



VIRGINIA LEAGUE OF
CONSERVATION VOTERS

2016

Virginia General Assembly
Conservation
Scorecard

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2016 Scorecard acknowledgments

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Front Cover Photo: **Storm's Comin'** by Barbara Houston of Quinton | Courtesy of Scenic Virginia

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2016 General Assembly

Political realities come home to roost

In 2015, we worked diligently to secure a Conservation Majority in the State Senate. Though we did gain strong conservation allies in both the Senate and the House leading into the 2016 General Assembly, we fell one seat short of our overarching goal. Faced with this reality, we came into session looking for common ground and finding ways we could work with members of both parties on our conservation priorities.

On more traditional issues like land conservation and Chesapeake Bay restoration, our approach worked; however, a partisan divide from the start of session, fueled in part by disagreement over the Governor's pick for the Supreme Court of Virginia as well as traditional clashes over gun control and same-sex marriage, hindered success on clean energy and climate solutions. Republicans were loath to go along with climate policies championed by a Democratic administration.

This trend is reflected in the 2016 Scorecard. Washington D.C.-style politics brought obstruction when it came to issues like clean energy and the Clean Power Plan, the Obama administration's strategy to reduce carbon emissions from power plants.

This is a troubling ideological shift, one that makes any legislative victory on these issues extremely difficult, if not impossible.

As such, our legislative "wins" in 2016 were few but meaningful. While we did have a handful of good bills advance out of the Senate, much of the legislation we and our conservation partners championed died without recorded vote at the House subcommittee level, a troubling lack of transparency at the legislature that unfortunately only seems to get worse with each session. For example, this year a bill requiring recorded

votes at the committee level was abruptly killed...by voice vote...in a subcommittee.

Where we were most successful in 2016 is with a state budget that funds conservation at unprecedented levels. The spending plan introduced by Governor McAuliffe included \$40 million in the biennium for land conservation. Though this expenditure was cut in half in the final budget, despite strong support from our Republican allies, this is still the most funding we've ever seen to protect open spaces, working farms and historic sites in the Commonwealth. Likewise, the budget provided upwards of \$60 million to help farmers in rural Virginia implement on-the-ground practices to cut pollution and improve water quality, which in turn will help the long-term health of the Chesapeake Bay.

Overall, we were able to push the ball forward in 2016. We made some modest gains while defending our top conservation issues from attacks. More obviously needs to be done to ensure success in future years, which is **where you come in**. If you don't like your legislators' scores, urge them to do better. If your Delegate or Senator voted the right way, thank them for being on the right side.

Most importantly, thank you for your continuing support of conservation in Virginia.

Sincerely,



Michael Town
Executive Director



Photo credit: *Micheale White, Governor's Office*

Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe signs into law a package of clean energy legislation during a bill-signing ceremony held in April 2015. Appearing with the Governor (from left): Delegate David Yancey (R-Newport News), Senator Rosalyn Dance (D-Petersburg), and Secretary of Commerce and Trade Maurice Jones.

Executive Branch

McAuliffe shows conservation values in 2016 with more to do during term

A divided government properly functions under the premise of checks and balances. With every branch bearing its own distinct powers and responsibilities, the political branches – the legislative and executive – are often in a continuous struggle to provide additional oversight of the other. Coupled with views and priorities of opposing political parties, such a division in government yields policy that is incremental in nature, and is rarely sweeping. Virginia's Democratic Governor and Republican-dominated General

Assembly have been at odds since the beginning of Governor McAuliffe's administration. As a result, compromises are often made and not every battle is won.

In 2013, Governor McAuliffe campaigned on combating climate change, advancing clean energy, protecting our open spaces, restoring the Chesapeake Bay, and being a steadfast opponent to lifting the long-held ban on uranium mining. Since being in office, he has consistently held these positions and taken actions to uphold those commitments, utilizing

Virginia LCV: Conservation's Political Voice in Va.

The Virginia League of Conservation Voters is the political voice of conservation in the Commonwealth. We work tirelessly to protect all of Virginia's treasured natural resources – clean air and water, thriving communities and rural landscapes, productive farms and forests, historic battlefields and Main Streets, and ample public lands and open spaces.

