

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 194

*Commending the first Black voters in Virginia.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 11, 2026

WHEREAS, after the end of the Civil War and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States abolishing slavery, the United States Congress set about enacting laws to define citizenship and ensure enfranchisement for all citizens throughout the nation; and

WHEREAS, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 affirmed that individuals born in the United States were entitled to citizenship and equal protection under the law, and similar provisions were included in the draft of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States sent to state governors that same year; and

WHEREAS, the Reconstruction Acts established provisions for former Confederate states to be readmitted into the United States, which included ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment and new state constitutions guaranteeing universal male suffrage, regardless of race; and

WHEREAS, in the years after the Civil War, more than 105,000 Black men registered to vote in the Commonwealth, and many of these men attempted to vote in elections as early as 1865, but local electoral boards refused to count their ballots; and

WHEREAS, on October 22, 1867, more than 90,000 Black voters elected delegates for the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1867–1868 in accordance with the Reconstruction Acts; of the 105 men elected to the convention, 24 were Black; and

WHEREAS, the new Constitution of Virginia, which was ratified in 1869 and took effect in 1870, included universal suffrage for all male citizens over the age of 21, along with other far-reaching reforms, such as the establishment of the first statewide public school system and the implementation of boards of supervisors as a form of local government; and

WHEREAS, these first Black voters in 1867 paved the way for full participation by Black men, and subsequently Black women, in the electoral process across the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the first Black voters in Virginia hereby be commended for their important role in the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1867–1868; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for the contributions of the first Black voters in Virginia to the advancement of the Commonwealth during the Reconstruction era and beyond.

ENROLLED

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