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VIRGINIA'S NEWS LEADER FOR 175 YEARS

# Richmond Times-Dispatch

Sunday, March 29, 2026

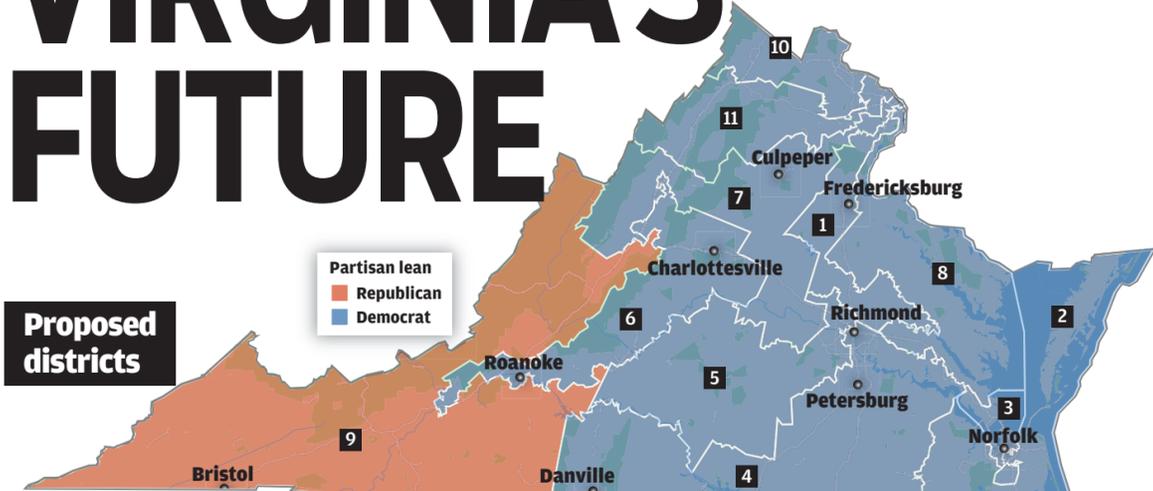
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ELECTION 2026 | REDISTRICTING REFERENDUM

# MAPPING VIRGINIA'S FUTURE

What voters need to know before April 21



**MICHAEL MARTZ**  
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Virginia voters face a constitutional choice in a political saga that began last summer deep in the heart of Texas.

A group of Democratic legislators fled the Lone Star State in a vain attempt to block state Republicans there from approving a plan to redraw the state's congressional map to pick up five seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and protect the political agenda of President Donald Trump in the second half of his term.

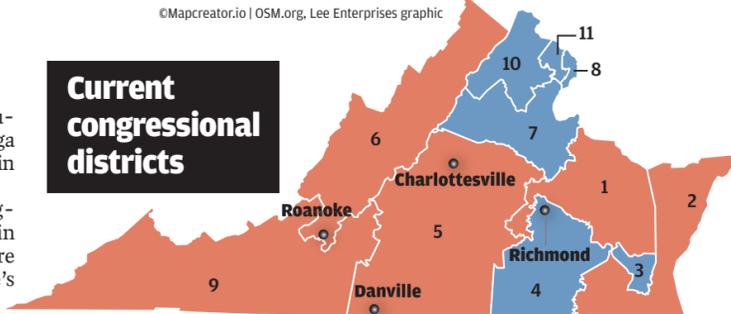
Some of those Texas Democrats traveled to Boston, where two influential Virginia Democratic leaders were attending an August meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures: Senate President Pro Tempore Louise Lucas, D-Portsmouth, and Senate Democratic Caucus Chair Mamie Locke, D-Hampton.

And so the seed was planted for Virginia's surprising push — launched publicly just over a week before Halloween — to adopt a political redistricting plan that would give Democrats the opportunity to pick up four congressional seats in midterm elections in November in an escalating political arms race between Republican- and Democrat-controlled states.

A few weeks after the Texans arrived in Boston, Lucas urged Democratic states to "follow suit," as California Gov. Gavin Newsom threw the first counterpunch in the political brawl over Trump's bid to

Please see **REDISTRICTING**, Page A4

## Current congressional districts



## Redistricting at a glance

**What are we voting for?** Virginia Democrats want to redraw congressional districts to make it likely that the commonwealth elects 10 Democrats and one Republican to the House of Representatives in November. Currently, six Democrats and five Republicans represent Virginia in the House.

**Why do Democrats want to redistrict?** They say it's in response to other states redrawing their districts at the behest of President Donald Trump to send more Republicans to Congress.

**How long will the changes be in effect?** The General Assembly would retain the power to redraw districts until after the 2030 U.S. Census. Congressional elections happen every two years.

## Key dates

**March 6:** Early voting began 45 days before the referendum. Check with your local registrar for locations and hours.

**April 21:** Voting for the statewide referendum.



**April 23:** Last day for briefs to be filed in the redistricting case before the Virginia Supreme Court.

**Aug. 4:** If the referendum passes, party primaries will take place for the 11 congressional races.

**Nov. 3:** Election Day

## RIGHTS RESTORATIONS

# Numbers continued to dwindle

Only 1,218 granted in '25; Youngkin reversed policy of past 3 Va. governors

**DAVE RESS**  
Richmond Times-Dispatch

The number of Virginians whose rights were restored by former Gov. Glenn Youngkin declined in 2025 for the fourth year in a row, according to the annual report on pardons required by the state Constitution.

A total of 1,218 Virginians who had been convicted of felonies had their rights restored in 2025, a Richmond Times-Dispatch analysis found.

That's down from 1,641 in 2024, which declined from 2,580 in 2023,



Youngkin

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**VIEW:** Read the documents referenced in this story by aiming your cellphone camera at the QR code and tapping the link.

## CELLPHONES

# 'Bell-to-bell' ban sought for schools

Assembly attempting to strengthen current law

**ANNA BRYSON**  
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Virginia officials have been working for years to ban student cellphone use in K-12 classrooms, but enforcing those rules has proved a challenge in some schools.

A bill passed by the General Assembly this year aims to reinforce the state's push, requiring schools to impose "bell-to-bell" limits on student phone use and tightening what lawmakers say were gaps in earlier policies.

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**INSIDE:** Gov. Abigail Spanberger faces narrow window to act on bills passed by assembly. **Page A15**



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## Houthis enter war, as more US forces arrive in Middle East

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## Weather

Mostly sunny  
**High 66**  
**Low 43**  
**Forecast • B3**

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