To do this, we advocate for and secure strong public policy at the state level, hold elected officials accountable for their positions on conservation issues, and endorse conservation-minded candidates to state office. Of the organizations in Virginia's conservation commu-

nity, Virginia LCV is unique in that we provide the political power of bringing legislators' records on conservation issues to the forefront of their campaigns and the minds of their voters.

Conservation Accountability

Virginia LCV's annual Conservation Scorecard provides the only comprehensive look at how legislators voted on the year's most important conservation issues. From land conservation, to water quality, to transportation, to energy, the scorecard provides an inside take on what happened in Richmond on a full spectrum of issues. Further, the scorecard provides

a distinctive and useful tool for voters as they choose who represents their conservation values in Richmond. As a constituent and a voter, it is important for you to let your elected officials know you saw their scores. Thank those who helped protect Virginia's natural resources and urge those who didn't to do better.

Conservation Endorsements

As conservation's political voice in the Commonwealth, Virginia LCV proudly endorses and seeks to elect and re-elect candidates to office who prioritize conservation. In addition to using the Conservation Scorecard, we issue an inclu-

them to build the “New Virginia Economy.” The 2016 General Assembly session was a shining example of this deep commitment.

In his introduced budget, Governor McAuliffe proposed historic levels of funding for conservation efforts – \$40 million for land conservation, over \$60 million for agricultural best management practices, and \$2 million for the development of solar energy in Virginia. In his State of the Commonwealth Address at the outset of session, Governor McAuliffe made clear his commitment to veto any legislation that would interfere with his administration’s ability to combat climate change through creating a strong state plan under the Clean Power Plan. However, as

session got underway, it was clear that climate deniers and opponents of conservation were not going to abandon their push to stop the Governor’s efforts.

Bills that were sent to the Governor at the adjournment of regular session included: a budget that stripped funding for solar development, restrained the ability of the Department of Conservation and Recreation to acquire new lands for state parks, and dramatically cut the amount of funding provided for land conservation; roadblocks to Virginia’s compliance with the Clean Power Plan (both through legislation and the budget); and measures extending grossly ineffective and fiscally irresponsible coal subsidies. During

the reconvened – or veto – session, Governor McAuliffe provided an additional opportunity for the General Assembly to move forward on these important policies.

By vetoing multiple efforts to hinder Virginia’s movement to combat climate change, to extend coal subsidies and by amending the budget to clarify the ability of the Department of Conservation and Recreation to accept new lands for state parks, to restore solar funding, and to restore his administration’s ability to develop a Clean Power Plan for the Commonwealth, Governor McAuliffe reaffirmed his commitment to being one of the most environmentally conscious Governors in Virginia’s history.

Governor McAuliffe’s use of executive authority to check efforts by the General Assembly to hinder Virginia’s advancement of conservation and clean energy policies has not gone unnoticed by the conservation voters that elected him. Whether it be exercising his veto power, or recruiting new clean energy projects to Virginia, Governor McAuliffe has been a consistent champion for building on the successes that conservation can bring to a “New Virginia Economy.”

This is a mere snapshot of the recent successes of Governor McAuliffe’s during the 2016 session. As an organization advocating for an array of conservation values, we expect to not be able to win on every issue.

There are of course instances in which we disagree with the Governor. From his support of offshore drilling and interstate natural gas pipelines; to his signing of legislation to upend Virginia’s proffer system, we know there have been and will be issues where we will be on opposite sides. However, it is important to spotlight the wins, focus on the issues we can move forward on, and stay committed to working with the Governor to push him to do even better. We do appreciate the Governor for his work this session and look forward to continue working with his administration to achieve even more over the remainder of his term.

sive candidate questionnaire, research the dynamics of races, and lead candidate interviews to determine which candidates deserve our “conservation seal of approval.”

Virginia LCV’s endorsed candidates receive our guidance on how to make conservation issues a priority in their races, our financial support, and our outreach efforts to ensure conservation voters in their districts know of our endorsement. All of these factors are important to seeing our candidates win and to seeing a conservation majority in the legislature.

