

Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission Workgroup #3 (Education)

Richmond
August 15, 2007

Workgroup 3 (Education) of the Virginia Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the American Civil War Commission held its organizational meeting on August 15, 2007, in Richmond. The Commission was established by the 2006 General Assembly to prepare, lead, and coordinate Virginia's commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War. Together with an Executive Committee and Advisory Council, the Commission has established three workgroups, consisting of numerous experts, elected officials, state and local agency staff, and citizens representing a myriad of disciplines, professional associations, and community organizations throughout the Commonwealth to assist it with its work: Workgroup 1 (Coordination); Workgroup 2 (Signature Events); and Workgroup 3 (Education).

Responsibilities of Workgroup 3 (Education)

One of the most important objectives of the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War in Virginia is educating and providing complete and historically accurate information to citizens, particularly students, young adults, and newcomers to the state concerning the war, Virginia's role, the legacy of the war, and the significance of the war to contemporary society. To this end, the Education Workgroup has responsibility for the following:

- **Participation of the public education community.** To stimulate awareness, enhance knowledge, and promote interest and appreciation of this era in American history and life, (ii) place events in historical context, particularly relative to new research findings, and (iii) facilitate an understanding of the significance of this historical period to contemporary society.
- **Review of the Standards of Learning for History and Social Studies.** To review the Standards of Learning for History and Social Studies, its curriculum framework, and the Enhanced Scope and Sequence Guides to ensure that the instructional blueprint is current, balanced, and accurate in its account of American Civil War history, preceding, during, and after the War. To provide supplemental instructional materials and resources for teachers. To stimulate an avid interest in history and the love and appreciation of lifelong learning and academic excellence among students and to promote the development of critical thinking and analytical skills. To promote mastery of academic skills required by SOLs and NCLB, improved SOL pass rates, and increased student knowledge of history, particularly American Civil War history.
- **Teacher institutes.** To equip classroom teachers to impart relevant, timely, and historically accurate instruction to students concerning the American Civil War, including, but not limited to its prelude, duration, aftermath, and legacy, through creative and innovative instructional modalities that accommodate student learning styles, are consistent with the Standards of Learning in History and Social Studies, and enable teachers to satisfy in-service training requirements.
- **Participation of institutions of higher education.** To marshal the collective assets and expertise of institutions of higher education to promote and coalesce academic inquiry and scholarly research pertaining to the American Civil War. To facilitate public discourse concerning this period in American history, Virginia's role, the legacy of the war, and the implication and application of lessons learned.
- **Law school symposia.** To educate the citizenry and examine, reflectively, the historical, political, social, and legal context of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments of the United States Constitution, their significance to the foundation and reinforcement of the Rule of Law, and the relevance of these Amendments to the legacy of the war and contemporary national and global issues.

- **Participation of public libraries.** To ensure the broad diffusion of information concerning the commemoration of the sesquicentennial and the availability and access of commemorative materials, documents, exhibits, and resources to citizens throughout the Commonwealth.

Overview of the Commission

Ms. Cheryl Jackson, Commission Coordinator, presented an overview of the Commission's statutory duties, organization, activities, and plans. Ms. Jackson commented that Virginia is the only state with advanced planning and an established statewide commission to commemorate the sesquicentennial anniversary of the war. She also summarized the history and activities of the Centennial Commemoration in Virginia to provide the background and context for planning the 150th commemoration, noting similarities between the commemorations, mistakes to avoid and lessons learned, and the gateway before the Sesquicentennial Commission to maximize and market the Commonwealth's educational, economic, tourism, and historical assets, demonstrate national leadership, and ensure the participation of all citizens in the observance of this significant mark in American history.

Workgroup Deliberations

Members of the Education Workgroup were canvassed prior to the meeting to ascertain their perspectives concerning the "message" that students and the public should receive about and during the commemoration of the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War. A roundtable discussion was devoted to a candid airing of comments, perspectives, and suggestions regarding the "message" that should be promoted, various mechanisms for delivering the "message" to specific audiences, collaboration among the public and private and higher education systems, community involvement, diversity among the membership of the Workgroup, the importance of inclusiveness and the investment of all citizens in the commemoration, and ways to encourage their participation. Common themes and points of agreement identified from among the comments and suggestions solicited of the Workgroup members prior to the meeting were summarized by Brenda Edwards, staff contact for the Workgroup, who also presented proposed objectives and specific strategies to accomplish each of the Workgroup's goals.

Work Plan and Future Meetings

The staff's proposed objectives were adopted as the framework for the Workgroup's plans. Workgroup members were asked to submit additional ideas, suggestions, and cost estimates to assist the staff in refining the objectives and establishing priority events, programs, and activities. Using the members' contributions and other information, the staff was directed to construct a definitive work plan for the Workgroup's consideration at its next meeting. A summary of the Workgroup's meeting and proposed objectives will be presented by Delegate Algie Howell, Workgroup Chairman, to the Executive Committee and the Commission. A date for the next Workgroup meeting has not been set.

Chairman:

The Honorable Algie T. Howell, Jr.

For information, contact:

Brenda H. Edwards, DLS Staff