Elections in Richmond:
A History

EARLY HISTORY
17TH Century

1607: English settlers establish the **Colony of Virginia**, there are initially no formal elections, but the colony has to establish its own governing structures.
1619: The first legislative body, **the House of Burgesses**, meets in Jamestown. This meeting marks the onset of representative democracy in the United States.

18TH CENTURY

1737: Richmond is established as a city officially in Virginia.
1782: Richmond is officially designated as the **capital of Virginia**, allowing the local government (legislative, executive, and judiciary) to officially develop.

19TH CENTURY

1851: Richmond changes the mayoral selection process from **popular elections** to **appointments by City Council.**
1861: Virginia secedes from the Union during the Civil War and establishes **Richmond** as the Capital of the Confederacy. (until the end of the war in 1865).
1870s: John H. Adams becomes one of the first African American men to serve on City Council. representing **Jackson Ward**.

20TH CENTURY

1962: Eleanor Parker Sheppard becomes Richmond's first woman Mayor. She would sponsor the bill, in the House of Delegates, that formed **VCU.**
1965: The Voting Rights Act is established across the United States and Virginia is forced to practice fair voting methods, with the absence of any racial discrimination.
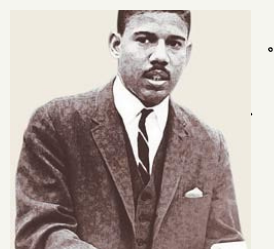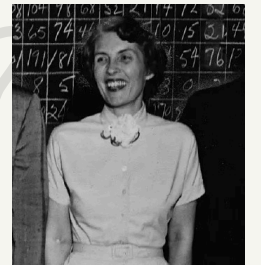**1970:** Richmond **annexes** 23 square miles of Chesterfield County, which reduced the Black population by 10%.
1971: Curtis Holt Sr. files a suit against the City of Richmond, holding that the 1970 annexation violated the Voting Rights Act and had an illegal racial purpose.
1972: City Council elections are ceased until **1976**, by order of the **Department of Justice.**
1973: Richmond appoints its first black woman, **Willie J. Dell,** as city council member.
1975: The Annexation lawsuit makes it to the **Supreme Court,** which ruled in Richmond's favor.
1977: Henry Marsh III is elected as the first Black mayor, strongly showcasing the advance of Civil Rights in Richmond.

21ST CENTURY

2004: Richmond reinstates the popular election for mayor, changing the mayoral selection process from **appointment** to **election**, yet again.
2005: Douglas Wilder becomes the first directly elected mayor of Richmond after the popular election is reinstated.
2016: Levar Stoney is elected as the mayor of Richmond. This is important historically as at age 35, he is the youngest elected mayor in the history of Richmond.
2024: Danny Avula is elected as Richmond's first mayor with Indian descent.