

# Fair Districts GA Advocacy Day

March 9, 2021



# Advocacy Day Agenda

- **Welcome and Introduction to FDGA**
- **A Success Story in Virginia**
- **Panel of Legislators**
- **How to be a Citizen Advocate**
- **Virtual Rope Line**
- **Wrap Up and Next Steps**

# About Fair Districts GA

Fair Districts GA is a nonpartisan organization that works to end electoral map rigging in Georgia.

Our focus is to fight gerrymandering, the practice of drawing legislative district lines to favor one group over another.

Our ultimate goal is to reform Georgia's process for drawing state and federal electoral maps.

*Georgia is now a swing state. Our legislative and congressional districts should reflect this new reality.*

# Redistricting Timeline for 2021

**January 11 – March 31**

Regular legislative session

**April 30**

Census release: state population totals  
Congressional reapportionment

**Spring - Summer**

Local hearings throughout state by legislative committees  
(assumed – awaiting plan from committees)

**September 30**

Census release: full PL 94-171 data

**October □ ?**

Legislature drawing official plans

**Late 2021 or early 2022**

Special legislative session to vote on redistricting plans

# 2021 FDGA Strategy

1. Convince Georgia General Assembly to produce fair maps during decennial redistricting, avoiding another gerrymander
  - Balanced between political parties
  - Reflecting racial makeup of population
  - Responsive to shifts in voting patterns
  - Aligned with communities of interest
2. Improve transparency of redistricting process
3. Build support in and out of the legislature for reform legislation in future cycles



# 2021 Tactics – Public Pressure

## GA General Assembly



Citizen advocates

Direct advocacy



Direct advocacy

Letters to the editor  
Social posts

Media



@FairDistrictsGA

Community input  
Response to maps



Community groups

Direct advocacy



Partner Organizations and Business leaders

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# ONE VIRGINIA 2021

## FOUNDATION



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Liz White, Executive Director



# Redistricting Reform in Virginia

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An ongoing success story





# This time last decade...

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In 2011, Virginia was under split legislative control.

A long line of redistricting reformers thought that could be just what we needed to set the stage for real reform.



2011:

D & R GERRYMANDER

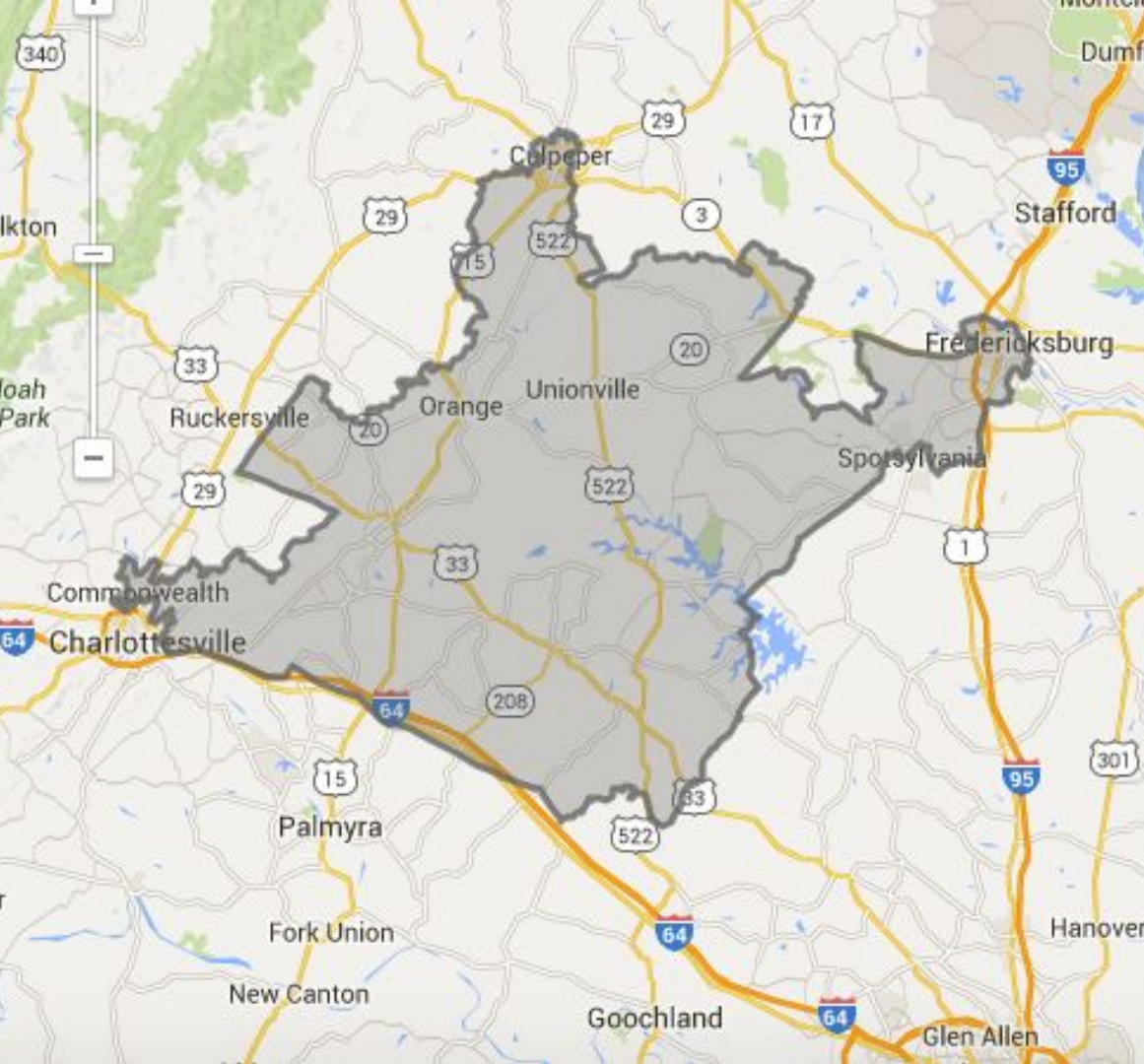


# Not Right vs. Left; Right vs. Wrong

Gerrymandering is about power, even more than partisanship.

It's petty and it's personal.

**Tell the story** - it's a gross abuse of power that should outrage every citizen.



**This is Virginia's 17th Senate district, a poster child for gerrymandering.**

1. "Frankenstein's District"
2. Mid-decade horse trading
3. Eliminating competition

2014:  
ONEVIRGINIA 2021  
FOUNDED!

(JOINING A LONG LINE  
OF REFORM ORGS)



# Mid-decade political climate:

Complete Republican control of both chambers (near supermajority in House)

“I don’t hear about it at home”

“Who’s Jerry?”

Facing Goliath with 3500 names

# Our Toolkit

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“GerryRIGGED: Turning Democracy on Its Head”



“Del. Jerry Manderling”



The public

**End Gerrymandering In Virginia!**

Voting districts belong to Virginians, not politicians or parties. We're pleased that the 2019 General Assembly passed a constitutional amendment to create a Virginia Redistricting Commission, but it needs to pass a second time in 2020. Please vote to pass the amendment again, so Virginia voters can vote on it directly in November 2020.

Additionally, the 2020 General Assembly should pass legislation to set criteria for the redistricting process, including:

- An open process for citizen involvement in the commissionExplicitly prohibit gerrymandering and keep communities together
- Clear rules that keep our communities together when new districts are drawn
- Specific language prohibiting political gerrymandering that reads, "No district shall be drawn with the intent to favor or disfavor any party or individual."

Name																			
Street																			
City																			ZIP
Email																			
Phone																			
I am interested in volunteering to help OneVirginia2021 (circle)    Yes    No																			

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I am interested in volunteering to help OneVirginia2021 (circle)    Yes    No																			

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I am interested in volunteering to help OneVirginia2021 (circle)    Yes    No																			

Gathered By: \_\_\_\_\_ Gathered At: \_\_\_\_\_ Gathered On: \_\_\_\_\_

PO Box 1054 Richmond, VA 23218

# The "Petition"

Action form

Adaptable

- Language
- Use

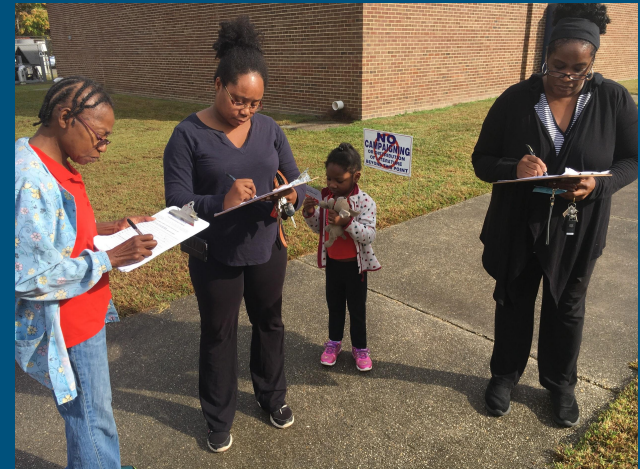
Gridlines!

