



# THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VIRGINIA

## BULLETIN

Volume 43, Issue 4  
January, 2015

P.O. Box 10133, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0133  
<http://www.lwvmcva.org>

## Redistricting: Fostering or Stifling Competitive Elections?

A program on non-partisan redistricting

Monday, Jan. 26, 7 p.m.  
Blacksburg Town Hall



Shuler

James "Jim" Shuler represented the 12th District in the House of Delegates from 1994 to 2012. The 12th District was a Gerrymandered district between 2001 and 2011. It stretched from Bath County to western Montgomery County and was often only a couple miles wide. Shuler was the primary House sponsor of nonpartisan redistricting legislation. He gave numerous talks about its importance.

Shuler served on numerous committees: Agriculture, Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources, Corporations, Insurance and Banking, and others.

He is a veterinarian who operated the Companion Animal Clinic until retirement.

Shuler is the Southwestern Virginia Regional Chair for OneVirginia2021.

William H. Fralin, Jr., was a member of the Virginia House of Delegates from 2004 - 2010. He represented the 17th District, which includes Roanoke. He served on the Courts of Justice, Transportation, Education (chairing the Students and Daycare Subcommittee), Privileges and Elections Committees (chairing the Campaign Finance Subcommittee), and General Laws

He is president of Medical Facilities of America which provides skilled nursing and rehabilitation care throughout Virginia and North Carolina. He currently serves on the Virginia Health Reform Initiative (VHRI) Advisory Council as a gubernatorial appointee



Fralin

Jason P. Kelly of Virginia Tech's department of political science faculty, specializes in American politics. His work examines how institutions -- the rules, procedures, and norms that shape the behavior of government actors -- effect political and policy outcomes in the United States.

Some of his research explores how the rules that govern legislative redistricting shape the strategies employed by partisans seeking to create electoral advantages. He has studied how the variance in redistricting procedures across states affects the degree to which congressional districts are gerrymandered to benefit one party over the other or incumbents over their would-be challengers.



Kelly



Yancey

Dwayne Yancey, editorial page editor of the Roanoke Times, has held a variety of reporting and editing positions since joining the paper in 1982, including six years as political reporter and seven years as an assistant managing editor.

In addition to his work as a journalist, Yancey also wrote a book on the campaign and election of former Virginia Gov. Doug Wilder, and is a playwright.

*The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.*

*The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates for office, or political parties, and any use of the League of Women Voters name in campaign advertising or literature has not been authorized by the League.*

## Contact

Co-Presidents  
Amy Mauldon  
951-1534  
[amauldon@gmail.com](mailto:amauldon@gmail.com)

Mary Houska  
552-2717  
[mfdh@aol.com](mailto:mfdh@aol.com)

Alison Wilson  
557-1253  
[alisonhwilson@verizon.net](mailto:alisonhwilson@verizon.net)

*Treas:* June Schmidt  
552-1590  
[schmidtj@vt.edu](mailto:schmidtj@vt.edu)

*Sec:* Susan Gurley  
951-1189  
[susangurleyva1@gmail.com](mailto:susangurleyva1@gmail.com)

*Directors:*  
David Scheim (*publicity*)  
320-8013  
[dscheim@comcast.net](mailto:dscheim@comcast.net)

Bev Fleming (*Facts for Voters*)  
951-1527  
[bev\\_fleming@hotmail.com](mailto:bev_fleming@hotmail.com)

Joan Zajac  
552-3856  
[JoanZajac@cooper.net](mailto:JoanZajac@cooper.net)

Carolyn Rude (*webmaster*)  
552-0373  
[carolyn.rude@comcast.net](mailto:carolyn.rude@comcast.net)

Julia Lewis (*event planner*)  
961-2655  
[cisco@warmhearthva.org](mailto:cisco@warmhearthva.org)

Carol Linker  
953-0533  
[cjlinker1@verizon.net](mailto:cjlinker1@verizon.net)

Mary Ann Johnson (*Bulletin/Facebook*)  
552-0133  
[jnayram@vt.edu](mailto:jnayram@vt.edu)

*Finance*  
Harriett Cooper  
552-3446  
[chayabrona@verizon.net](mailto:chayabrona@verizon.net)

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Go to the League website  
<http://lwvmcva.org> and link from there.

