



# AMERICA 250

## There's some odd stuff in the America250 time capsule

BY SWASTI SINGHAI  
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via Reuters Connect

"America's Time Capsule" has been officially sealed in commemoration of the United States' 250th birthday.

The 900-pound steel cylinder contains over 200 artifacts, records and objects to tell America's story when it is opened 250 years later.

The capsule will be buried in Philadelphia on July 4 as part of the hundreds of events for America's 250th anniversary that will take place nationwide.

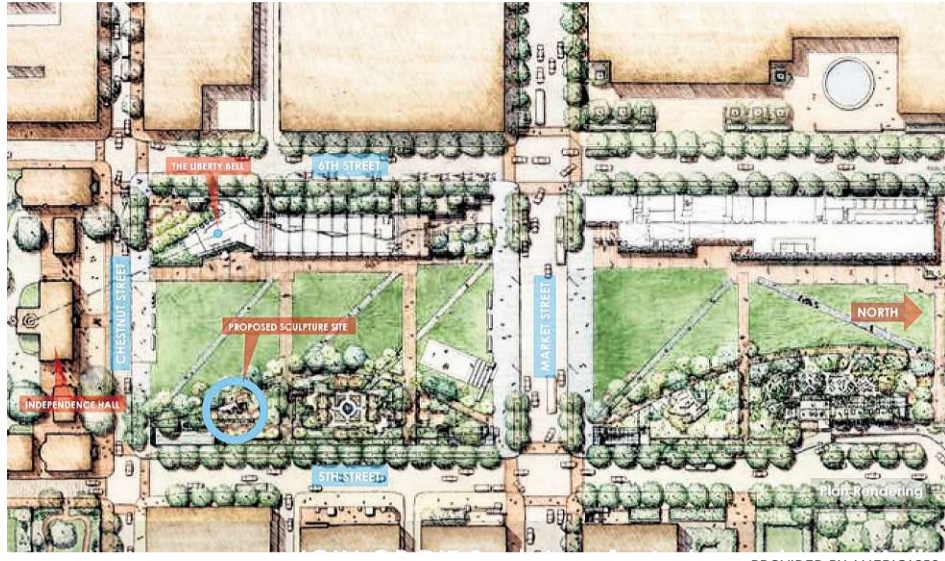
America250, the official nonpartisan commission designated by Congress to organize the July 4 celebrations, spearheaded the work to design the capsule and collect relics. All 50 states in conjunction with numerous national organizations contributed items (ranging from a vial of sand to an Olympic gold medal) reflecting the people, places and moments that shaped their history.

California contributed a NASA photo, an AI prediction and a fusion superconductor segment. Arizona contributed a copper ingot and a laser-etched challenge coin. Maine contributed a whale bone and a woven bookmark. And Utah contributed tickets to their amusement parks and George Washington's prayer medal.

"Now that America's Time Capsule has been sealed, it carries with it a remarkable record of this moment in our nation's history," said Chair of America250 Rosie Rios. "This moment is as much about the future as it is the past. When it is opened in 2276, future generations will see the care, pride, and optimism with which Americans marked our 250th anniversary."

Below is a list of an item contributed from each state and territory of the United States. Most states submitted multiple items, and the full list can be viewed on America250's official website.

**Alabama:** A series of poems written by author



America's Time Capsule will be buried at Independence Mall in Philadelphia.

and professor James Matthew Wilson entitled "America."

**Alaska:** A map of New Archangel, Alaska, when Russia sold Alaska to the United States in 1867.

**American Samoa:** A set of two uncirculated quarters from 2009 and 2020 with images of American Samoa.

**Arizona:** A laser etching of the text and signatures of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution on a coin.

**Arkansas:** A diamond found at the Crater of Diamonds State Park, the only place in the United States where people can search for diamonds and keep what they find.

**California:** A Claude AI prediction of what California will be like in 250 years on archival paper. This will serve as a "tangible representation" of AI in 2026.

**Colorado:** A set of postcards selected to represent "what life was like in Colorado in 2026."

**Connecticut:** The Official Proclamation document for the state.

**The District of Columbia:** A challenge coin with "Washington, D.C. 250" on one side and a building with flags and the Mayor's name etched on the other.

**Delaware:** A set of 12 notecards with writings and drawings from the state's citizens to answer what Delaware is to them.

**Florida:** The Florida Senate Booklet from 2024

to 2026, which describes the operations of the Senate.

**Georgia:** A distinct medallion of The Masters Logo, which has a yellow silhouette of the United States with a red flagstick to mark where Augusta, Georgia, is located.