Gathered By/At/On



# Presence at the Polls

10,000 new supporters in one day!



# Something happened in 2017...

Influx of political interest and engagement

More volunteers than we knew what to do with - literally

Needed an answer to "What can I do?"

Statewide elections - big issue!

50,000 strong!



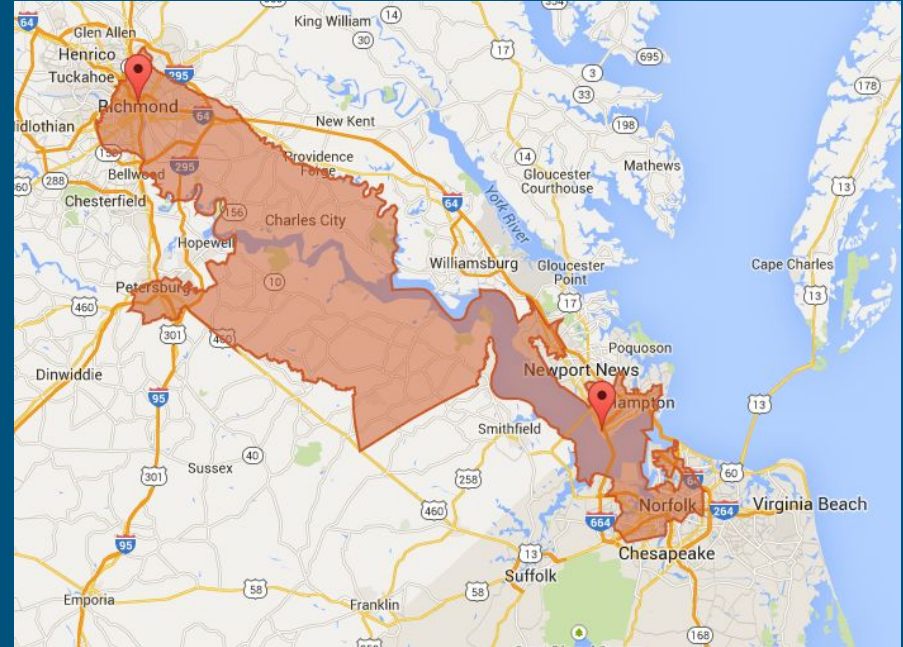
# Racial gerrymandering cases

2015 - *Personhuballah v. Wittman*

Congressional districts

2018 - *Bethune-Hill v. VA Board of Elections*

11 House of Delegates districts



# March Forth to End Gerrymandering Rally



# Local Action Groups

Answered the “What Can I Do?” question

Interaction with local and state officials in their area

We can’t know every corner of the state

Signature collection opportunities



# Legislative Plans

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Criteria alone - no matter who draws the maps, at least there would be good rules on the books

Study of the issue

Statutory advisory commission

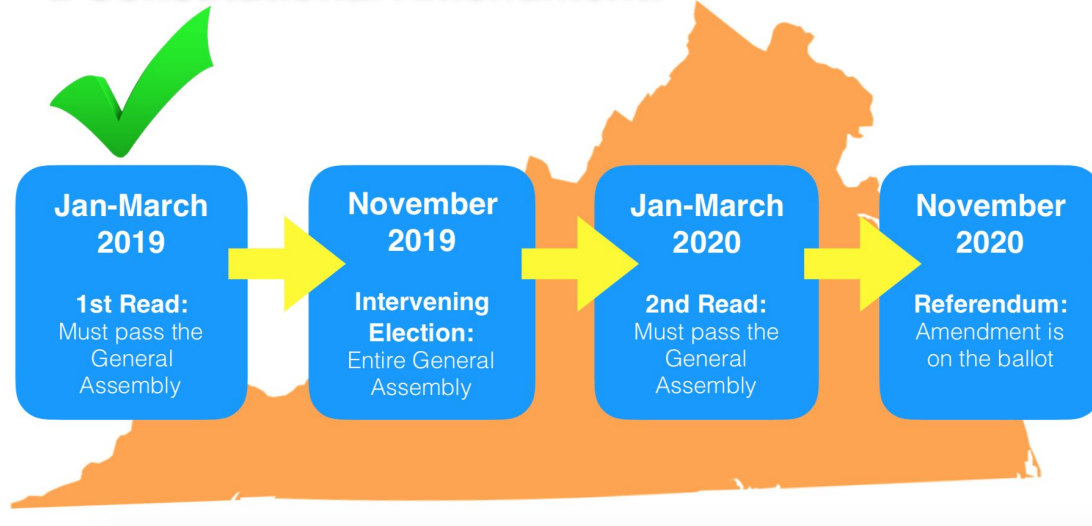
Single line constitutional amendment to outlaw partisan gerrymandering

