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Significant Events and Individuals in Virginia Politics

Virginia Chronology, 1776–1791

1776

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| 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

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| 15 November | Congress adopts Articles of Confederation and sends them to states for approval. |
| 16 December | Legislature ratifies Articles of Confederation. |

1781

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| 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

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| 7 December | Legislature repeals its approval of Impost of 1781. |
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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.

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.
4 December	Legislature elects George Washington, Patrick Henry, Edmund Randolph, John Blair, James Madison, George Mason, and George Wythe as 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 <i>sine die</i> .
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 <i>Virginia Gazette</i> prints Richard Henry Lee’s proposed amendments to Constitution.
21 November– 13 November	Union Society of Richmond debates Constitution, voting 128 to 15 in favor of it.
22 November	<i>Virginia Journal</i> prints George Mason’s objections to Constitution.
23 November	Winchester <i>Virginia Gazette</i> prints George Mason’s objections to Constitution.
30 November– 12 December	Legislature debates and passes act to pay state convention delegates.

1 December	Legislature passes act to allow tobacco to be used for payment of taxes.
6 December	Richard Henry Lee's amendments and 16 October letter to Edmund Randolph printed in Petersburg <i>Virginia Gazette</i> .
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.
2 April	Volume I of <i>The Federalist</i> offered for sale in Norfolk (23 April in Richmond).
2 April	Winchester <i>Virginia Centinel</i> begins publication.
2–27 June	Virginia Convention meets in Richmond.
4 June	Volume II of <i>The Federalist</i> is offered for sale in Norfolk (11 June in Richmond).
25 June	Virginia Convention rejects previous amendments to Constitution, 88 to 80, and then ratifies Constitution, 89 to 79.
26 June	President of Convention signs engrossed Form of Ratification, which Convention orders sent to Congress. Retained Form signed next day.
27 June	Convention recommends Declaration of Rights and amendments to Constitution and orders them sent to Congress and states.
14 July	Virginia Form of Ratification and proposed amendments received by Congress.
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.

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.

1791

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

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