**Guam:** A Gualofan ornament pendant, which is a traditional ornament that has become a "modern expression of Chamorro identity." The pendant represents the full moon.

**Hawaii:** A letter from Gov. Josh Green.

**Idaho:** A star garnet, which is the state's official gemstone found only in Idaho and one other place in the world. The garnet is meant to highlight the state's geological heritage.

**Illinois:** A poem authored by Illinois Poet Laureate Mark Turcotte titled "Dear New Blood."

**Indiana:** The Indiana 250 Annual Report, which shares the mission and objectives of the commission working to celebrate July Fourth.

**Iowa:** Astronaut Peggy Whitson's International Space Station medallion, which commemorates Whitson's leadership as the first woman to command the International Space Station.

**Kansas:** A document identifying Kansas250 commissioners and news items from the last year.

**Kentucky:** A commemorative coin from the Sons of the Revolution, intended to serve as a re-

minder of how the American Revolution influenced Kentucky.

**Louisiana:** A necklace with a Krewé of Bacchus pendant, a collectible from Mardi Gras, and glass beads.

**Maine:** A whale bone from the North Atlantic right whale, which is one of the world's most critically endangered large whale species.

**Maryland:** A challenge coin with Gov. Wes Moore's name and a map of the state on it.

**Massachusetts:** A set of archival prints, including a print of the Boston Massacre and a letter from John Adams and Benjamin Franklin to the Massachusetts Council.

**Michigan:** The state stone, or the Petoskey stone, which is native to the shores of Lake Michigan and formed nearly 350 million years ago.

**Minnesota:** The state's flag.

**Mississippi:** Four brass coins commemorating the U.S.'s largest rocket engine test site and the Birthplace of America's Music, amongst other notable events.

**Missouri:** A letter from Gov. Mike Kehoe to Americans 250 years later.

**Montana:** A beaded artwork created by an Arikara artist representing the state's landscapes and heritage.

**Nebraska:** An archival photo of the Vice Grip pliers, which symbolize the state's commerce and

history.

**Nevada:** A set of gambling chips to reflect the history of casinos across the state, which legalized gambling during the Great Depression.

**New Hampshire:** A print of a sticker depicting the center emblem of a flag carried by the Second New Hampshire Regiment of the Continental Army.

**New Jersey:** A stainless steel plate with greetings to people in 2276, with "the hope that the values that guide us in 2026 — liberty, opportunity, cooperation, love and respect for one another — continue to shape society."

**New Mexico:** A handcrafted red chile tile created by Mexican-American artist Jennel Juarez. The tile is one of New Mexico's longstanding cultural symbols.

**New York:** A written reflection from New York State.

**North Carolina:** A copper disk engraved with an image of the North Carolina State Capitol Building.

**North Dakota:** A commemorative coin representing the opening of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota.

**The Northern Mariana Islands:** A crescent-hewn symbol representing the Chamorro ancestors' leadership and noble standing.

**Ohio:** Fabric from the Wright Brothers' flight honoring the state's connection to the birth of aviation.

**Oklahoma:** A belt buckle that features images that represent the "grit, determination and spirit" of the state.

**Oregon:** A handcrafted pin created by Native American artist Lillian Pitt.

**Pennsylvania:** A "Greetings from Harrisburg" letter from Gov. Josh Shapiro.

**Puerto Rico:** A rosary to represent the importance of faith on the island.

**Rhode Island:** A holiday ornament meant to honor the state's Revolutionary War legacy.

**South Carolina:** A coin commemorating the work done by the state's 250 Commission.

**South Dakota:** A poetry book celebrating the state's rivers, wildlife and homestead culture through a special edition

of "This Far Country" authored by Joseph Botum.

**Tennessee:** An original poster designed by one of the state's artists to highlight Tennessee's agricultural history and cultural symbols, including its role in the Civil Rights movement and women's suffrage.

**Texas:** The state seal on a chiseled glass paperweight. The seal was designed in 1836 during the Texas Revolution.

**The U.S. Virgin Islands:** A letter from Gov. Albert Bryan, Jr.

**Utah:** A set of 101 paper cards with different people that shaped Utah history.

**Vermont:** A Battle of Hubbardton ornament. The battle was the only Revolutionary War battle fought entirely on what is now considered Vermont.

**Virginia:** A challenge coin representing the state's commemoration of America's semiquincentennial.

**Washington:** A letter from Washington State Lt. Gov. Denny Heck to the future.

**West Virginia:** A student essay authored by Alyssa Dalton titled "Remembering our Foundation" celebrating the nation's 250th birthday. The essay was solicited from a statewide essay contest to recognize how "the young people... will continue to guide our state."

