



Thursday, September 17, 2026

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY | HELMS SCHOOL
of GOVERNMENT

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On behalf of the **Helms School of Government** and the **Liberty University School of Law**, it is our distinct honor to welcome you to the “**To Secure These Rights: Blessings of the Declaration**” Conference.

This gathering is more than an academic event—it is a timely celebration of the **250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence**. As we reflect on a quarter-millennium of constitutional governance, we pause to consider the enduring principles upon which our republic stands. We focus our attention today on the defining document that declared the basic human rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that ultimately announced our independence.

Throughout the day, distinguished speakers will engage in robust dialogue to explore the origins, role, and enduring nature of the Declaration of Independence and conclude with a public reading and distribution of copies of the Declaration and Constitution at the Montview Student Union.

We hope this conference will inspire continued pursuit of knowledge and wisdom concerning the constitutional principles upon which our founding fathers formed this great nation.

Thank you for joining us on this historic occasion.

God Bless and Semper Fi,

Dean Jason Q. Bohm

Helms School of Government

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

8:15am-8:20am.....**Opening Remarks and Prayer**
Dean Jason Bohm

8:20am-9:30am.....**"Equal Justice for All"**
The Honorable Bethany A.S. Harrison

9:45am-11:00am.....**"America's Second "Revolution"**
Dr. Timothy O'Brien

11:15am-12:30pm.....**"To Secure Economic Liberty: The Declaration of Independence
as a Foundation for Modern Regulatory Reform"**
Mr. Walter Frimpong
Student Scholarship Award Essay Contest Winner

12:45pm-2:00pm.....**"Constitutional Resilience in the Commonwealth:
Navigating Political Turmoil in Modern Virginia"**
Senator Mark Peake

2:15pm-3:30pm.....**"Unheeded Critics: Anti-Federalists and the Rise of National Power"**
Professor Aaron Van Allen

4:30pm-5:45pm.....**Live Reading of the U.S. Constitution**
Pizza, Prizes, and a Celebration of Our National Heritage
On the Montview Steps/Academic Lawn

6:45pm-8:30pm.....**Secretary Mike Pompeo Distinguished Speaker Series**

*This event will feature **Congressman Bob Goodlatte** as he is interviewed by Professor Aaron Van Allen. **Congressman Bob Goodlatte**, the former chair of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary. The Committee on the Judiciary has been called the lawyer for the House of Representatives due to its jurisdiction over matters relating to the administration of justice. Christians are called to "seek justice and love mercy" (Micah 6:8), and with in mind, we invite you to join us for an evening focused on our nation's administration of justice as well as insights into wide-ranging national affairs.*

Q&A and light refreshments to follow. Use the QR code to RSVP; space limited.





The Honorable Bethany Harrison is the Commonwealth's Attorney for the City of Lynchburg, Virginia where she started her career as a prosecutor in 2006. Bethany was elected as Lynchburg's first female Commonwealth's Attorney in 2018, and she was re-elected to the same office in 2022 and 2026. Throughout her career Bethany has served on numerous boards of non-profit organizations and state committees. She and her family are members of Rivermont Evangelical Presbyterian Church.



Dr. Timothy O'Brien currently serves the Helms School as an Associate Professor, Subject Matter Expert, Instructional Mentor, and Program Director of the Doctor in Public Policy program. He earned a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Public Policy from The L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. Through the most difficult times in his life, his faith has carried, and continues to carry, him through to success.



Mr. Wilson Frimpong is a Ph.D. student in Public Policy with a cognate in Economic Policy at Liberty University's Helms School of Government. He holds a master's degree in economics and has professional experience in financial services. His research focuses on regulatory policy, economic liberty, financial regulatory complexity, and small-business access to credit. His scholarship examines how public policy can promote accountable governance, economic opportunity, and human flourishing. Mr. Frimpong is this year's recipient of the 2026 Constitution Day Conference Student Research Scholarship.



Senator Mark Peake is a senator for the 8th district of Virginia. He was elected to the Virginia Senate in January 2017. Senator Mike Peake serves on the Courts of Justice, Commerce & Labor, Education & Health, and Rules Senate Committees. He graduated from Virginia Tech and Washington and Lee Law School. Senator Peake has served his community by being involved with many organizations such as the Commonwealth Transportation Board, the Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Lynchburg Bar Association, and the Lynchburg Republican Committee.



Professor Aaron Van Allen holds an M.A. in Public Policy from Liberty University and a B.A. in Government from Hampden-Sydney College. He serves as the Department Chair and Associate Professor of Government at Liberty University's Helms School of Government. His expertise includes congressional operations, constituent services, and the legislative process, shaped by over a decade of experience in the U.S. House of Representatives. He has coordinated military service academy nominations and supported policy development in economics, education, energy, and defense.