

Why I oppose the proposed constitutional amendment that will control re-districting:

- The amendment makes meaningful citizen input virtually impossible.
- Requiring only 3 public hearings is completely inadequate for Commission members to understand what makes up communities of interest across Virginia.
- Public hearings can't start until mid-February.
- Legislators' on-the-ground knowledge of communities is completely frozen out.
- The Virginia Supreme Court is put in total control, if the General Assembly doesn't take the Commission's plan exactly as written.
 - Those justices were selected by the majority party for 12-year terms and, thus, represent the statewide voter preference of the past.
 - Significant demographic and regional experience aren't represented on the Court.
 - No one from Fairfax, Arlington, or Alexandria has been on the Court in two decades.
- There are zero requirements in the amendment on how the Court proceeds. At a minimum
 - Bi-partisan approval should be needed for any special master(s) that courts elsewhere have used to analyze gerrymandering cases.
 - While the Commission is required to have open meetings and must provide public access to all records, there is no requirement that Court's work be public.
- 48 members of the General Assembly opposed this ballot question.
 - There is deep concern about the total control given to the Court, since it only takes two of the four minority members of the General Assembly serving on the Commission to kill any plan and send redistricting to the Court.
 - The greatest concern is the amendment's total silence on the racial, ethnic, or geographic make-up of the Commission. The naming of the eight non-legislators is controlled, again, by judges selected by the majority party in the prior decade. In naming the citizen members, there's no requirements these judges even consider - let alone achieve - a balance that is representative of Virginia's people.
- We don't need an amendment to the Virginia Constitution to proceed with 2021 redistricting that is open, inclusive and fair. Passing this deeply flawed proposal will only tie our hands now and in the future to a process controlled by procedures and by a timeline that makes public input little more than window dressing. We can and will come up with a much better constitutional protections.

Delegate Vivian Watts

P.S. Here's why I'm particularly concerned a community based focus:

My district has parts of eight high schools, four supervisor districts, four state senate districts, and two congressional districts. Before the district was cut into peices, I loved the challenge of talking with high school students. Now, I'm not the representative identified with any high school. Last year, even the League of Woman Voters only included me in one of the four debates that covered voters in the 39th District. When communities are cut, communication is cut. Voters can't hold their elected officials accountable if they don't know who represents them.