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## MEDIA ADVISORY

### **New Regional Citizenship and Branding Initiative to Go Public December 13**

*"America's First Region" to Debut Before 800 at Chamber Annual Meeting*

On the eve of the year in which America will celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landing and settlement at Jamestown, the organization representing all of Hampton Roads' local governments, colleges, military commands and leading businesses will announce a major effort to promote **regional citizenship**.

**On Wednesday December 13, during the annual meeting of the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, an 11:30 am lunchtime event expected to draw more than 800 people to the Chesapeake Conference Center, the Hampton Roads Partnership will unveil the community's first ever branding initiative: *Hampton Roads, America's First Region*.**

"The need for this designation has never been greater, nor has the timing of its commencement," says Dana Dickens, President of the Hampton Roads Partnership. "With great challenges like transportation, public safety, economic and tourism development, job creation and quality of life enhancement so important to all of our 17 localities, we need to come together by first acknowledging and rallying around something we all share, which is our shared history."

*Hampton Roads, America's First Region* has its genesis in a pivotal period in American history. "When three English ships arrived at Virginia Beach on April 26, 1607, they did not stay put," says Deborah Stearns, co-chair of the Partnership and President of Advantis Real Estate. "They sailed up our rivers and bays, stopping at what is today Norfolk and Hampton, eventually settling for good on May 14 at Jamestown. In those 18 days and the many that followed, Hampton Roads became America's First Region."

"In fact," says Bruce Goodson, Chairman of the James City County Board of Supervisors, "Virginia Beach and James City County remain the boundaries of the Hampton Roads region, and our interdependence is greater than ever."

Goodson is one of a number of local elected leaders who have pledged their city, county or town's support for the campaign and intend to display the blue and green HR-AFR logo on literature, websites and other public places.

"I think it's brilliant," says Paul Fraim, Mayor of Norfolk and current head of the Hampton Roads Mayors and Chairs. "It tells all of us here in the region that we have a common heritage and a leadership position in the country. Norfolk is very much behind this." So is Virginia Beach, according to Mayor Meyera Oberndorf. "As a native of Newport News who moved to the southside, I have always considered myself a regional citizen. If we can all think that way, it will lead to more regionally inspired approaches to the challenges that confront us."

At the annual meeting of the HR Chamber, to which leadership of the Peninsula, Greater Williamsburg, York County and Smithfield-Isle of Wight Chambers have been invited, guests will be encouraged to identify their companies and organizations as proud to do business in or to serve **Hampton Roads, America's First Region**. "We have established a website, [www.americasfirstregion.com](http://www.americasfirstregion.com), where organizations and individuals can download artwork to use on their websites and signage or include in ads, newsletters, brochures and other materials to identify themselves as part of this important regional citizenship project," says Dickens, who is a former mayor of Suffolk. "We certainly do not expect this to be implemented everywhere overnight; but a host of localities, associations and companies have already signed on, and we expect that number to grow dramatically as word spreads."

"This is not a short term campaign," says Tom Frantz, an attorney with Williams-Mullen and co-chair of the Partnership. "We want **America's First Region** to be how people, here and elsewhere, define Hampton Roads forever; and for all of our cities, counties, towns and other institutions to work together to create more historic firsts for our area, the state and nation, as our first regional citizens did 400 years ago."

The announcement of the HR-AFR effort, which will include a videotaped endorsement from Governor Tim Kaine, will take place during the Chamber's luncheon, which begins at 11:30 a.m. on December 13 and is expected to end no later than 1:30 p.m.

*The Hampton Roads Partnership is a public-private nonprofit committed to pursuing regional competitiveness for Hampton Roads in a dynamic global economy. The Partnership represents ten cities, six counties, and one town in Southeastern Virginia and their citizens totaling nearly 1.6 million. The Partnership facilitates regional collaboration and action resulting in a better quality of life for all of the region's citizens.*

For more information, visit [www.hrp.org](http://www.hrp.org) or call 757-625-4696.