



## LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

Sandra Gioia Treadway  
Librarian of Virginia

### Library of Virginia celebrates Black History Month with Panel Discussion on Black Political Activism After Claiming Freedom

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Jan. 31, 2023

**CONTACT:** Angela L. Flagg, APR, Director of Marketing and Communications  
804.692.3653, [angela.flagg@lva.virginia.gov](mailto:angela.flagg@lva.virginia.gov)

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA – In honor of Black History Month and as part of its 200th anniversary activities, the Library of Virginia will present a panel discussion on Thursday, Feb. 23 to celebrate the completion of a signature project that documents the lives of [Virginia's first Black legislators](#). Titled “The First Civil Rights: Black Political Activism After Claiming Freedom,” the free panel discussion, offered in partnership with Virginia Humanities, will be held 6-7:30 p.m. in the Library’s Lecture Hall. Advance registration is required at <https://lva-virginia.libcal.com/event/10200777>.

Editors of the Library's *Dictionary of Virginia Biography* joined this project in 2011 in collaboration with the commonwealth's Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Commission to research and write about the 92 African American men who served in the General Assembly from 1869 to 1890. Their stories are now available online as part of Virginia’s collective digital story thanks to a collaboration with *Encyclopedia Virginia*, a rich online resource sponsored by Virginia Humanities.

“We’re proud to celebrate such a meaningful project to document early African American representation in our commonwealth’s legislature,” said Librarian of Virginia Sandra G. Treadway. “We encourage the public to join us at what will be a very insightful discussion examining the contributions of early Black legislators and their enduring legacy today.”

Panelists for the program, moderated by Virginia Humanities executive director Matthew Gibson, will include the Honorable Viola Baskerville, one of the founders of the project; Luranett Lee, public historian and University of Richmond adjunct assistant professor; Ajena Rogers, supervisory park ranger at the National Park Service's Maggie L. Walker Historic Site and a descendant of Black legislator James A. Fields; and historian and author Brent Tarter, a retired editor with the Library of Virginia.

For more information on the panel discussion, contact Elizabeth Klaczynski at 804.692.3536 or [elizabeth.klaczynski@lva.virginia.gov](mailto:elizabeth.klaczynski@lva.virginia.gov). Learn more about the Library’s anniversary events at [www.lva.virginia.gov/200](http://www.lva.virginia.gov/200).

**Related images are available here:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8rov8xju12cpf5h/AACF8qaoZkidePEB-ElabsLwa?dl=0>

###

## **ABOUT THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA**

The Library of Virginia is the state's oldest institution dedicated to the preservation of Virginia's history and culture. Our online offerings attract nearly 3.8 million website visits per year, and our resources, exhibitions and events bring in more than 100,000 visitors each year. The Library's collections, containing more than 130 million items, document and illustrate the lives of both famous Virginians and ordinary citizens. The Library is located in downtown Richmond near Capitol Square at 800 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219. Learn more at [www.lva.virginia.gov](http://www.lva.virginia.gov).