The Virginia State Capitol

Capitol Square is a public park that changes with the seasons, the General Assembly Sessions, and the bustle of Richmond's vigorous downtown.

Beginning in January of each year, the Square pulses with activity as legislators from all parts of Virginia convene to conduct the business of the people. The General Assembly convenes here annually on the second Wednesday in January for 60 calendar days in even-numbered years, 45 days in odd-numbered years. Citizen legislators represent the interests of over 8.5 million Virginians.

Throughout the year, visitors enjoy the magnificent grounds, walkways, monuments and magic of the historic Square. School children and tourists from around the globe use the Square as a starting point to visit downtown and statewide historical attractions.

Operating Hours
The Capitol building is open to visitors 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mon-Sat and Sundays from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Capitol Square is open to the public from 6:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. daily.

Tours
Free one-hour guided tours begin Monday through Saturday no later than 10:00 a.m. for walk-in visitors (9:00 a.m. for groups by appointment), with the last tour starting at 4:00 p.m. On Sunday, guided tours are available beginning at 1:00 p.m., with the last tour starting at 4:00 p.m. In addition, self-guided tours are available during operating hours each day.*

Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Individuals and small groups are invited to tour the Capitol on their own or with a tour guide. Guided tours for groups of 10 or more may be arranged by calling Capitol Guides at (804) 698-1788.

The Capitol's introductory film Keepers of the Flame is available for viewing on demand at http://virginiacapitol.gov/kotf

Entrance
Visitors may temporarily enter the Capitol at the West Entrance.

Executive Mansion
Home of Virginia’s Governor and First Family since 1813, the Executive Mansion is the oldest governor’s residence still used for its original purpose. Guided tours are available on a limited basis and vary according to the season. Call (804) 371-8847 for more information or to schedule a group tour.

*Times subject to change

Photography, Design, & Illustrations of Capitol and Interiors: Dick Kirkland, House of Delegates Clerk’s Office
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1792 engraving of Capitol, Valentine Richmond History Center
All other images: The Library of Virginia

It All Began in Virginia
American self-government began in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619, and it continues to thrive at the Capitol today.

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First convened in 1619, the General Assembly is the oldest continuously operating legislative body in the United States. It is one of the three branches of Virginia’s government, the others being the Governor and the State Supreme Court.

The Capitol building is, beyond comparison, the finest, the most noble, and the greatest in all America.

A tribute to the Capitol from France, 1794

For more information about Capitol Square over time please visit https://virginiacapitol.gov/capitol-square
Thomas Jefferson, Architect of Liberty

A Noble Experiment

The Virginia State Capitol introduced the Classical Revival temple style to the modern world. The first statehouse to exhibit Greek architectural forms, it inspired countless public buildings for over 200 years. The Capitol was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960.

What is a “Commonwealth”?

A “Commonwealth” is a government based on the consent of the people and guided by the rule of law. Virginia emerges as a key player in a Commonwealth with a written constitution in 1776. Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky also are Commonwealths.

Notable Visitors to Capitol Square

Included among the hundreds of thousands of visitors to Capitol Square are many historical figures and notable personalities.

Three days after the famous “Iron Curtain” speech, President Dwight D. Eisenhower made a speech to a joint session of the General Assembly in 1946. Fifty years later, he returned as the grand marshal of a parade commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Bill of Rights.

The Virginia State Capitol Building was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1960.

Who Built the Capitol?

The Capitol was built between 1785 and 1798 at a cost of $300,000 and was a landmark example of the Classical Revival style.

A Name Fit for a Queen

Beulah Randolph may have suggested the name for Virginia around 1800 after the queen of Greece. The name was adopted for religious institutions, libraries, theaters, and more.