*From Co-president Mary Houska*

# What We Need To Know About

***Why so much attention to trying to take the politics out of designing Virginia Congressional and General Assembly political districts?*** Because of Gerrymandering in Virginia, there are very few really competitive General Assembly and Congressional elections. For example, in the 2013 election, only 19 of the 100 House of Delegates seats faced real competition. In Virginia, redistricting is controlled by the majority party in the General Assembly. Gov. Terry McAuliffe asked his Ethics Commission to consider Virginia redistricting. Co-Chairmen former Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling and former Congressman Rick Boucher recommended an amendment to the Virginia Constitution creating an independent redistricting commission to oversee and implement nonpartisan criteria.

***What is Gerrymandering?*** Gerrymandering is designing a district to crowd most members of one political party in an area into a single district, often forming very long and narrow districts. A high percentage of the voters in that district will be in one party. That means that the adjoining districts will have a comfortable majority of voters from the other party. No reasonable opposition politician will waste time and resources running for any of those seats. A lawsuit is pending in the U. S. District Court for Eastern Virginia challenging the redistricting of Virginia's 3rd Congressional District as an unconstitutional racial Gerrymander. The district crowds African Americans living between Richmond and the Tidewater into a "bizarrely shaped" single district. Congressman Bobby Scott represents the 3rd Congressional District.

***Why is that a problem?*** These districts are not competitive so the winning political candidate is usually selected by a primary or a convention, not by all the voters in November. Most voters do not vote in primaries. In either selection process, only the most enthusiastic party members participate and they are not likely to be the moderates. Moderates are leaving the Congress and the General Assembly either because they are losing primary elections (remember Congressman Eric Cantor) or they retire before they are challenged in a primary. A legislature made up of representatives who know they must please the most fervent members of their party is not a legislature of compromise and cooperation.

***Why push the General Assembly now, it is 5 years before the next census?*** It takes about 3 years for a Virginia Constitutional Amendment to pass, assuming that the

*continue on next page*

## Transparency Virginia Aims To Increase Access To Information in General Assembly

The League of Women Voters of Virginia is one of the leading organizations in Transparency Virginia, a coalition of about 20 groups that is planning efforts to increase accessibility to information about activities in the General Assembly.

It plans to focus on meeting notices, recording of votes in committees and subcommittees, and ensuring that all bills are heard in committee before the session adjourns.

"This is a good government effort," said Anne Sterling, president of the League of Women Voters of Virginia, one of the organizations behind the effort, according to the news story in the Richmond Times Dispatch by reporter Graham Moomaw.

"Citizens' ability to observe the legislative process and to engage in that process is part of a rich tradition, both here in Virginia and elsewhere around the country, and it must be preserved," said Megan Rhyne, executive director of the Virginia Coalition for Open Government.

Organizers said the coalition is nonpartisan and nonideological, and the new coalition is an effort to capture information and eventually report that information to the public.

# Non-partisan Redistricting

General Assembly does pass the Amendment in two sessions, separated by an election, and the voters of Virginia then pass the Referendum. The Referendum really needs to be passed by 2019. There is very little time left to convince members of the General Assembly that Virginia voters want Nonpartisan Redistricting.

## Timetable for Changing the Virginia Constitution

Required Actions:	1st GA Approval	Election	2nd GA Approval	Referendum
	February	November	February	November
	2015	2015	2016	2016
	2016	2017	2018	2018
	2017	2017	2018	2018
	2018	2019	2020	2020

Next Census Year: 2020

Next Redistricting: 2021

**What is happening in southwestern Virginia?** Former Delegate Jim Shuler, has agreed to lead the effort to make voters in southwestern Virginia aware of the problems caused by partisan redistricting. He will be working with One Virginia 2021 and with any other organizations with these goals. Your League has agreed to work cooperatively with him and organizations working towards nonpartisan redistricting. Our chore is to help educate voters about the importance of removing politics from redistricting. Why us? There is only one League in southwestern Virginia, the Montgomery County League. We hope to work cooperatively with the Washington County MAL. Nonpartisan redistricting is the primary goal of the Virginia League this year. It is also a major goal for the United States League. If the League doesn't do this, who will?

