

Former President George H.W. Bush

Representative government in America began at Jamestown, and many of the world's great ideas about liberty were worked out by the giants of the founding generation here in Colonial Williamsburg and other colonial capitals. In the 20th century our country, along with strong partners and friends such as the United Kingdom, sacrificed blood and treasure to defeat a series of totalitarian threats. In doing so we presented the chance for the world's people to live in peace and freedom.

One needs only to look to Europe's outstanding progress since the Iron Curtain came down to see the power and potential of people once freed to chart their own course. Yet, we know that the business of democracy is hard, hard work. New challenges and new opportunities arise everyday and they demand the best each generation has to contribute. That process of thinking, discussing, planning and innovating, is what this *World Forum on the Future of Democracy* is all about. I encourage you to participate actively in the dialogue over the next several days; to consider the perspectives of your colleagues, and to make up your own mind about how best to preserve freedom and democracy around the world. The journey launched at Jamestown continues and even 400 years later there is still much to be done.