

Stunt studio
Train like a Hollywood action star at Miami gym
EXTRA, D1

Hokies fall to FSU in final
ACC SOFTBALL SPORTS, B1



Ahead of class
Working job during college can pay off after graduation
BUSINESS, C1

THE ROANOKE TIMES

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VIRGINIA | REDISTRICTING



MIKE KROPP, RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH

Reporters stand outside of the Virginia Supreme Court in April. On Friday, the court ruled against a bid by Virginia Democrats to redraw the state's congressional maps.

SMITH MOUNTAIN PROJECT
APCo forced to release less water

As drought lowers level of lake, there's less water for dam system

JASON DUNOVANT
The Roanoke Times

Extended drought conditions in the region has forced Appalachian Power to reduce downstream flows from the Smith Mountain Project, which stores water between Smith Mountain and Leesville lakes.

The reduction comes as the water levels around the lakes have remained low for months.

"Appalachian Power Company is operating the Smith Mountain Pumped Storage Project under its approved Water Management Plan and has implemented the first operational measures to conserve water, balance lake levels and maintain required downstream flows and water quality, while meeting all regulatory obligations," the company said in a statement to the Roanoke Times.

George Porter, director of communications for Appalachian Power, said the reduction in flows out of the Leesville Dam were put into place on April 27. The power company is required to release a certain amount of water downstream based on its water management plan, created in 2010.

The requirements are in place to protect aquatic habitats downstream and to support downstream recreation.

The amount of water released into the Roanoke River is reduced, as it was on April 27, when the forecasted lake level has a 20% chance of dropping below 790.5 feet adjusted in 16 weeks. That release is reduced by 15%.

There could be additional reductions in the amount of water released if the lake level falls below 790 feet for an extended amount of time, according to the water management plan.

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Demos take blow, but hope for gains

Back to old map 'not a fatal blow' for party, political analyst said

MICHAEL MARTZ
Richmond Times-Dispatch

RICHMOND — Virginia Democrats are back to where they started before an audacious bid to redraw the state's congressional maps that the Virginia Supreme Court nipped in the bud on Friday.

The Supreme Court ruling represented an unprecedented decision to overturn the result of a public referendum just two weeks earlier to ratify a proposed constitutional amendment that would have allowed the Democratic-controlled General Assembly to impose new congressional maps this year instead of waiting for an independent redistricting

commission to act after the next U.S. Census in 2030.

Instead of a likely 10-1 partisan advantage in midterm elections in November, Democrats still look to take advantage of President Donald Trump's unpopularity in Virginia to potentially pick up two seats in competitive congressional districts under the old map, while fighting longer odds in two other Republican strongholds as part of a national push to regain control of the U.S. House of Representatives.

"It's a serious blow for Virginia Democrats," said Larry Sabato, director of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia. "It's a serious blow to the national party effort to take the House, but it's not a fatal blow."

Currently, Democrats hold a 6-5 advantage in the state's congressional delegation, which

they hope to expand by flipping Republican-held districts in the Hampton Roads area, parts of the Richmond suburbs and the eastern Tidewater. Their odds are much longer to win seats in Southside and Western Virginia, which they had hoped to paint much bluer under the maps that the court blocked on Friday.

"It puts back into play where we would have been without a referendum," said Mark Rozell, dean of the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University.

However, what the redistricting push may have changed is the political environment, with Republicans now emboldened to take on Democrats after enduring a 15-point thrashing by Gov. Abigail Spanberger last fall.

"It was risky to begin with, given the possibility of the court

overturning it on procedural grounds," Rozell said. "It also was risky because it inflamed rural Republican voters who saw this as an existential threat to their representation in Washington."

The political battlegrounds are the same as they were before Democrats publicly launched their redistricting push in late October.

Rep. Jen Kiggans, R-2nd, remains the top target for Democrats in a politically competitive district that Spanberger carried by 8 percentage points in November. Kiggans is likely to face former Rep. Elaine Luria,



Kiggans

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WAR IN IRAN

US, Iran appear no closer to ending war

US awaiting Tehran's response to proposal

IDREES ALI, ERIN BANCO AND HATEM MAHER
Reuters

WASHINGTON — A state of relative calm prevailed around the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday, after days of sporadic flare-ups, as the United States waited for Iran's response to its latest proposals to end more than two months of fighting and begin peace talks.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Friday that Washington

expected a response within hours. A day later, there was no sign of movement from Tehran on the proposal, which would formally end the war before talks on more contentious issues, including Iran's nuclear program.

Rubio met with Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani in Miami on Saturday and discussed the need to continue working together "to deter threats and promote stability and security across the Middle East," U.S. State Department spokesperson Tommy Pigott said in a statement. The statement did not specifically mention Iran.

With U.S. President Donald Trump due to begin a long-awaited visit to China this week, there was mounting pressure to draw a line under the conflict, which threw energy markets into turmoil and posed a growing threat to the world economy.

A Qatari tanker carrying liquid natural gas sailed toward the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday en route to Pakistan, according to LSEG shipping data. If it successfully transits the strait, it would be the first Qatari LNG vessel to do so since the conflict started.



REUTERS

Emergency responders inspect the site of an Israeli strike Saturday in Saksakiyeh, Lebanon.

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