



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Vienna Kicks Off This Month Liberty Amendments Month Four Weeks of Festivities Set June 19 - July 19**

**June 3, 2021** (Vienna, VA) - The Town of Vienna's inaugural [Liberty Amendments Month](#) celebration kicks off this month with community organizations, businesses, and individuals helping shape the four weeks of festivities taking place from **June 19 - July 19, 2021**.

A celebration of the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> amendments, which extended rights to those who had previously been excluded from full participation, Liberty Amendments Month is the brainchild of Town Manager Mercury Payton, who during this past summer of discourse and strife, sought a way to bring us together and to find common ground. "We all can celebrate these amendments that ensure rights and liberties for each of us," he says.

Liberty Amendments Month will kick off June 19 at First Baptist Church of Vienna's annual Juneteenth Celebration and will feature nearly 30 activities over the course of the month. This year's celebration will include an opening ceremony for Liberty Amendments Month that will offer thoughtful reflection on the liberties assured by these four amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The month-long celebration will culminate with a multicultural festival featuring food, drinks, crafts, and entertainment from around the world on July 17.

### **What are the Liberty Amendments?**

The Liberty Amendments are the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 19th Constitutional amendments, which abolished slavery, granted citizenship to anyone born or naturalized in the U.S., and extended voting rights to all citizens regardless of race and gender.

The 13th (1865), 14th (1868), and 15th Amendments (1870) were the first amendments made to the U.S. constitution in 60 years. Known collectively as the Civil War Amendments, they were designed to ensure the equality for recently emancipated slaves.

*13<sup>th</sup> Amendment – Abolition of Slavery.* This amendment explicitly banned slavery and involuntary servitude in the United States. An exception was made for punishment of a crime. This amendment also gave Congress the power to enforce the article through legislation.

*14<sup>th</sup> Amendment – Citizenship and Equal Rights.* This amendment set out the definitions and rights of citizenship in the United States. The first clause asserted that anyone born or naturalized in the United States is a citizen of the United States and of the state in which they live. It also confirmed the right to due process, life, liberty, and property. This overturned the

Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857) Supreme Court ruling that stated that black people were not eligible for citizenship.

*15<sup>th</sup> Amendment – Voting Rights.* This amendment prohibited governments from denying U.S. citizens the right to vote based on race, color, or past servitude. While the amendment provided legal protection for voting rights based on race, there were other means that could be used to block black citizens from voting. These included poll taxes and literacy tests. These methods were employed around the country to undermine the Civil War Amendments and set the stage for the Civil Rights Movement.

*19<sup>th</sup> Amendment – Extended Women’s Right to Vote.* This amendment declares that the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation. 2020 marked the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this amendment.

### **Town of Vienna Liberty Amendments Month Signature Events:**

#### Week One

#### **June 19, 2021- Juneteenth Celebration at First Baptist Church**

Liberty Amendments Kick Off

11:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m. 450 Orchard Street NW, Vienna

The 2021 Juneteenth Celebration will include the Inaugural Liberty Amendments Month Ceremony at 11 a.m., live music, kids’ performers, vendors featuring black owned businesses and craft vendors, civic organizations, food trucks and a book give away for kids. The event will be live streamed on Town and First Baptist social media. First Baptist Church will be holding a COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic during the event.

*June-20-25 area events and programs focusing on the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment (the abolishment of slavery).*

#### Week Two

#### **June 26 - 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment Kick Off Celebration**

**1:00 – 3:00pm**

Loving vs Virginia and It’s Import – An Oral History and Discussion

Vienna Community Center

A summary of the supreme court case followed by a Q&A with Philip Hirschkop (who represented the Loving’s), along with first person testimonial from community members who were directly effected by the Supreme Court decision in 1967.

*June-27-July 2 area events and programs focusing on the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (citizenship rights and equal protection under the law)*

#### Week Three

#### **July 3 - 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment Kick Off Celebration**

**6:00 – 8:00pm**

Justice for All Concert & Festival

Vienna Town Green – 144 Maple Ave.

Sponsored by Vienna Presbyterian Church

A showcase of community musicians performing songs with a justice theme. Event will also feature food vendors, civic organizations, voter registration and more.



# NEWS RELEASE

*July 3-July 9 events and programs focusing on the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment (extended the right to vote to all men regardless of 'race, color, or previous condition of servitude")*

## Week Four

### **July 10 - 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment Kick Off Celebration**

'But for the 19th Amendment' - A Talk Delivered by Cheryl Johnson, Clerk of the US House of Representatives

2:00 p.m.

Hybrid Event – Vienna Community Center (120 Cherry St. SE and Livestream via Facebook and YouTube)

*A speech and Q&A with Cheryl Johnson, Clerk of the House of Representatives*

Followed by the American Association of University W performance: *Failure is Impossible*

### **July 17- Multicultural Festival (Closing Event)**

2:00 p.m. -7:00 p.m.

Downtown Historic Church Street and the Vienna Town Green

A day-long bevy of performers, interactive activities, crafts, food and vendors that celebrate the diverse cultures and communities represented across Northern Virginia and the DC Metro Area.

*July 10 - July 17 events and programs focusing on the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment (extended voting rights to women)*

### **July 19- Observance of Liberty Amendments Day (Town Offices Closed)**

In addition, each week between June 19 and July 19, one of the four liberty amendments will be celebrated with contests, entertainment, lectures, performances, classes, themed restaurant specials, art exhibits, films, shows, walks, and more. All events are open to the public and will follow COVID protocols.

Liberty Amendments Day has been recognized as an official 2021 Town holiday and the month-long celebration has been officially recognized by the commonwealth of Virginia, having been adopted this year by the General Assembly.

"I am so proud that the Town of Vienna is leading the way in initiating this holiday and month-long commemoration of these fundamental rights that we all cherish," says Mayor Linda Colbert. "I am especially proud that Town Manager Mercury Payton came up with the idea and we have worked hard to see it become a reality."

For more information on the schedule of events and activities, [viennava.gov/liberty](https://viennava.gov/liberty). To learn more about the Amendments, visit [constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution](https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution).

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