Full independent commission

Hybrid commission

# Amending VA's Constitution

## OneVirginia2021's Timeline to pass a Constitutional Amendment:



# The magic formula

A legislator went from “I never hear about this so I don’t have to care” in three steps.

1. 2000 sign-ups in their district
2. A competitive (prominent) election
3. Insider meeting



# A perfect political storm - 2019

Leading up to the 2019 General Assembly elections, both chambers were virtually tied, and experts predicted a Blue Wave.

First read of the constitutional amendment - “gimme” vote

For the first time, both parties were in a position to benefit from compromise.

**Villains become heroes** - competitive primaries and public pressure.

Working hard to get lucky.

# Primed for success in 2019

National attention

Volunteer base at full force - 100,000!

Harnessing righteous anger

Lobby Day

Emails/phone calls/postcards/lit drop



# Then the tables turned

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Dems took over both houses

Suddenly a lot of concern about the proposed amendment...

House of Delegates tried to prevent a vote entirely, killed enabling legislation in conference committee, but narrowly passed.

# A hard-fought campaign

Statewide education

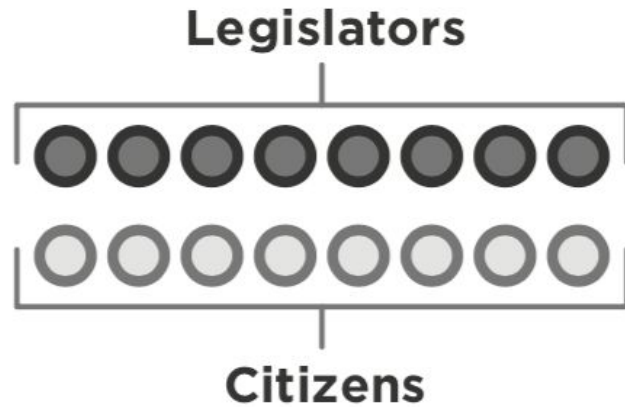
Vote YES on 1

FairMapsVA

67% of the vote!



# What we have now



Districts will be drawn by a commission comprised of 8 citizens and 8 legislators, with one of the citizens serving as chair.

## Criteria:

New VRA protections

Prohibits prison gerrymandering

Communities of Interest

# Staying Nonpartisan

IT. IS. HARD.

Heroes and villains on both sides of the issue.

Your allies don't have to be in the legislature.

Look national, look local.

Look to the past - Reagan, Bush I, Bush II

# Staying Nonpartisan

OneVirginia2021 has had a partisan balance (including 3rd party) on:

Boards

Panels/Speakers

Event Hosts

Statements

Donors

Bill Sponsors

Supporters/Volunteers

# National wave

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National experts

Grassroots best practices

Heavyweight endorsers

HR 1





# Making space, then filling it with voices



# Panel of Legislators



**Representative Carolyn Hugely and  
Representative Matt Wilson**

# 4 Steps to being an effective Citizen Advocate

1. Do your homework
2. Know whom to contact
3. Decide how to contact them
4. Formulate the message



# Step 1: Do your Homework



## Democracy Act

- SR 20/HR 55 in 21/22 session
- A resolution for constitutional amendment includes transparency, standards, independent commission
- Requires passage of "joint" resolution both houses by 2/3 majority
- Requires ratification by majority of voters on ballot of even year general election
- Effective the first of January following passage by voters

