

NFRW/VFRW HISTORY

The loss of the legal right for women to vote began in 1777. The Constitutional Convention of 1787 placed voting regulation in the states and that loss became codified. The state of New Jersey granted the right to vote to all “free inhabitants” including women in 1790, but rescinded it in 1807. In 1848 the first women’s rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, NY. The Wyoming Territory was the first to grant women’s suffrage in 1869.

Reacting to the possible extension of slavery into the territories, the Democrat Party split and the Whig Party and those opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, which said that settlers could decide the issue of slavery for themselves, formed a new Party that had its first meeting “under the oaks” July 6, 1854 in Jackson, Michigan. It was made up of Anti-slavery Whigs, Free-soilers, those who decried the Dred-Scott decision, those who opposed the elimination of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, and those who opposed the extension of slavery as new states were settled and admitted into the union. They called themselves the Republican Party in a nod to Thomas Jefferson. Two years later the first Republican National Convention in 1856 in Pittsburgh nominated John C Fremont for President. By this time the new Republican Party had huge representation in state legislatures and was perceived as a real danger to the Democrats-especially those in the South. In 1860 in Chicago the Republicans nominated Abraham Lincoln and in less than a decade the Republican Party had become the dominant political force in the nation. In the early 1870’s the first Republican Women’s club was formed in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The Republican Party Platform of 1872 said, “The Republican Party is mindful of its obligation to the loyal women of America for their noble devotion to the cause of Freedom.” Between 1890 and 1919, New Zealand, Australia, Finland, Norway, Canada, the Soviet Union and Germany granted women’s suffrage. Twelve American states, all Republican and including Montana, had given women full suffrage prior to the passage of the 19th Amendment. Also in that year Republicans gained control of the U.S. Congress. Hundreds of independent Republican Women’s club grew up around the nation in the early 20th century.

The first woman elected to the House of Representatives and who served a full term was Republican Jeanette Rankin from Montana. She was elected in 1916, nearly four years before the 19th Amendment giving American women the right to vote was ratified on August 18, 1920. (Virginia ratified in 1952) Rebecca Latimer Elton, a Democrat from Georgia, was appointed to the U S Senate in 1922, but she only served one day. Republican Margaret Chase Smith of Maine was the first women elected to the Senate without having a previous appointment. She was elected in 1949.

In 1938 Assistant Chair of the Republican National Committee, Marion Martin from Maine, called a meeting at the Palmer House in Chicago to organize those independent clubs into a national federation. States with members in 50% of their counties and 75% of their Congressional Districts sent delegates who adopted the rules for governing a National Organization. The Charter states were California, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and their stated purposes were:

“...to foster and encourage loyalty to the Republican Party and the ideals for which it stands - to promote education along political lines - to encourage closer cooperation between independent groups and the regular party organization, which are working for the same objectives, namely sound government - to promote an interchange of ideas and experiences of various clubs to the end that the policies which have proven particularly effective in one state may be adopted in another - and to encourage a national attitude and national approach to the problems facing the Republican Party.”

As thirty-one year old Joyce Arneill of Denver was elected the first President of the new National Federation of Republican Women’s Clubs the Party itself was at a low ebb. When FDR was elected in 1936-only Maine and Vermont went Republican; there were 6 Republican Governors and only 104 Republicans in both houses of the federal legislature. Nevertheless, the NFRW provided a vehicle for women concerned about the direction of government and the

organization grew. In 1940 the NFRW reported that, "Since the founding there has been a steady and consistent progress." By then 34 states were represented in the Federation through state-wide federations and/or individual clubs.

In 1940 the NFRW enlisted the support of its members to urge their representatives in Washington to hold free and open hearings and a full investigation on the amendments to the Wagner Labor Relations Act. They wrote their representatives during National Debt Week to impress them with the fact that constituents were concerned about the national debt. And on June 10, 1940, NFRW President Arnell sent a letter to all club presidents urging their help in keeping Congress in session until the immediate crisis of the "foreign situation" was past. What is old, is new again.

Once an auxiliary of the RNC with limited office space in their DC building, today the NFRW is a financially and organizationally independent entity and one of the largest grassroots political organizations in the country with thousands of active members from "sea to shining sea," and Puerto Rico. On April 1, 1992, the National Federation of Republican Women got a home of its own when it moved into an historic building at 124 N. Alfred Street in Old Town Alexandria, Va. Constructed in 1829 and listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings, the structure was discovered, renovated and redecorated between 1989 and 1990. It includes a reception area, eight offices, a conference room, a copy room, four bathrooms, a kitchen, a storage basement and a parking driveway. The building and its contents were purchased for \$860,000. In 1993, just 367 days after going to settlement on the national headquarters, the NFRW paid the mortgage in full with contributions from state federations, local clubs and individuals.

The locale may have changed, but goals remain the same as agreed on in 1938-to encourage women to participate in the political process from door-knocking to elected official, to promote the cause of good governance through community and club education, and to electing Republican officials to office at all levels.

Virginia may have had a representative at the initial meetings in 1937-38, and the Commonwealth had two clubs form in 1938; Arlington RW and Norfolk RW. However, the state was totally dominated by the Byrd family and the Democrat Party. In 1945 Emily Logan, Virginia Republican National Committee Woman and Marion Martin founded the Virginia Council of Republican Women. It was not until 1953 that Virginia met the minimum requirements for membership in the National Federation. In that year Virginia had 12 clubs with 200 members and the Virginia Council became the Virginia Federation of Republican Women and a full-fledged member of the NFRW. In the 1960's the VFRW grew in influence, being instrumental in electing Linwood Holton, the first Republican Governor since Reconstruction, and active in the election of Richard Nixon. President Dorothy Bernhardt (1966-69) instituted the first newsletter.

