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**NEWS**

## First 'Richmond Highway' Signs Now Up Along Route 1 in Crystal City

**Airey** September 5, 2019 at 10:45am



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Crews began the process of replacing signs along Route 1 today (Staff photo by Jay Westcott)

≡ *(Updated at 11 a.m.)* County crews replaced the first “Jefferson Davis Highway” sign this morning as officials work to complete Route 1’s renaming to “Richmond Highway” in Arlington. Q

Arlington County Board Chair Christian Dorsey and Del. Mark Levine stomped on the sign honoring Confederate President Jefferson Davis, folding it up as crews placed the first new “Richmond” signs in Crystal City this morning at the 23rd Street S. intersection.

“It felt great,” Dorsey said afterward. “We are at a point now where we don’t have to have these monumental signs hanging over the streets of Arlington.”

Arlington’s lawmakers have pushed for the change [for several years](#), but were stymied by conservative representatives in Richmond. The county [renewed its efforts last year](#) in the wake of Amazon’s [arrival](#).

Earlier this year, at the prompting of Del. Mark Levine, Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring [issued an opinion](#) that local leaders could sidestep Richmond entirely. The opinion clarified that the Arlington County Board had the authority to [change the name on its own](#).

In an statement Wednesday, Levine wrote that today’s event was important because the General Assembly named the highway after Davis long after the Civil War — in 1922 — and Davis himself few connections with Virginia.

“The purpose instead was to terrorize Virginia’s black population into submitting to unconstitutional second-class legal status under Virginia law,” said Levine. “In 1922, Jim Crow laws, lynching, and the KKK were at their peak power, while poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses kept the descendants of the courageous African-Americans who fought Davis and died for the Union from exercising their constitutional right to vote.”

“While it is necessary for us to honestly discuss and interpret Virginia’s history, I feel strongly that commemorating the president of the Confederacy through the name for a major thoroughfare is not appropriate,” Virginia’s Commonwealth Transportation Board Secretary said after [approving the name change](#) in May.

The highway was named after Davis at the request of the [United Daughters of the Confederacy](#), a group which sponsored confederate monuments across the south in the 20th century, including a [now-removed plaque](#) in Bluemont Park. In 1946, the

≡ group also commissioned a stone marker along the highway bearing Jefferson Davis' name, which county or state transportation officials [are not quite sure what to do](#) about. 🔍

“I’m proud of Mark Levine for getting this through,” said [Freddie Lutz](#), owner of longtime Crystal City LGBT bar Freddie’s Beach Bar, who attended this morning’s ceremony. “It’s a great, progressive move. I’m all about celebrating diversity.”

“It’s been a long time coming,” Levine said. “It’s a sign of oppression. It was wrong to put it up [then] and it was wrong today.”

Levine added that having himself and Dorsey personally take the Jefferson Davis sign down “wasn’t planned that way, but it’s wonderful symbolic justice.”

Officials [previously estimated](#) that total cost of changing Jefferson Davis Highway to Richmond Highway in Arlington would be around \$17,000, and that work would continue through October.

Alexandria voted to [nix the name](#) last year. Earlier this year Google Maps began [display the new name](#) on the Arlington portion of the highway.

“We are thrilled about the overdue name change,” Tracy Sayegh Gabriel, President of the Crystal City Business Improvement District, told ARLnow. “It’s much more consistent with our values — and provides a progressive and inclusive environment to live and work.”

*Jay Westcott contributed to this report.*

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**#Civil War #Crystal City #Route 1 #signage**

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