## Transparency Act

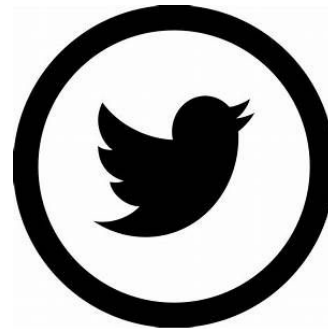
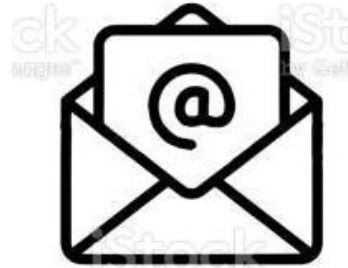
- SB 186/HB 189 in 21/22 session
- Bill focused on transparency of redistricting process
- Requires passage by majority in both houses
- Requires Governor to sign or do nothing (not veto)
- Typically becomes effective first of July after passage

## Step 2: Know whom to contact

- Senate Reapportionment Committee Members
- House Reapportionment Committee Members
- Your Senator and Representative

# Step 3: Decide how to contact them

- Email
- Phone
- Post to social media



# Step 4: Formulate the Message

- Templates will be provided
  - Email
  - Phone script
  - Pictures and hashtags for social media posts

## Transparent Redistricting - **Email Template**

Dear Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to voice my support for a transparent redistricting process in the 2021 cycle.

As a member of the redistricting committee, I ask that you ensure transparency and establish robust guidelines for this redistricting process. Transparency requires the opportunity for public input throughout the process, reasonable time for review and comments on proposed maps, and full disclosure of all of the legislature's redistricting work.

I also ask that you support this goal by signing on as a co-sponsor to the Transparency Act [HB 189/SB186 ], and making sure hearings are held and this legislation comes to a vote in the [House/Senate].

Sincerely,

*Your Name and Address*



## 2021 Senate Redistricting Committee Members:

Senator Name	Dist	Email	Phone	Admin
John Kennedy, Chair	18	<a href="mailto:john.kennedy@senate.ga.gov">john.kennedy@senate.ga.gov</a>	(478) 749-9981	Ali Farmer
Bill Cowsert, Vice Chair	46	<a href="mailto:bill.cowsert@senate.ga.gov">bill.cowsert@senate.ga.gov</a>	(706) 543-7700	Cyndi West
Tonya Anderson	43	<a href="mailto:tonya.anderson@senate.ga.gov">tonya.anderson@senate.ga.gov</a>	(404) 463-2598	Corrinna Edwards
Dean Burke	11	<a href="mailto:dean.burke@senate.ga.gov">dean.burke@senate.ga.gov</a>	(229) 243-6267	Ryann Miller
Gloria Butler	55	<a href="mailto:gloria.butler@senate.ga.gov">gloria.butler@senate.ga.gov</a>	(404) 656-0075	LaTonia Long
Greg Dolezal	27	<a href="mailto:greg.dolezal@senate.ga.gov">greg.dolezal@senate.ga.gov</a>	(404) 656-7127	Tarika Jackson
Mike Dugan	30	<a href="mailto:mike.dugan@senate.ga.gov">mike.dugan@senate.ga.gov</a>	(404) 656-7872	Elizabeth Fetzer



**Take the next 15  
minutes to make your  
voice heard**

# Key Information for Virtual Rope Line

- If needed, ask for help in Chat
- Link to the Advocacy Templates is in the Chat
- Minimize the zoom window so you have room to view the Advocacy templates and your email at the same time
- Clicking on Email address for Senators and Representatives should open your mail application and populate to “To:” field

**Before we head to breakout rooms to  
compare notes with fellow citizen  
advocates,  
please take a moment to let us know how  
you did ...**

## *Something to think about*

- What was this advocacy process like for you?
- What advocacy actions are you planning to take
  - ....This week?
  - .... Later this month?
  - ....Later this year?

Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has.

~ Margaret Mead ~

In just 15 minutes

We sent XX emails

We made XX phone calls

We made xx Social Media Posts

# Next Steps

- Finish the outreach that you started today
- Sign up on the Fair Districts website to get action alerts ([FairDistrictsGA.org/emailgetinvolved](https://FairDistrictsGA.org/emailgetinvolved))
- Follow Fair Districts on FaceBook (FairDistrictsGA) and Twitter (@FairDistrictsGA), amplify our message
- Join us for the April Fair Districts Town Hall

# Fair Districts Advocacy Day

Thank you!