**Wisconsin:** An Eagle feather and photo of Old Abe, an American bald eagle who served with the Eighth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment during the Civil War.

**Wyoming:** A letter from Gov. Mark Gordon to future Americans.

Many of the capsule's collections were specifically designed for the commemoration. For example, the Library of Congress contributed a molecular data storage device about 0.2 inches with synthetic DNA encoded with digital copies of the library's items. It includes Thomas Jefferson's rough draft of the Declaration of Independence, a 3D rendering of President Abraham Lincoln's hand and an 1898 audio recording of the national anthem.

Companies such as Coca Cola and Apple along with museums like the Smithsonian Institute also contributed items.

### COMMENTARY

## Freedom Train united a divided nation then. What about a Freedom Plane now?

BY ERIK J. CHAPUT  
The Providence Journal  
guest columnist

In the fall of 1947, a specially outfitted train carrying a cache of documents from American history departed Philadelphia on a coast-to-coast journey to commemorate the 160th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution. The United States had emerged triumphant from the Second World War, but as the Freedom Train began its journey the nation found itself engaged in a new campaign — to stop the spread of communism.

Just a few months before the Freedom Train's departure from the city where both the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the U.S. Constitution (1787) were drafted, President Harry Truman committed the United States to containing the global spread of communism and to defending democracy.

Writing at the height of the Cold War, historian Adrienne Koch argued that the American brand



The Freedom Plane is a traveling exhibition that will bring founding-era documents to eight American cities throughout 2026 celebrating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the United States of America's birthday.

needed to be promoted because Soviet philosophy "denied the reality of moral values."

The seven-car train was powered by a streamlined locomotive named "The Spirit of 1776." On board the moving historical shrine were hundreds of priceless documents, including Jefferson's draft of the Declaration and the Bill of Rights and the Emancipation Proclamation. Over the course of the next year and a half, the Freedom

Train traversed the country and was boarded by over 3 million Americans eager to view some of the seminal documents in our nation's history. The train pulled into Providence's Union Station on Oct. 8, 1947. The Providence Evening Bulletin reported that a crowd of over 10,000 jammed the station to see rare pieces of American history.

Almost three decades later, the organizers of the nation's Bicentennial

celebration revived the post-World War II journey, but in an even grander fashion, with over 500 historical documents laid out in 26 cars painted red, white and blue. Like its predecessor, the Bicentennial version crisscrossed the country during a tumultuous period at home and abroad. The tour followed closely on the heels of the Watergate crisis and the fallout from the Vietnam War.

The train arrived in

Providence on Aug. 6, 1976, for its four-day stay and was greeted by Providence Mayor Vincent A. "Buddy" Cianci, the widely popular radio personality Salty Brine, Rhode Island '76 Chairman and Providence College professor Patrick T. Conley, along with a big crowd at the railroad yard near the State House. President Gerald Ford, who had issued a controversial pardon to former President Richard Nixon, later noted that the Freedom Train helped to heal the "nation's wounds." Americans had "rediscovered" their "faith" and "laid the foundation for a future that had to be filled with hope."

During the current America 250 campaign, there will not be a revamped Freedom Train, but the National Archives is sponsoring a Freedom Plane, which will bring historical documents to eight locations (between March and August 2026). On board is a printing of the Constitution in draft form with delegates' handwritten notes. To date, the plane has not generated the fanfare of its predecessors.

Beset by foreign and domestic crises not dissimilar from the timing of previous grand tours of national treasures, America is currently at a cross-

roads. The fabric of our political culture has frayed. There is again a need to "resell America to Americans," to borrow a popular phrase from the late 1940s. This is especially true for a younger generation of students who are justifiably turned off by a political culture in which politicians conduct themselves in a manner that would violate every tenet of a school-issued handbook.

Reflecting on the Constitution 30 years after its adoption, former President James Madison noted that its drafting occurred at a crucial moment when many wondered "whether the American Experiment was to be a blessing to the world," or if its demise would "blast forever the hopes the republican cause had inspired."

Here's hoping the 2026 Freedom Plane might eventually have a positive impact on rejuvenating an understanding of the "blessing" the American experiment can continue to be in the 21st century.

Erik J. Chaput has been a high school and college educator for over 20 years. He is the author of "The People's Martyr: Thomas Wilson Dorr and His 1842 Rhode Island Rebellion." This column is from USA TODAY Network via Reuters Connect.