



Issue Summary - Voting Rights /Gerrymandering - All Districts

Have you ever wondered why Virginia’s top elected officials, U.S. Senators, Governor, Lieut. Governor, Attorney General, and the Democratic candidate for President, Hillary Clinton, *ALL won the state* by strong margins in their last elections yet Republicans managed to hold on to a majority in the state House and Senate?¹ How can that be when the people have spoken? The answer lies in the good-old practice of “gerrymandering.” Gerrymandering is the ability to draw district lines that favor one party over another by excluding entire sections of the population that might vote for the opposition. Voted “one of the most gerrymandered states in the nation,”² Virginia’s districts look like they were drawn by the arthritic hand of an octogenarian grandmother. Often based on racial lines, income disparity and retaining the status quo, the practice persists despite multiple Democratic reform efforts, and despite the fact that 74% of Virginians feel district lines should be drawn by an independent board—not by the Republican state legislature that uses it to serve its own purpose.³

Virginia Republicans Repeatedly Subvert Voting Rights Representation:

- April 24, 2017, GOP Delegate calls Republican redistricting efforts “Gerrymandering on steroids....Virginia Republicans are using outside lawyers to defend their current hyper-partisan gerrymandering. Guess who is paying the bill, which now exceeds \$2.6 million? You and I are, with our taxes....We need to demand redistricting legislation that makes it illegal to create districts that unfairly benefit one political party over the other. We need redistricting commissions that are non-partisan.”⁴
- March 1, 2017, Supreme Court directed reexamination of Republican-driven redistricting efforts in Virginia legislature for signs of racial bias, gerrymandered that dilute the impact of African American voters. The case, Bethune-Hill v. Virginia State Board of Elections, concerned a dozen voting districts drawn with at least a 55% population of black residents of voting age⁵
- February 3, 2017, Virginia House of Delegates Republican Caucus refused to recognize Democratic efforts to move a redistricting reform amendment to the floor today—resulting in public “Boo’s” in disbelief.^{6,7}
- February 6, 2017, 62 members of the House Republican Caucus voted in favor of HB 1409 to continue to allow lawmakers to draw legislative districts for their own political gain, with EVERY House Republican voting to continue to allow gerrymandering except for four who did not vote: Del. Barry Knight, Del. Jim LeMunyon, Del. Randall Minchew and Del. Will Morefield.⁸
- May 23, 2016, Supreme Court dismissed challenge by Republicans to a lower court ruling on redistricting in VA, leaving lower court’s decision to redraw Virg. Congressional districts, creates possibility of electing a second black U.S. House member from the commonwealth. Justices ruled unanimously that 3 VA Republican congressmen who challenged the lower court’s decision — Reps. J. Randy Forbes, Rob Wittman & Dave Brat — do not have legal right to proceed. Democrats cheered the decision, with the head of the state party calling it a blow to “racial gerrymandering” and an advance for fair representation.^{9,10}

- For a better understanding of *gerrymandering* and why your Democratic leaders in Virginia are fighting to blow-up this very undemocratic practice, see¹¹:



Sources:

1. https://ballotpedia.org/Virginia_elections,_2016
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3. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/11/05/the-2015-election-in-virginia-a-tribute-to-gerrymandering/?utm_term=.769e15b3f3f3
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11. <https://js.washingtonpost.com/video/c/video/e447f5c2-07fe-11e6-bfed-ef65dff5970d>