Virginia Chronology, 1776–1791

**1776**

**15 May** Revolutionary convention instructs delegates in Congress to call for independence, foreign alliances, and a form of confederation. Also appoints a committee to prepare a declaration of rights and a form of government for Virginia.

**7 June** Richard Henry Lee moves in Congress that colonies “are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States,” that foreign alliances should be entered into, and that a plan of confederation be prepared.

**12 June** Virginia Declaration of Rights adopted.

**29 June** Virginia Constitution adopted; Patrick Henry elected governor.

**2 July** Congress declares the colonies independent.

**4 July** Congress adopts Declaration of Independence.
1777

15 November  Congress adopts Articles of Confederation and sends them to states for approval.

16 December  Legislature ratifies Articles of Confederation.

1781

2 January    Legislature cedes Northwest Territory to Congress.

14 June      Legislature approves Impost of 1781.

19 October   British forces surrender at Yorktown.

17 December  Legislature suspends approval of Impost of 1781 until approved by other states.

1782

7 December   Legislature repeals its approval of Impost of 1781.

1783
13 December  Congress requests a second cession of Northwest Territory from Virginia.

12 December  Legislature authorizes Congress to retaliate against British trade restrictions in West Indies.

18 December  Legislature approves Impost of 1783.

20 December  Legislature cedes Northwest Territory to Congress.

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1784

1 March  Congress accepts Virginia’s cession of Northwest Territory.

26 June  Legislature approves amendment to Articles of Confederation to share expenses according to population.

28 June  Legislature appoints commissioners to meet with Maryland commissioners to discuss commercial problems over the jurisdiction and navigation of the Potomac River.
29 June  
Legislature approves amendment to Articles of Confederation to grant Congress power to regulate commerce for fifteen years.

19 November  
Legislature instructs delegates to Congress to secure navigation of Mississippi River.

15 December  
Congress officially informed that Spain has closed navigation of Mississippi River to Americans.

1785

25–28 March  
Mount Vernon Conference.

1786

21 January  
Legislature calls interstate meeting to consider granting Congress power to regulate trade and appoints Edmund Randolph, James Madison, Walter Jones, St. George Tucker, and Meriwether Smith as delegates.
3 August  Congress receives Secretary for Foreign Affairs John Jay’s request to forbear navigation of Mississippi River for twenty-five years so he could conclude commercial treaty with Spain.

29 August Congress votes seven states to five to approve Jay’s request. Virginia votes with minority.

11–14 September Annapolis Convention meets and calls for a convention to meet in Philadelphia on 14 May 1787.

1 November House of Delegates rejects petitions favoring paper money; it condemns paper money as “unjust, impolitic, and destructive.”

17 November House of Delegates receives petition from inhabitants of Kentucky protesting rumored action by Congress giving up navigation of Mississippi River.

23 November Legislature authorizes appointment of delegates to Constitutional Convention.

7 December  Legislature instructs its delegates to Congress to oppose any attempt by Congress to give up right to navigate Mississippi River.

1787

21 February  Congress calls for Constitutional Convention to meet in Philadelphia on 14 May.

22 February  Thomas Nelson, Jr., appointed delegate to Constitutional Convention in place of Patrick Henry, who declined to serve.

20 March    Richard Henry Lee appointed delegate to Constitutional Convention in place of Thomas Nelson, Jr., who declined to serve.

5 April     James McClurg appointed delegate to Constitutional Convention in place of Richard Henry Lee, who declined to serve.
5 May     James Madison arrives in Philadelphia.

13 May    George Washington arrives in Philadelphia.

14 May    Constitutional Convention meets, but lacks quorum.

17 May    George Mason, the final Virginia delegate, arrives in Philadelphia.

25 May    Convention attains quorum.

29 May    Virginia Resolutions presented to Convention.

19 June   Committee of the Whole adopts and reports amended Virginia Resolutions to Convention.

17 September Constitution signed by all delegates present except George Mason, Edmund Randolph, and Elbridge Gerry; Convention adjourns *sine die*.

