

Virginia

1870—Richmond reformer Anna Whitehead Bodeker founded the Virginia State Woman Suffrage Association (VSWSA). Bodeker attempted to vote in the 1871 election, but election officials refused to give her a ballot. VSWSA was short-lived as an organization.

1909—Lila Meade Valentine and 20 other suffragists jumpstarted the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia (ESLV). Valentine, who had married into a socially prominent family, served as the organization's first president. ESLV campaigned, participated in community parades, organized suffrage plays and concerts, and held rallies and meetings.

1912—ESLV petitioned Virginia's General Assembly to hold a vote on a suffrage amendment. In spite of a moving speech from Valentine, the House of Delegates defeated the amendment with 85 votes in opposition and 12 votes in favor.

1914—Following another General Assembly defeat (74 votes in opposition and 13 votes in favor), the ESLV organized a Suffrage Day Rally outside of the State Capitol. Two thousand Virginians attended the gathering.

1916—Virginia's General Assembly held a third and final vote on suffrage legislation. Despite decades of ESLV's active campaigning, the bill failed by a vote of 52 in opposition and 42 in favor. After this, Virginia suffragists shifted their focus to passage of a federal suffrage amendment.

1919—When the 19th Amendment was sent to the states for ratification, Virginia's General Assembly referred the amendment for committee consideration, where it was defeated. It never reached the full General Assembly for a vote.

February 21, 1952—Virginia symbolically ratified the 19th Amendment.*

* Jim Crow laws were enforced in Virginia until passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and Black women were not able to vote post-1920.

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