Bramnick.

SENATOR BRAMNICK: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Singer.

SENATOR SINGER: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Burzichelli.

SENATOR BURZICHELLI: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Zwicker.

SENATOR ZWICKER: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Ruiz.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Chairman Scutari.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Yes.

The motion is approved, congratulations. (applause)

Next we have Resolution Number 3, the next resolution, which I will be pleased to present to Mayor Christian Bollwage, recognizes the City of Elizabeth and commends its indispensable role in the American Revolution, and its enduring contributions to the history and development of New Jersey.

Can I get a motion on the resolution?

SENATOR BRAMNICK: So moved.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Moved by Senator Bramnick, seconded by Senator Ruiz. Roll call on the resolution.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Bramnick.

SENATOR BRAMNICK: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Singer.

SENATOR SINGER: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Burzichelli.

SENATOR BURZICHELLI: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Zwicker.

SENATOR ZWICKER: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Senator Ruiz.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

MS. CORRENTI: Chairman Scutari.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Yes.

Thank you, the resolution is passed. (applause)

I think somebody wants me to end the meeting, the mic went out. Next up--

SENATOR RUIZ: It's my job.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Thank you, Majority Leader. OK.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We have the series of resolutions-

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SENATOR SCUTARI: OK.

Next we have a series of resolutions regarding the descendants of our American Revolutionary War with us today. We're very lucky to have some of those descendants with us. Some of New Jersey's most storied families; just next door between us and the Snyder Academy lies the tombstones of America's founding sons and daughters. Here with us today is Bob Gula, who is the descendant of Isaac White and the Rev. John Harriman. Isaac White was the original Elizabeth associate and Elizabeth's first town clerk; Rev. John Harriman was an elder pastor of the historic congregation.

Nancy Bentz is a descendant of the Crane family, who were among Elizabethtown's earliest settlers. Stephen Crane was a delegate to the

Continental Congress, and also served in the New Jersey General Assembly and Legislative Counsel.

Leonard Jackson, Jr. is a descendant of the Bess and Post family. Leonard preserved his family burial record entrusted to him by his mother. Leonard Jackson, Jr. made an invaluable effort to the 313+ Ancestors Speak projects commission of restoring the names, dignity, and stories of the free and enslaved African American ancestors buried here. His work, as well as his family's devotion to preserving the 13-page burial list has brought dignity to those who were placed in the ground without even a first or a last name to commemorate them.

Jocelyn Francis-White is a descendant of Henry Philip VanDevere. Henry Philip VanDevere was the son of Philip Henry VanDevere and Katie VanDevere who came to this area on a Dutch slave ship. In Elizabeth, Henry established a moving company with a cart and a horse. This company passed through generations before finally closing in the 1960s. Henry Philip VanDevere's name was preserved in the survival burial records and was buried in this cemetery.

Rev. Caldwell Beier is a descendant of the Caldwell family. His ancestors, Rev. James Caldwell and his wife, Hannah Caldwell, were American Patriots who gave their lives during the Revolutionary War, one of which is on the pins of the Commissioners today. Rev. Caldwell served as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church and as a chaplain to the Jersey Brigade at Valley Forge where he ministered and helped supply Patriot troops. The church and the Caldwell home were burned by Loyalist forces in 1780. Hannah Caldwell was tragically killed by a British soldier during the Battle of Connecticut Farms while at home with her young children, an event which

is, as I stated, memorialized this seal of the County of Union -- Rev. Caldwell was later killed in Elizabethtown in 1781.

Pamela Witt Thoms is a descendant of John "Pilgrim" Ogden, one of the founders of Elizabethtown. John Ogden was an early English Colonial settler; a stone mason; and established multiple communities in Connecticut, Long Island, and New Jersey. John Ogden's descendants would go on to fight on the side of the Patriots in the American Revolution; negotiate treaties; become United States Senators, become the first Mayor of Chicago; and Governor of New Jersey.

I would ask all of our descendants to please rise and join us at the front to receive these ceremonial resolutions in recognition of your presence here today and for sharing your families' stories and history as we commemorate the 250th anniversary of our founding. (applause)

We'll have them up first--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Matt, this is--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yup, so each Senator has one for each descendant.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Each Senator has one for each descendant, so you all have one and you can bring those up forward, and then we will go back and present the other resolutions for the Mayor and the book.

SENATOR RUIZ: Leonard Jackson, Jr.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Leonard--

(indiscernible)

SENATOR SCUTARI: OK.

SENATOR RUIZ: They're not here.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Not here.

Senator Zwicker will present them.

Thank you.

Senator Bramnick.

SENATOR BRAMNICK: Leonard Jackson.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Jackson.

(indiscernible) I don't think he's here. How about Senator Singer?

SENATOR RUIZ: Is that the same one as this?

