



Members of the Florida National Guard pass by tourists on a sidewalk Friday in Washington. JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

ELECTION 2026

Virginia votes today

Redistricting referendum could have national implications

By **Natalie Anderson**
STAFF WRITER

Virginia's special election for a ballot referendum on congressional redistricting is today. Here's a rundown of everything voters need to know to cast a ballot.

Virginia voters are asked to choose "yes" or "no" on a redistricting referendum that, if approved, would put a new congressional map in effect for the 2026 midterm elections. Democrats currently hold six congressional seats and Republicans have five. Under the proposed maps, 10 congressional districts would favor Democrats and one would favor Republicans.

It's a hotly contested election with national implications and millions being spent by various groups to campaign on the issue. Democrats frame the issue as a national fight for "fair elections" and to "level the playing field" in response to recent redistricting in other states that's favorable to Republicans.

They see it as a tangible way to "fight back" against a national GOP stronghold.

Republicans have deemed the proposed maps a "power grab" by Richmond politicians that dilutes representations of minorities and rural communities.

Their messaging frames the redistricting push as unconstitutional and illegal gerrymandering in a state that previously supported bipartisan redistricting efforts. They have filed numerous lawsuits seeking to block the maps, arguing the state legislature did not follow the proper procedure to get the referendum on the ballot.

WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT?

The referendum question reads as follows:
"Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended to allow

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No clear end in sight for DC deployment

National Guard troops roam capital months after emergency declared

By **Gary Fields**
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The cherry blossoms draw more than a million visitors to Washington's Tidal Basin annually. This year was no different, except some strolling the area between the Lincoln Memorial and the Thomas Jefferson Memorial were dressed in camouflage — and armed.

Eight months after President Donald Trump declared a crime emergency in the nation's capi-

tal and called up the National Guard, more than 2,500 troops remain, in a deployment that has grown increasingly routine, with no clear end in sight.

Deployments to other cities have ended or been paused by courts in California and Illinois, while more limited operations are ongoing in some cities, including New Orleans.

But in Washington, guard members still walk city streets and patrol metro stations, tourist

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A member of the National Guard rides the Metro on March 23 in Washington. ALLISON ROBBERT/AP

Police charge blogger with violating curfew

Man was recording with phone, looking to interview people

By **Peter Dujardin**
STAFF WRITER

VIRGINIA BEACH — Mickey Barker, a blogger with a small following on Facebook, went to the Oceanfront on Saturday night to document the city's curfew.

The 41-year-old Hampton man walked slowly down Atlantic Avenue, recording with his iPhone and looking for people to interview.

Though he knew the Virginia Beach City Council exempted

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Michael "Mickey" Barker, 41, of Hampton, with his dog, Max, at the "No Kings" rally in Washington in June 2025. MINNIE BOATWRIGHT

INSIDE



COSTLY BEEF

Ranchers across the U.S. are reluctant to grow the national herd, and until they do so, beef prices will likely remain high.

Business, Page 10

REVAMPING ATLANTIC AVE.

Four businesses on Atlantic Avenue will receive Virginia Beach grants to spruce up their properties. **Page 3**

MIXED MESSAGES

President Trump offered mixed messages about the path ahead for the war against Iran. **Nation & World, Page 6**

Redesign team seeks to improve experience

Design firm focused on changing how visitors move through Fort Monroe's 560-acre site

By **Devlin Epding**
STAFF WRITER

The design firm selected to reimagine Fort Monroe is planning a major overhaul and wants to change how visitors move through and experience the site.

Fort Monroe is underperforming when it comes to visitor experience, according to Hargreaves Jones President Mary Margaret Jones. That includes an "awkward" entrance that often requires a vehicle, the lack of pedestrian sidewalks or programming, and the acres of open grass fields that add nothing to the fort but require

mowing every week.

The Fort Monroe Authority selected Hargreaves Jones as lead designer in January for its new redevelopment master plan, and the firm presented its initial vision to the authority at its Thursday Board of Trustees meeting.

Some improvements Jones suggested included adding new buildings like a hotel, removing decaying buildings with no historic purpose and changing how people move through the site.

"People want experiences

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