

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Okaloosa County America 250 Commission

February 17, 2026



Okaloosa County America 250 Commission Begins Year-Long Planning Efforts for America 250 Celebration

Okaloosa County, Florida – The Okaloosa County America 250 Commission held its first meeting on Thursday, February 5, 2026, in Shalimar to discuss and plan various 250 anniversary events to celebrate the birth of the United States and encourage every American in Okaloosa County to engage in this historic moment in our nation’s history.

Commissioners attending the first meeting included the Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of the American Revolution, Florida State America 250 Commission, the Florida Historical Commission, Okaloosa County School District, Chambers of Commerce, Okaloosa League of Cities, local US Military Bases, Scouting America NW Florida, Billy Bowlegs Association, first responders, and five (5) at-large appointees of the Okaloosa County Commission. Community volunteers interested in serving as support staff for the Commission were also in attendance.

“We have a rich history that deserves to be recognized both nationally and in Okaloosa County,” said Okaloosa America 250 Commission Chairman Graham Fountain. “We can all come together, pause and reflect on the contributions made by our patriot ancestors who fought and died to create our great republic and those many heroes that continue to make the United States of America a true example of freedom throughout the next 250 years.”

The Commission will be identifying, scheduling, and co-sponsoring various 250 anniversary events throughout the 2026 celebration year. Events will be added and adjusted throughout the planning process.

Events currently being planned include:

- February 20 - All Sports Association will kick off a new Military Award in honor of Patriots and acknowledge America250!
- February 28 - The Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce will host A HEROES DINNER, honoring our military. For tickets call the chamber at 850-244-8192.
- March 23 - United for a Good Cause will host an America250! International Festival
- May 9 – Patriots Day will be held in downtown Crestview with a Grand Parade and America 250 celebration at the courthouse.
- June 12 - Patriotic Drone Show at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Rigdon Center from 6-10 pm with a community tailgate at Freedom Tech Center/Fairgrounds for the show.
- June 12 - A Gala will be held (hosted by the Choctawhatchee Bay DAR) in the evening at Destin-Fort Walton Beach Rigdon Center following the drone show. This event is open to anyone with purchased tickets.
- July 4th America250! - Fireworks will be held by our local municipalities

- In October, the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce plans to organize a “Remember 9/11” event with a Patriots focus.
- November 11 - Veterans Day program at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center on Okaloosa Island at 9 a.m., an 11:00 a.m. ceremony at Beal Memorial Cemetery, and a 1:00 p.m. Veterans Day Parade in Mary Esther.

To get us in the “spirit of 1776”, the Commission encourages attendees/participants at events to dress in colonial/continental attire/period clothing; civilian wear, colonial military uniforms, dresses, tricorn hats and ladies' bonnets. “Part of the fun in paying tribute to the colonial/continental period of our history is learning more about our founders and ancestors and dressing in period attire at America 250 events,” said Vice Chairman Mitzi Henley.

How to promote your event:

- Organizations wishing to have their event posted and advertised publicly should follow the instructions for submissions on the official Okaloosa America 250 website at getthecoast.com/America250.
- The Commission encourages organizations to add @OkaloosaCountyAmerica250 as a co-host on Facebook to help promote the event.
- Submit photos, flyers, logos and other assets for your event at <https://bit.ly/Okaloosa250Assets>

For questions, please email the Commission’s Chairman, the Hon. Graham W. Fountain at america250@myokaloosa.com or call (850) 830-0002. Find us on Facebook at [@OkaloosaCountyAmerica250](https://www.facebook.com/OkaloosaCountyAmerica250). For additional information concerning the upcoming May 9 Grand Parade/250 Celebration in Crestview, please contact Melissa Carter, Crestview Special Events Manager at carterc@cityofcrestview.org or 850-974-8136.

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About the Okaloosa County America 250 Commission

The Okaloosa County America 250 Commission was founded by resolution of the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners on Jan. 20, 2026, to support efforts to provide meaningful activities to the citizens and visitors of Okaloosa County throughout the 2026 calendar year to celebrate the founding of the United States of America, designated as the “America 250 Celebration Year.” The Commission is made up of 18 members that include: President of the Sons of the American Revolution (Chairman), Regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution Choctawhatchee Bay Chapter, representative of the West Florida Daughters of the American Revolution, Director of the Tourist Development Department, Representative of the Okaloosa County School District, representative of the Florida State Historical Commission, one representative of each chamber of commerce, one mayor as designated by the League of Cities, one general from the U.S. military, representative of the Krewe of Billy Bowlegs, President of the NAACP, District Commissioner of the Choctawhatchee District of the Gulf Coast Council of Scouting America and five members appointed, by County Commissioners (one each). The Commission will operate through Jan. 31, 2027.