

Issue: Republican Incumbent Voting Record

Delegate District 12-Joseph Yost-Voting Record

Summary

Joseph Yost is a Republican member of the Virginia House of Delegates representing District 12. At age 31 he is appealing to Millennials and focuses on issues important to them. A native of Giles County, he received a BS and an MA in Criminal Science from Radford College. Giles is currently serving his second term, and is on the House Committees of Education, General Law, and Health, Welfare and Institutions. Yost's political positions are generally along party lines (fiscal conservatism, pro-business, antiabortion and against "big government"). However, he is also a strong advocate for health, mental health and education, and is willing to break with party lines on key votes in these areas. When not serving as a Delegate, he works as Executive Director of the Giles County Historical Society.

He was endorsed by the Virginia Education Association in 2013 and 2015, and the national alliance on mental illness of Virginia named him its 2015 Outstanding Legislator.

Issues:

Until 2017, Yost voted primarily along Republican party lines on most House Bills. Recently he has been voting across party lines particularly when it will have little impact on the final result but will mislead voters into thinking that he is a moderate. The key areas of concern regarding his voting record are:

1. ***Against raising minimum wage***- Voted for HB 1371, which prohibits cities from increasing minimum wage or other benefits above state & federal requirements. The bill passed in 2016 but was vetoed by the Governor. The bill was a reaction by Republicans to some cities that have enacted policies to allow employees of contractors performing services for those cities to earn a high enough wage to allow them to live in the area.
2. ***Against expansion of Medicaid***- Recently voted, along with all Republican Delegates, against Medicaid expansion in the budget bill HB 1500 (Amendment 17), which amounts to turning down Federal money that was earmarked for healthcare for Virginians. 3,700 people in District 12 could have gained coverage by closing the Medicaid coverage gap.
3. ***Against women's reproductive rights***- Voted for HB 462 (requires ultrasound prior to procedure); Voted for HB 1 (defines life as beginning at conception, a move toward criminalizing abortion); Voted for HB 62 (prohibits Medicaid payment for abortion even in cases of totally incapacitating physical or mental defect); Voted for HB 1090 (rescinds funding for certain facilities, such as Planned Parenthood, that include abortion among its services); However, more recently (2017), he voted against HB 2264, which is almost identical de-funding bill to HB 1090. See flip-flopping issue under "weaknesses" below.

4. **Against immigrants' rights**- Voted for HB 1060, requiring police to ask about immigration status during arrest. Current VA law (19.2-83.2) requires law enforcement to notify ICE if an arrestee's citizenship is other than US or is "unknown." This creates a system designed to promote racial profiling and unfair treatment of people born outside of US, whether or not they are undocumented. However, more recently (2017), he abstained on HB 2000, which prohibits establishment of Sanctuary Cities in VA. See flip-flopping issue under "weaknesses" below.

5. **Anti-Environment** – Received a "D" from VA Sierra Club. Voted to extend **coal tax credits SB 1470 /HB 2198**– (Bill vetoed). According to VA Chapter of the Sierra Club, Since 1988, Virginia tax payer dollars as subsidize the cold industry in the form of a cold tax credits. To date, \$637 million in corporate welfare to a dying industry has done little to change the economic realities of the cold fields. (See Additional Coal Tax Information below).

Voted for HB 1679 – Allow fracking companies to not disclose chemicals used in the process which are dangerous to human health by considering them to be trade secrets. (Passed by house, withdrawn by Patron in Senate committee.)

Voted for **HB 1974** – Requires the Department of Environmental Quality to receive approval from the General Assembly for a state implementation plan to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from existing power plants prior to submitting the plan to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (**obstructs Clean Power State Implementation Plan**)

Environmental information from VA Sierra Club General Assembly Scorecard

<http://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce/virginia-chapter/documents/gascorecard2017.pdf>

Strengths: Yost is young (31 years old) in a district with 2 universities (Virginia Tech & Radford University), and Radford is his alma mater. His youth may make him appealing to millennials, although in 2015 he did not win in the Blacksburg metropolitan area, which is the location of Virginia Tech University. He focuses on and advocates for mental health and education. In his re-election campaigns in 2013 and 2015, he was endorsed by the Virginia Education Association. In 2015, Virginia's National Alliance on Mental Illness chose Yost as its Outstanding Legislator.

Potential Weaknesses: At a time when Virginians are concerned about jobs and wages, Yost's vote against improving minimum wage and benefits is tone-deaf. Also, Yost's vote along party lines against Medicaid expansion is troubling on multiple fronts. It amounts to taking money away from Virginians that would otherwise be made available, and denying coverage to thousands of residents in his district. The healthcare industry is also a large employer in the district, so his vote against money for healthcare is also a vote that limits potential job growth. Furthermore, Medicaid expansion funds would include coverage for important mental health services for the most vulnerable of the population. And yet Yost considers himself a proponent of the importance of mental healthcare. Medicaid expansion would also have provided thousands of Virginians access to substance abuse services at a time when opioid overdose deaths exceed fatal car accidents as the leading cause of unnatural death in Virginia. Yost's voting record on key social issues such as women's and immigrants' rights shows an abrupt change following the 2016 Presidential election (when District 12 voted for Clinton over Trump). This suggests that he is aware that the voters of District 12 may not agree with many of his far-right positions, and that he is concerned about his seat in the upcoming election. Therefore, in addition to shedding light on his anti-growth and discriminatory views, his voting record shows a lack of trustworthiness.



Additional Coal Tax Information

“During bankruptcy proceedings last year, coal mining corporation Alpha Natural Resources shredded labor contracts with Union Mine Workers of America, the union representing the Virginia is coal miners. Alpha cut health and pension benefits for unionized members and over 4,500 nonunion retired coal miners, who had worked underground for 20 years or more and emerged with significant health problems including black lung. One year before declaring bankruptcy, Alpha gave its executives more than \$3.5 million in bonuses. CEO Kevin Crutchfield alone received 7.75 million in total compensation in 2014. Hundreds of millions of dollars provided through the coal tax credits have made CEOs rich, but not one penny has gone to coal miners or their families.

Companion bills SP 1470 and House Bill 2198 would have continued tax credit for bad actors like Alpha. Virginia coal tax credits do not promote employment in the coal mines. Virginia’s legislative watch dog, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) found that Virginia coal tax credits have been ineffective at retraining coal jobs, and will not help workers who have been left behind in a changing economy. Elected officials should instead focus on policies that benefit Virginian's in southwestern by providing healthcare, public education, workforce training and community college to certifications and diversifying The Southwest economy through other industries, including the deployment of clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Both bills passed the General assembly and for the third year running governor McAuliffe vetoed the coal tax credits. “ – VA Sierra Club General Assembly Scorecard Vote Key
<http://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce/virginia-chapter/documents/gascorecard2017.pdf>