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First Landing license plate celebrates foundation of faith

By Pamela Burnham Guest columnist

In the shadow of Cape Henry's windswept dunes, where the Atlantic meets the Chesapeake Bay, a pivotal moment in America's story unfolded on April 29, 1607. There, 104 English settlers, led by Rev. Robert Hunt, erected a wooden cross and dedicated the land to God, planting the seeds of faith and freedom that would shape a nation. This "First Landing," often overshadowed by the later establishment of Jamestown, marked a spiritual and cultural foundation that still resonates more than four centuries later.

Today, community leaders are working to ensure this history receives the recognition it deserves. Don Blake, president of the Virginia Christian Alliance, has spent more than 15 years uniting clergy and advocating for family values. In collaboration with groups such as Banners4Freedom, Blake is mobilizing efforts to reconnect Virginians with the enduring legacy of the First Landing.

"This is about pastors and communities coming together around something that transcends denominations," Blake said, emphasizing the event's unifying power.

Momentum for the cause is building. On April 29, President Donald Trump issued a proclamation marking the 418th anniversary of the First Landing and the Raising of the Cape Henry Cross, the first recognition by a U.S. president in 418 years. In his statement, Trump declared, "Today, a majestic granite cross stands on those same hallowed shores as a testament to the steadfast Christian belief of the Jamestown settlers that God's grace abides, his mercy is abundant, and his glory is everlasting."

Virginia leaders have also played a role in preserving the First Landing's memory. In 1997, Gov. George Allen and his wife, Susan, spearheaded the renaming of Seashore State Park to First Landing State Park. Former Gov. Bob McDonnell advanced efforts to promote Virginia's historical heritage, and Gov. Glenn Youngkin has issued First Landing Day resolutions in 2023, 2024 and 2025. National voices have amplified Cape Henry's place in America's story, with Glenn Beck delivering the keynote at the 2023 commemoration alongside historian and author William Federer, whose remarks highlighted the enduring significance of faith in America's founding.

Blake's latest initiative seeks to create a specialty Virginia license plate honoring the First Landing of 1607. Featuring imagery of the Cape Henry Cross, the plate would serve as a daily reminder of Virginia's foundational role in America's beginnings. To move forward, the Department of Motor Vehicles requires 450 pre-paid applications. Once the DMV certifies that requirements have been met, certification will be sent to the General Assembly for final approval.

Joining Blake in this effort are First Landing Declaration of Covenant and Pray America Great author Donica Hudson; Robert and Jaime Agee of Banners4Freedom; and original First Landing 1607 Project founders Craig Hudgins and Jack Stagman. Together, they are rallying Virginians to meet the goal in time for the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026. For Blake and his partners, success would not only secure a new license plate but also create a traveling conversation starter, one that could educate children, inspire newcomers and remind longtime residents of Virginia's place in America's origin story.

The First Landing license plate is more than a symbol; it is an invitation to conversation about faith, freedom and the enduring purpose declared on Virginia's shores. Hampton Roads residents can take part by visiting FirstLanding1607.com to pre-order a plate and add their names to the supporter database. By doing so, they help renew a legacy of unity and liberty, first planted here in 1607. As Blake notes, "This is about passing on to the next generation what was entrusted to us."

Pamela Burnham of Virginia Beach spent more than a decade in critical-care nursing before shifting her focus to naturopathic practice and holistic wellness. She is a community advocate for faith, freedom and health sovereignty, working with local leaders to strengthen Virginia's heritage and civic life.