

## West Virginia in the Un-Civil War

### The Union Annexation of 50 Virginia Counties

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Confederate Monument in Romney, WV

I have no doubt that the great majority of the people of West Virginia today believe they are better off separated from Virginia. They have their own two U.S. senators, and most importantly, they are not ruled by the wacko-leftist, anti-Second Amendment, pro-baby-disposal Democrat Governor Ralph Northam and his slavishly politically correct Neo-Marxist comrades in the Virginia Legislature. "Democrat" was once a virtual synonym for conservative, especially in the South. But

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that was a far cry from the present madness. The Republican Party during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods was dominated by its big-business-big-government establishment wing. That has been slowly changing since Eisenhower. Reagan was a first peak of pro-worker, pro-middle class, common sense economic and social conservatism. President Trump has been a flowering and aggressive triumph of these same principles, vanquishing titanic errors of globalism and obsequious political fashions. It is a grave mistake to assume Republican and Democrat mean the same thing today as they did in 1860.

West Virginia is culturally Southern and conservative. That has not changed much. Trump received nearly 69 percent of West Virginia's vote in 2016, the highest of any state in the nation. Trump got more than 60 percent of the vote in several Southern states. He carried every Southern and border state except Virginia and Maryland. West Virginia has differed from other Southern states in the recent past because of the high degree of unionization in its mining oriented economy. Most of the South has avoided unionization, but an underlying Southern religious, social, and cultural heritage unites West Virginia to Oklahoma (65% Trump), Alabama (63%), Kentucky (63%), Tennessee (61%), Arkansas (60%), Mississippi (58%), Louisiana ((58%), Missouri (57%), South Carolina ((55%), Texas (53%), Georgia (51%), North Carolina (51%), Northern Florida, (Florida 49% plurality), and large parts of Virginia (45%) that do not want to live under Neo-Marxist gun-control tyranny. Some in West Virginia have even proposed annexing willing Virginia counties.

In 1860, West Virginia was part of Virginia. Following Lincoln's election, South Carolina seceded on December 20, and Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas had followed by February 1, 1861. These secessions were the result of long-term political, economic, and cultural tensions. Those who believe that slavery was the only tension have been badly misinformed and propagandized. South Carolina had threatened secession in 1824 and 1832 over tariff issues that favored Northern manufacturing and caused ruinous hardship on Southern agriculture. The Morrill Tariff, supported by Lincoln and finally passed over nearly three years of political struggle on March 3, would more than double the tax burden on Southern states, especially major cotton-producing states. On April 12, Confederate artillery batteries in Charleston bombarded and forced the surrender of Union held Fort Sumter before approaching Union Navy ships carrying troops could relieve it. On April 16, 1861, Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to be raised to invade the seven seceding Southern states to "restore order" and collect the tariffs, which were more than 95 percent of U.S. tax revenues. This call for troops and invasion was while Congress was not in session! This call provoked Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, and five Indian tribes in Oklahoma to secede. Attempted secessions in Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland were put down and held down by Federal troops.

Virginia had hoped for a compromise that would allow it to remain in the Union, but Lincoln's call for troops shattered that hope. It was considered totalitarian disregard for the Constitution in Southern and Border states. On April 17, the Virginia Secession Convention voted 88 to 55 to secede, followed by a confirming referendum May 23, which passed overwhelmingly 132,201 to 37,451. In the Secession Convention, 30 of 49 delegates from the 50 counties that would become West Virginia voted against secession. The total referendum vote in those 50 counties was 34,777

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against secession to 1912 for secession.

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A look at the map, however, raises some serious questions about the 50 counties that became West Virginia. More than half of these counties actually voted a majority for Virginia's secession from the Union. These formed a wide band of geographically connected counties closest to the present Virginia border, constituting considerably more than half of what is now West Virginia.

Pro-Union politicians quickly gathered to lay plans for a new state called Kanawha, which was later changed to West Virginia. They called for a convention on May 13 in Wheeling, which was attended by 425 delegates from 25 counties. They met again on August 20 and called for a referendum creating a new state from 50 counties. It passed overwhelmingly on October 24 by a vote of 18,408 to 781. By this time, Union troops from Ohio and Pennsylvania controlled what is now West Virginia, and this was resented even by those who had voted against secession. It was odd, however, that only a little more than 19,000 votes were cast, where the voter registration was 70,000, and the secession vote on May 23 had been nearly 54,000. Most of the balloting was done in and around Wheeling under surveillance by Union troops. The votes of the outlying 25 or so counties toward Virginia had to be collected by Union troops. Many counties on the Virginia border cast no votes in the referendum. Many others had less than a 5 percent turnout. Many in those counties considered themselves still part of Virginia, and many of the men were serving in Virginia Confederate Army units. Many refrained from voting to protest the referendum and Union military intimidation.

Although many establishment and media historians think of West Virginia as a pro-Union state during the Civil War, according to the most thorough recent studies, 22,000 West Virginians served in Virginia Confederate Army Units. Those West Virginians that served in Union military units probably numbered between 20,000 and 22,000. At least 5,000 men from Ohio and 2,000 from Pennsylvania served in West Virginia Union regiments. Today, West Virginia has a very active division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Lincoln was quick to allow the prospective new state of West Virginia to send two senators to Washington representing the "Restored Government of Virginia."

On May 13, 1862, the newly created West Virginia legislature approved the formation of the new state. An application for admission to the Union was made to Congress, and on December 31, 1862, an enabling act was approved by President Lincoln that would admit West Virginia to the Union conditioned on the gradual abolition of slavery in the state constitution.

It was controversial even in his own cabinet. Secretary of State William Seward maintained that West Virginia's admission was constitutional because Virginia had engaged in treason against the Union. Actually the Southern position was that secession, which had been taught for years as legal at West Point, was legal because the Northern States had betrayed the Constitution. Lincoln had thought it constitutional in the 1840s. Indeed, the American Revolution was secession by 13 colonies from the government of Britain's King and Parliament.

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Seward had probably never bothered to read and consider closely the Constitution on treason:

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**“Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or adhering to their enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort”**

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Lincoln’s call for 75,000 troops to invade Southern States was what provoked Virginia to secession, when she longed for a peaceful compromise of issues.

Lincoln’s Attorney General Edward Bates argued against Lincoln and Seward that the Federal government cannot create a new state out a larger one without the permission of both and that imposing conditions was also unconstitutional and a dangerous precedent.

West Virginia’s admission to the Union is officially dated June 20, 1963. So West Virginians can probably be very glad they are a separate state, but it did not come about without considerable controversy.