By 1972 The VFRW had 51 clubs and 2,064 members. Liz Frazier (1970-72) developed uniform Bylaws for the state, providing a clear example for all clubs. Francis Garland (1972-76) improved the working relations with the State Party which resulted in the State President having a permanent seat and therefore a voice on the Republican Party of Virginia's State Central Committee's Executive Committee. She also established a protocol system and instituted regular board meetings, which actively united the various Virginia clubs. Virginia Lampe (1976-80) held the first Atoka Country Supper fundraiser at Senator John Warner's estate that is the legendary prototype for the current "Boots on the Ground Soiree" VFRW Fundraiser.

Around 1972 D. Eveland Newman designed the official VFRW seal, which features a "Woman of Valor" on a dark blue oval. Eve was a graduate of the Philadelphia Art Institute, a club president, the first Republican General Registrar of Fairfax County, and a patron of the Arts. She is a worthy role model, an exemplar of community and political activism, and a fitting representative of the talent, intelligence, and commitment of the average member of the VFRW.

The 1980's saw expansion of membership and of activities. Doriene Steeves (1980-84) co-authored the first Club Presidents VFRW Leadership Manual, produced membership and political polling brochures, initiated the first Legislative Day, implemented leadership training seminars and a campaign management school and presided over a 27% increase in membership to a high of 3,199 members and 70 clubs.

Mary Ramey (1984-86) emphasized recruiting women to run for office by initiating the Women's Candidate Recruitment Committee. She also oversaw an additional fundraising event, "Gascony Gathering," that hosted sitting Senators as

guests. As a courtesy to the VFRW, Mary was requested to second Virginia's nomination of President Ronald Reagan for a second term at the Republican National Convention in 1984.

Mary Vaughan Gibson (1988-92) organized the first Commonwealth-wide Candidates Televised Debate in NFRW history, and produced a campaign manual and a VFRW video with the RNC. She was the first Virginian elected to the NFRW Board.

The 1990's was a time of change for the VFRW and the Commonwealth. During Jan Schar's term (1996-98) Virginia had a Republican majority in the Senate and held the top three jobs under the leadership of Governor George Allen. During her tenure the combined VFRW donation to candidates and campaigns was \$68,000. Bessie Scott (1998-2000) was the first President to give a panel presentation at the Annual RPV Advance.

The Republicans in the Commonwealth and the fortunes of the VFRW continued to grow into the early 2000's. Charlotte Neal (2000-2002) was president with a Republican majority in the General Assembly, a Republican President and two Republican U.S. Senators as well as a majority Republican Congressional Delegation. She was the first to be appointed as Temporary Chair of the Virginia State Convention. During her term the VFRW ranked 7th in the NFRW with 78 clubs and 2,700 members. Angie Hall (2002-2004) was the youngest woman to serve as president. During her tenure the VFRW celebrated its 50th Anniversary with four regional fundraisers.

Kendall Rhodes (2004-06) established the VFRW Political Women's Scholarship for college women majoring in political science, government or law. In 2015 in Kendall's memory one of the scholarships was named for her and given to a high school graduate going to college to study education. Kendall encouraged District Representatives to organize District-wide retreats. In 2014 5th District Representative Jo Holden and 1st District Representative Patricia Cowan initiated district meetings in their respective areas. In 2015 6th District Representative Sue Hughes organized that district's 10th Anniversary Retreat.

Paula Willoughby (2006-08) improved the state's technology, hosted a Mongolian Women's Delegation for the NFRW and served on the NFRW Board of Trustees. Virginia was 6th largest in the NFRW with 66 clubs. Brenda Campbell (2008-2010) initiated a traveling leadership seminar and led Virginia to national awards at the NFRW convention in 2009. Under Fay Williamson (2010-12) the VFRW began to use digital communication; an experiment then, the expansion of which continues. Miki Miller (2012-14) instituted the VFRW Regents Program and began a Policies and Procedures Manual that is digital and that serves as a bridge between the all-paper and pen era and a time of electronic communication.

The NFRW and its affiliated state organizations (VFRW) provide women who are interested in affecting politics in their community, state and country a recognized, effective and respected structure as well as a place for comradere with like-minded women to plan for the future and an opportunity for fun as well. It is a place where women can use their strengths of communication and management, attributes they possess naturally and use instinctively, in the service of educating themselves and their communities in the cause of good, honest governance that provides the maximum amount of freedom and opportunity for personal responsibility.

(In September 2015 the VFRW has 62 clubs and 1,919 members, up from just over 1,400 a few years ago. Every state plus Puerto Rico is represented in the NFRW with just under 70,000 members)

And, the beat goes on.....

Virginia Republican Creed

We Believe:

That the free enterprise system is the most productive supplier of human needs and economic justice,

That all individuals are entitled to equal rights, justice, and opportunities and should assume their responsibilities as citizens in a free society,

That fiscal responsibility and budgetary restraints must be exercised at all levels of government,

That the Federal Government must preserve individual liberty by observing constitutional limitations,

That peace is best preserved through strong national defense,

That faith in God, as recognized by our Founding Fathers, is essential to the moral fiber of the Nation

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The Republican Creed is read after the Prayer and Pledge at the beginning of every meeting.

The Virginia Republican Creed was authored by Dr. Max Charles Graeber who was the Republican Chairman of the 5th Congressional District and Dean of the Night School at the University of Richmond. On January 22, 1987 President Ronald Reagan nominated Max to be a member of the National Advisory Council on Educational Research and Improvement for a term expiring September 30, 1989. In 1997 George Allen, the Governor of Virginia, presented Max with a Certificate of Recognition for his many constructive contributions to the people of the Commonwealth of Virginia in which the Governor officially recognized December 9, 1997 as Max Graeber Day.

Dr. Max Charles Graeber 1928-2001.