

INTRODUCED: July 27, 2026

A RESOLUTION No. 2026-R032

To express the Council's support for the constitutional amendments on the November 3, 2026, general election ballot concerning reproductive freedom, marriage equality, and restoration of voting rights upon release from incarceration.

Patron – Ms. Gibson

Approved as to form and legality
by the City Attorney

PUBLIC HEARING: SEP 28 2026 AT 6 P.M.

WHEREAS, the Constitution of Virginia establishes fundamental rights and protections for the residents of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the Council forthrightly supports the advancement of human rights, equal protection under the law, personal liberty, and full civic participation for all persons; and

WHEREAS, upon the information and belief of Council, women and marginalized communities continue to confront barriers to equal opportunity, including workplace discrimination, health care inequities, disparate rates of poverty, gender-based violence, limitations on bodily autonomy, and barriers to voting access and civic participation; and

AYES: _____ NOES: _____ ABSTAIN: _____

ADOPTED: _____ REJECTED: _____ STRICKEN: _____

WHEREAS, upon the information and belief of the Council, the Constitution of Virginia defines marriage as only a union between one man and one woman and such definition does not reflect the principles of equality and inclusion embraced by the Council; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that the Constitution of Virginia does not provide explicit protections for reproductive freedom, including an individual's right to make personal decisions concerning pregnancy and reproductive health care; and

WHEREAS, under the Constitution of Virginia, individuals convicted of felonies may permanently lose their right to vote unless such rights are restored through executive action, creating barriers to civic participation and reintegration; and

WHEREAS, the Council recognizes that reproductive freedom and access to reproductive health care are matters of personal privacy, bodily autonomy, health, dignity, and individual freedom; and

WHEREAS, the Council supports equal protection under the law and recognizes the dignity, value, and legal equality of all families and relationships regardless of sex, gender, or race; and

WHEREAS, the Council recognizes that voting is a fundamental component of democracy and that restoration of voting rights upon release from incarceration promotes civic engagement, reintegration, and stronger communities; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of Virginia has approved constitutional amendments to appear on the November 3, 2026, general election ballot concerning reproductive freedom, marriage equality, and restoration of voting rights upon release from incarceration; and

WHEREAS, upon the information and belief of Council, the City has historically supported measures advancing civil rights, equality, fairness, and democratic participation;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND:

That the Council hereby expresses support for the constitutional amendments appearing on the November 3, 2026, general election ballot concerning reproductive freedom, marriage equality, and restoration of voting rights upon release from incarceration.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Council encourages the residents of the city of Richmond to educate themselves regarding the proposed constitutional amendments and participate in the November 3, 2026, general election.

DATE: May 14, 2026

TO: The Honorable Members of City Council

THROUGH: The Honorable Kenya Gibson, Councilmember 3rd District

THROUGH: RJ Warren, Council Chief of Staff

THROUGH: Will Perkins, Senior Legislative Services Manager

FROM: Whitney Brown, Policy Analyst

RE:

CNL-2026-0059

PURPOSE: To express the Council's support for the constitutional amendments on the November 3, 2026, general election ballot concerning reproductive freedom, marriage equality, and restoration of voting rights upon release from incarceration.

BACKGROUND: The General Assembly of Virginia approved three proposed constitutional amendments for consideration by Virginia voters during the November 3, 2026 election. The proposed amendments concern: (i) establishing a constitutional right to reproductive freedom, including abortion-related decision making; (ii) repealing the constitutional provision defining marriage as only between one man and one woman and prohibiting denial of marriage licenses based on sex, gender, or race; and (iii) restoring voting rights to persons convicted of felonies upon release from incarceration.

The proposed resolution would formally express the Richmond City Council's support for these constitutional amendments based on principles of equal protection, personal liberty, democratic participation, and civil rights. The City of Richmond has historically supported policies and legislation advancing equality, fairness, and civic inclusion for all residents.

STRATEGIC INITATIVES AND OTHER GOVERNMENTAL: N/A

FISCAL IMPACT: None

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon adoption.

REQUESTED INTRODUCTION DATE: July 6, 2026

CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING DATE: September 14, 2026

REQUESTED AGENDA: Consent

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL COMMITTEE: Governmental Operations

AFFECTED AGENCIES: City Council

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING ORD. OR RES.: None

ATTACHMENTS: None

STAFF: Whitney Brown, Policy Analyst, (804-646-3765)