26 September First printing of Constitution in Virginia.
28 September  Alexandria town meeting approves Constitution.

28 September  Berkeley County meeting approves Constitution.

2 October     Fairfax County meeting calls for a state convention to consider Constitution.

6 October     Williamsburg meeting calls for a convention to consider Constitution.

7 October     George Mason sends a copy of his objections to Constitution to George Washington.

15–16 October Legislature convenes in Richmond. House of Delegates reads Constitution, refers it for consideration on 25 October, and orders 5,000 copies printed for distribution.

16 October    Richard Henry Lee writes to Edmund Randolph enclosing his proposed amendments to Constitution.

20 October    Fredericksburg meeting calls for a convention to consider Constitution.
22 October Frederick County meeting calls for convention to consider Constitution.

22 October Henrico County meeting approves Constitution.

24 October Petersburg meeting calls for convention to consider Constitution.

25–31 October Legislature debates and calls state convention.

3 November House of Delegates condemns paper money as “ruinous to Trade and Commerce, and highly injurious” to people.

12 November House of Delegates adopts resolutions asserting the God-given right of Virginians to navigate Mississippi River.

14 November Governor Randolph transmits a copy of the resolutions calling Virginia’s convention to other states.

16 November Winchester Virginia Gazette prints Richard Henry Lee’s proposed amendments to Constitution.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 November</td>
<td>Union Society of Richmond debates Constitution, voting 128 to 15 in favor of it.</td>
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<td>13 November</td>
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<td>22 November</td>
<td><em>Virginia Journal</em> prints George Mason’s objections to Constitution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 November</td>
<td>Winchester <em>Virginia Gazette</em> prints George Mason’s objections to Constitution.</td>
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<td>30 November</td>
<td>Legislature debates and passes act to pay state convention delegates</td>
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<td>12 December</td>
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<td>1 December</td>
<td>Legislature passes act to allow tobacco to be used for payment of taxes.</td>
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<td>6 December</td>
<td>Richard Henry Lee’s amendments and 16 October letter to Edmund Randolph printed in Petersburg <em>Virginia Gazette</em>.</td>
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12 December  Legislature passes act to repeal laws interfering with collection of British debts that are contrary to Treaty of Peace of 1783, but suspends act until Great Britain complies with the treaty.

26–27 December  Legislature instructs Governor Randolph to forward to the states copies of 12 December act to pay convention delegates.

27 December  Randolph’s reasons for not signing the Constitution are printed as a pamphlet in Richmond by this date.

1788

23 February—17 May  Political Club of Danville, Ky., debates Constitution.

3–27 March  Elections for delegates to Virginia Convention.

24 March  James Madison addresses voters and is elected Orange County delegate to Virginia Convention.
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<td>2 April</td>
<td>Volume I of <em>The Federalist</em> offered for sale in Norfolk (23 April in Richmond).</td>
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<td>2 April</td>
<td>Winchester <em>Virginia Centinel</em> begins publication.</td>
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<td>2–27 June</td>
<td>Virginia Convention meets in Richmond.</td>
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<td>4 June</td>
<td>Volume II of <em>The Federalist</em> is offered for sale in Norfolk (11 June in Richmond).</td>
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<td>25 June</td>
<td>Virginia Convention rejects previous amendments to Constitution, 88 to 80, and then ratifies Constitution, 89 to 79.</td>
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<td>26 June</td>
<td>President of Convention signs engrossed Form of Ratification, which Convention orders sent to Congress. Retained Form signed next day.</td>
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<td>27 June</td>
<td>Convention recommends Declaration of Rights and amendments to Constitution and orders them sent to Congress and states.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 July</td>
<td>Virginia Form of Ratification and proposed amendments received by Congress.</td>
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8 November  Legislature elects William Grayson and Richard Henry Lee as U.S. Senators.

20 November  Legislature adopts resolutions asking first federal Congress for a second constitutional convention to consider amendments to Constitution.

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1789

2 February  Virginia elects ten U.S. Representatives.

8 June  James Madison proposes Bill of Rights in Congress.

25 September  Congress approves 12 amendments to Constitution to be submitted to states.

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1791

15 December  Virginia becomes eleventh state to ratify Bill of Rights, putting it into effect.