**What is One Virginia 2021?** One Virginia 2021 was founded in 2013 by Charlottesville lawyer, Leigh Middleditch, in cooperation with the Virginia League and other Virginia leaders. Its new Executive Director, Brian Cannon, is a Richmond lawyer and political activist. The new President is Greg Lucyk, former Chief Staff Attorney for the Virginia Supreme Court. Former Montgomery County Delegate Dave Nutter is a Board Member. Former Lt. Governor Bill Bolling and former Lynchburg Delegate Shannon Valentine Co-Chair the Advisory Board. LWV-VA President, Anne Sterling, serves on its Policy Council and Kerin Yates, President of the Charlottesville Area LWV is Treasurer of the One Virginia 2021 Foundation. One Virginia 2021 has opened a second office in Richmond in the same building as the LWV-VA's office.

**What else needs to be done soon?** Blacksburg Town Council has passed a resolution supporting the efforts of One Virginia 2021 and supporting Nonpartisan Redistricting. We need to convince other local governments to do this.

Our members and friends need to contact their representatives in the General Assembly, telling them they want Virginia to have Nonpartisan Redistricting. In the past few weeks, Board members and Action Committee members have visited the offices of Del. Greg Habeeb, Del. Nick Rush, Del. Joseph Yost, and Del. Sam Rasoul to talk about a Constitutional Amendment for nonpartisan redistricting. Delegates Rush, Yost and Rasoul are on the House of Delegates Privileges and Elections Committee. Any legislation about elections, including legislation to bring about nonpartisan redistricting, must be first passed by the Privileges & Elections Committee.

**Supporting and Tracking Legislation** If you want to support and track legislation that is being considered in the 2015 session of the General Assembly [GA], how do you do it? The most effective time to contact your GA representatives is before they go to Richmond. However, you can still track legislation and contact GA members by email or telephone.

**Tracking:** To find out what legislation has been submitted on a topic and what has happened to that legislation, there are two tracking services: Richmond Sunlight and the General Assembly web site. Richmond Sunlight, a web site founded by the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy is the easiest to use. The web site address is: [www.richmondsunlight.com](http://www.richmondsunlight.com).

Before you contact your Delegate or Senator, it is best to first go to a tracking service and identify the specific legislation you are supporting. Your Voter Card gives your House and Senate District numbers. Here is the contact information for the House and Senate members representing Montgomery County and Radford:

7th House District – Nick Rush, [DelNRush@house.virginia.gov](mailto:DelNRush@house.virginia.gov), 804-698-1007

8th House District – Greg Habeeb, [DelGHabeeb@house.virginia.gov](mailto:DelGHabeeb@house.virginia.gov), 804-698-1008

12th House District – Joseph Yost, [DelJYost@house.virginia.gov](mailto:DelJYost@house.virginia.gov), 804-698-1012

19th Senate District – Ralph Smith, [district19@senate.virginia.gov](mailto:district19@senate.virginia.gov), 804-698-7519

21st Senate District – John S. Edwards, [district21@senate.virginia.gov](mailto:district21@senate.virginia.gov), 804-698-7521

38th Senate District – Ben Chafin, [district38@senate.virginia.gov](mailto:district38@senate.virginia.gov), 804-698-7538

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### **Calendar**

Jan. 21, 11:30 a.m. Great Decisions, Blacksburg Branch, Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library community room  
Jan 26, 7 p.m.- Non partisan Redistricting panel, Blacksburg Town Council Chambers  
Jan. 28, 11:30 a.m. - Great Decisions, Blacksburg Branch, Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library community room  
Feb. 3, 11:45 a.m. - First Tuesday luncheon, 622 North Main  
Feb. 4. 11:30 a.m. - Great Decisions, Blacksburg Branch, Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library community room  
Feb. 4 - League of Women Voters of Virginia Lobby Day, Richmond  
Feb. 10, 11 a.m. - Board of directors, League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, Blacksburg Branch, Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library community room

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**Companion Animal Clinic, Inc., Blacksburg (540) 552-6800**

### **JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TODAY**

Become a member of the League of Women Voters. The annual membership fee is \$50. This payment includes local, state, and national membership dues. Members receive The Virginia Voter and The Montgomery County Bulletin. Email: [Membership@lwvmcva.org](mailto:Membership@lwvmcva.org). Or email Alison Wilson at [alisonwilson@verizon.net](mailto:alisonwilson@verizon.net)