

A Guide to the Records of the Commission to Suggest Changes in the Virginia Constitution, 1922-1936 (bulk 1926-1927).

Records of the Commission to Suggest Changes in the Virginia Constitution, 1922-1936 (bulk 1926-1927)
1922-1936 (bulk 1926-1927)

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Descriptive Summary

Accession Number

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Language

English

Creator

Virginia. Commission to Suggest Changes in the Virginia Constitution.

Physical Characteristics

0.35 cu. ft. (1 box)

Repository

Supreme Court of Virginia Archives, Virginia State Law Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no access restrictions.

Use Restrictions

Because the library is not open to the general public, researchers should contact the library to arrange access to the collection.

Acquisition Information

These records were transferred to the State Law Library from the Office of the Clerk, Supreme Court of Virginia, in 2007. Robert Prentis, President of the Court of Appeals of Virginia, was chairman of the commission.

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Historical Information

By authority of an act approved March 25, 1926, Governor Harry Byrd appointed a commission of seven members (Robert R. Prentis, President, Supreme Court of Appeals), R. Gray Williams, of Winchester; William Minor Lile, Dean of the University of Virginia Law School, Robert M. Hughes, of Norfolk; Joseph H. Chitwood, of Roanoke, former Governor Henry C. Stuart, and William Meade Fletcher, of Sperryville, to a commission to suggest changes in the Virginia Constitution. The commission was "charged with the duty of studying the constitution of Virginia and proposing in detail such revisions of the same as in the opinion of the commission will be for the best interests of the commonwealth." The suggested amendments, approved by the General Assembly, reduced the number of statewide elected officials from eight to three (what became known as the short ballot), and "revised the state tax system by implementing a system of tax segregation that gave localities the power to tax real estate and personal property while leaving the income tax available to the state." (Encyclopedia Virginia article on Harry F. Byrd, viewed July 30, 2012.)

The Bureau of Municipal Research was a citizens committee headed by William T. Reed, friend and mentor of Harry F. Byrd. The General Assembly authorized the bureau to survey Virginia government and recommend reductions.

Scope and Content

Commission to Suggest Changes in the Virginia Constitution records documenting the work of the commission from 1926-1927. Contains meeting minutes, correspondence, reports, press release, suggested amendments, drafts, notes, a transcript of public hearing about proposed amendments, a pamphlet summarizing a survey, initiated by the Office of the Governor, of county and city government in other states; newspaper clippings, and two speeches. Contains correspondence between Chief Justice Robert Prentis, Chair of the Commission, and Governor Harry F. Byrd, and with Congressmen R. Walton Moore (8th District), commission member Robert M. Hughes, as well as letters from lawyers, state officials and delegates, commenting on proposed amendments. Also contains correspondence pertaining to press relations and public hearings, printed reports of the commission and drafting committee, a statement from Robert Tunstall, 1926; and a report, "Organization and Management of the State Government of Virginia: Report on a Survey made for the Governor and his Committee on Consolidation and Simplification," issued by the New York Bureau of Municipal Research, January 1927.

Includes correspondence between University of Virginia president Edwin A. Alderman and Judge Prentis in which Alderman describes his concerns about Section 184 of the Constitution, which prohibited public borrowing for improvements; a memo from Governor Byrd to the members of the commission enclosing recommendations of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research for changes to the constitution, 1927 Jan. 18; and a letter recommending contemporary scientific research on race to the commission.

Index Terms

Personal Names:

Alderman, Edwin Anderson, 1861-1931.
Byrd, Harry Flood, 1887-1966.
Hughes, Robert M. (Robert Morton), b. 1855.
Lile, William Minor, 1893-1932.
Moore, R. Walton (Robert Walton), 1859-1941.
Prentis, Robert Riddick, 1855-1931.
Tunstall, Robert.

Corporate Names:

New York Bureau of Municipal Research.
Virginia. Commission to Suggest Changes in the Virginia Constitution.
Virginia. Constitution (1902).

Subjects:

Finance, Public -- Virginia.

Genre/form

Clippings (information artifacts) -- Virginia -- Richmond.
Correspondence -- Virginia.
Minutes -- Virginia.
Pamphlets -- Virginia.
Press releases -- Virginia.
Reports -- Virginia.
Speeches -- Virginia.