



**For Immediate Release:
May 23, 2025**

Contact: Kevin J. Gaydosh, APR
Ph: 757-646-3493
Email: kevingaydosh@obrienetal.com

One-Year Countdown to Sail250® Virginia Begins Gov. Youngkin, Mayor Alexander Announce Plans, Preparations for Once-in-a-Generation Maritime Event: “Together, We Are Making History Again.”

NORFOLK, VA (May 23, 2025) — Norfolk Mayor Kenneth C. Alexander welcomed Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin, along with other elected officials and regional leaders from across Hampton Roads, today at the Waterside Marina to officially launch the one-year countdown to Sail250® Virginia - a historic maritime celebration commemorating the 250th anniversary of the United States.

Hosted by Sail250® Virginia President & CEO Karen Scherberger, the event marks the final year of preparations for what will be one of the largest and most impactful maritime commemorations in Virginia history.

As one of only five official U.S. ports selected for the national Sail250® America tour, Norfolk will host the Parade of Sail on June 19, followed by four days of ship visits and special events.

“In June 2026, more than 60 tall ships and military vessels from over 20 nations, with 10,000 crew members will sail into the heart of Virginia,” said Scherberger. “It will be a once-in-a-generation event that honors our naval heritage, promotes international goodwill, and brings millions in economic impact to our region and Commonwealth.

Governor Youngkin hailed the event as a powerful symbol of Virginia’s maritime legacy and global connections.

“As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of our nation, Sail250® Virginia is a unique opportunity to honor America’s remarkable journey and showcase Virginia as a vibrant gateway to the world,” **said Governor Glenn Youngkin.** “As these tall ships gather to celebrate our independence, they will also shine a spotlight on the rich and enduring heritage of Virginia’s maritime community.”

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Norfolk Mayor Kenneth Alexander, “Norfolk is proud to serve as host port for Sail250® Virginia and values the cooperation of our friends in the 10 other Chesapeake Bay regional Affiliate Harbor cities who will provide additional ship visits and special events.”

Historic character vessels will begin to arrive in the SailVirginia™ 2026 Affiliate Harbors June 12 - 15, 2026 and more will join the Sail250® Virginia international fleet, hosted by Norfolk, June 19 – 23, 2026. SailVirginia™ 2026 Affiliate Harbors include: - each hosting complementary events and ship visits. Alexandria, Cape Charles, Chesapeake, Hampton, Onancock, Portsmouth, Richmond, Smithfield/Isle of Wight County, Virginia Beach, Yorktown. The U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, and other sea services will also participate.

Beyond the spectacle on the water, Sail250® Virginia will offer immersive educational experiences for students, youth, and civic groups. Through the Adopt A Ship program, participants will connect with international crews before the ships arrive and welcome them in person in June 2026.

The Sail250® Virginia celebration is produced Norfolk Festevents Ltd., in partnership with the VA250 Commission, U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, and municipalities statewide. Since 1964, Norfolk has marked eight other historic milestones with high profile maritime events in 1976, 1986, 1992, 2000, 2007, 2012.

“This is more than a celebration — it’s a statement,” said Scherberger. “Norfolk is reaffirming its place as a harbor of history and a port of international friendship.”

“Together, we are making history again!”

For more details, visit www.sail250virginia.com

Here is a Dropbox link for video and photo assets from the Press conference.

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/klykpxd3m9twtf4kebrh/ALl8vZPTnb50fskjynNNZpk?rlkey=ezykhfuynhm4nqvyu7e0jd2vxe&st=d9hmeqvs&dl=0>

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Media inquiries: Sail250VAinfo@festevents.org

Contact: Kevin J. Gaydosh, APR

Ph: 757-646-3493