

What's Next For Virginia Redistricting? Submitted by Sue Worden

The speaker was Brian Cannon, Executive Director of ONEVIRGINIA2021. He started by giving the recent history of redistricting in VA. In 2011 both parties participated in political gerrymandering with the Republicans in charge of drawing the delegate lines and the Democrats drawing the senate districts. The general assembly didn't draw the Congressional districts until 2012. The 3rd Congressional district was contested and was redrawn by the courts.

In 2014 ONEVIRGINIA2021 was formed and has been working/lobbying to accomplish fixing the redistricting mess before the next redistricting takes place in 2021. It has filed 2 lawsuits on racial gerrymandering: one about the Congressional lines and one about the House of Delegates lines. It has also brought a suit dealing with the definition of "compactness" which the Constitution requires. The Congressional suit has been settled but the House of Delegates suit has yet to be settled. On 3/31/17 the court ruled against the organization's law suit and it will go to the VA Supreme Court on appeal. The case on the "compactness" of the drawn districts is to be heard in August, 2017.

In 2015 when Brian took over as Executive Director the organization had 3500 members, today it has 50,000 and the expectation is that after the primary it will grow to 60,000.

He stated that the upcoming Governor's and Lt Governor's races are very important for redistricting reform because they will be in office in 2020 when the next census takes place and may control the 2021 redistricting. Brian stated that the question has changed from should there be redistricting reform to what kind of reform should there be. 60 out of 100 delegates in the House and 35 out of 40 Senators have said they support some kind of reform. Northam says reform is a top issue for him and while Gillespie has made no public statement he leans toward thinking that the status quo needs to change.

Brian then explained that a Constitutional Amendment will be needed and the steps needed to do that. He stated it's not impossible and that legislatures in NY, OH, & NE legislatures have voted for reform. He said that ONEVIRGINIA2021's proposal is for a 7-person commission (2 Republicans, 2 Democrats, and 3 independent members) but other configurations are possible. Bottom Line: it can happen in Virginia!

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