Which do you have? (Indiscernible)

SENATOR SCUTARI: How about Gregory Caldwell Beier?

You already have yours? (indiscernible)

SENATOR RUIZ: Has one--

SENATOR SCUTARI: Senator--

Thank you. Senator Burzichelli.

OK, great. Anybody not get a resolution, that's supposed to be getting one?

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes, (indiscernible)--

This is--

SENATOR SCUTARI: Hold on.

SENATOR RUIZ: We're going to have to replace the inside.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Sure, if everybody wants to stand in front of the podium and we'll get a picture; then, we'll do Resolutions 1, and 2, and 3.

Can we call Mayor Bollwage in for our presentation of Resolution 2?

Mayor, we have a book to present to you, if (indiscernible)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm speechless, and I'm grateful, I think this is the time that the (indiscernible) of this day for this (indiscernible)

This tells the stories of so many (indiscernible). And, so I'm grateful to hand it over to the Mayor (indiscernible).

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you, Dr. Lundy; thank you Senate President (indiscernible), here in the church, which is a priceless book, from April of 1776, so this is 1766 to whenever.

To 1941. This is a terrific presentation. Thank you for all your efforts on this. (applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: OK.

Next resolution--

Dr. Lundy. Lost the book, but you got a resolution. (laughter)

Thank you, congratulations. Final resolution is for Siloam Hope First Presbyterian Church. We're going to be presenting this to the Pastor Carson Washington and Elder Krishna. (applause)

Thank you, Senators, thank you, Mayor, and all members of the public that were here today. (indiscernible) we're not used to so much listening and talking, so, I'm going to allow Senators if they have any comments before we close the meeting. That's why we're in the Senate, outstanding job.

SENATOR RUIZ: I'll go last.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Nobody--

SENATOR RUIZ: Nobody wants to-- He wants to say something.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Senator Bramnick.

SENATOR BRAMNICK: Just a brief comment.

I'm just hoping our nation, for the next 250 years, reflects our history in terms of stability, kindness, and respect. Without that, we don't have a democracy. Thank you.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Thank you, Senator Bramnick.

Senator Singer.

SENATOR SINGER: Thank you, Senate President. As the lead in the New Jersey Senate, I want to thank the Mayor of Elizabeth and everyone here for a terrific program, well put together; thank you, Senate President, (indiscernible) our Chairman, and of course Ruiz the Majority Leader.

The leadership in the New Jersey Senate is terrific--

(microphone malfunction)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- Before we leave this building, let's do our part to be kind to one another, let's keep our eye on the ball, and let's start with fairness.

(applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: Before I finish up for Senators.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just asked about the books up here.

Very near and dear to my heart, John Ogden's Bible is up here. No touching, no touching.

(laughter)

And, Rev. Caldwell's Bible as well. (indiscernible) over from the archives in the library. So, I just wanted you all to know.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

SENATOR SCUTARI: Thank you very much.

Next is Senator Zwicker.

SENATOR ZWICKER: Thank you, Senate President.

Just to the people of Elizabeth and the rest of the state, thank you so much. Elizabeth is really the small microcosm of our entire state and our entire country; so grateful to be here, thank you, Senate President.
(applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: Thank you, Senator Zwicker.

And, of course, our Majority Leader, Senator Teresa Ruiz.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Senate President, and to our staff at the Senate Majority Office for seamlessly putting this together to celebrate the 250th; to the Mayor of the great City of Elizabeth; to all of my colleagues on different levels of government, thank you for welcoming us here today.

I think one constant theme that we heard from everybody who presented was liberty, the pursuit of justice, equality and opportunity. Those are the cornerstones that this country was built on, and yet, somehow every day it seems like each of those principles is eroded a little bit more. I sit in this church on multiple occasions for historic bill signings; I've stood in this church when English was not the primary language that was spoken; I've stood in this church when the City of Elizabeth consistently (indiscernible) its door open to bring community and purpose together in this space. I hope that this is a reminder that this country wasn't built through one lens, that so many contributed to it, and that while we teach our students its purpose, that we recognize that there have been pitfalls, and we don't do so to focus on that, we do so to empower. When we know our history, then we can move forward in a collected, conscious movement, united together. So, thank you,

Senate President, for bringing us all here today, and to the City of Elizabeth for being such a cornerstone and a neighbor to the City of Newark.

That's for you, David. (laughter) (applause)

SENATOR SCUTARI: Thank you, Senator.

And, finally, I just want to say that, it is a pleasure for me to lead the State Senate of New Jersey. It truly is a pleasure. People read about things that happen in Washington and the difficulties that we have in government, but in the State of New Jersey, we have an outstanding group of men and women that lead the state in a bipartisan fashion. I want to thank both sides of the aisle participating today, and thank you for the honor of being able to lead this really austere body.

There being no further business before the Committee, we're adjourned. Thank you, everybody.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)