Conservation Advocacy

After candidates are sworn in, Virginia LCV staff and members work diligently to advocate for conser-

vation values in the General Assembly. Our efforts are essential to guaranteeing legislators are best educated on the importance and value of protecting our natural resources and safeguarding our clean air, clean water and open spaces. The more they hear from us, and especially from you, the more victorious we will be.

Join Our Team

Check in at valcv.org to keep updated on what’s happening with conservation issues in Virginia. There you can take important conservation actions, get updated on Virginia LCV news, and follow our positions on critical legislation during the General Assembly session.

100 % 2016 Legislative Heroes

Virginia LCV Legislative Heroes demonstrate a strong dedication and prioritization of our conservation values. This year we recognize 14 Senators and 31 Delegates for voting with Virginia LCV 100 percent of the time.

Of the hundreds of bills these legislators vote on every session, they deserve a special acknowledgment for getting the conservation vote right every time.

On behalf of conservation voters in Virginia, we thank the Legislative Heroes pictured here and look forward to their continued commitment to protecting the Commonwealth's precious natural resources.



Senator Alexander



Senator Deeds



Senator Ebbin



Senator Favola



Senator Howell



Senator Locke



Senator Lucas



Senator Marsden



Senator McEachin



Senator McPike



Senator Miller



Senator Petersen



Senator Saslaw



Senator Wexton



Delegate Aird



Delegate Bagby



Delegate J. Bell



Delegate Boysko



Delegate Bulova



Delegate Carr



Delegate Filler-Corn

2016 Legislative Leaders

Virginia LCV “Legislative Leaders” scored between 75 and 99 percent on this year’s scorecard. Three Delegates and four Senators earned this recognition for making conservation a priority.

Legislative Leaders in the Virginia Senate

Senator Rosalyn Dance – 89%
 Senator Lynwood Lewis – 89%
 Senator Scott Surovell – 86%
 Senator Jill Vogel – 75%

Legislative Leaders in the House of Delegates

Delegate Steve Heretick – 89%
 Delegate Matthew James – 89%
 Delegate Luke Torian – 89%



Delegate Herring



Delegate Hester



Delegate Hope



Delegate Kearn



Delegate Kory



Delegate Krizek



Delegate Levine



Delegate Lindsey



Delegate Lopez



Delegate Mason



Delegate McClellan



Delegate McQuinn



Delegate Murphy



Delegate Plum



Delegate Price



Delegate Rasoul



Delegate Sickles



Delegate Simon



Delegate Spruill



Delegate Sullivan



Delegate Toscano



Delegate Tyler



Delegate Ward



Delegate Watts

Photo Credit: **Chancellorville Dawn** by Buddy Secor of Stafford County | Courtesy of Scenic Virginia



Scored Legislation:

Land Conservation

✓ Consideration of Historic Resources When Approving Transmission Lines

House Bill 908 – Delegate Randy Minchew (R – Loudoun)

Virginia is home to several of the most invaluable historic sites and resources in the nation. As a significant part of the Commonwealth's tourism economy, protect-

ing the integrity of these resources is imperative as we go forward in expanding infrastructure to meet growing demand. This includes shielding viewsheds and contiguous spaces from unsightly transmission lines. A proposal to install a 500 kV transmission line across the James River just outside the historic Jamestown Settlement has put this issue at the forefront of debate – yielding bipartisan support for responsibly protecting these resources.

House Bill 908 was introduced to direct the State Corporation Com-

mission to determine that, prior to their approval of transmission lines of 138 kV or larger, the route of the project avoids any adverse impacts to Virginia's historic resources – resources that are defined as eligible sites according to the National Registry of Historic Places. The legislation went on to clarify that, should there be no path that completely avoids impacts, the SCC should approve a route that most minimizes those impacts.

The bill passed with a comfortable margin of bipartisan support in

the House Subcommittee on Energy, however, after the need for clarity on some ambiguous components, the bill was continued to the 2017 session in the full committee.

✓ State Park Land Acquisition

Governor's Amendment #22 to the Budget, House Bill 30

Virginia State Parks are proven economic drivers in the Commonwealth – both to local and state

Know the Score:

As an exclusive accountability tool for conservation voters, it is important to know how we arrive at the final scores for each General Assembly session. The Conservation Scorecard gives you a comprehensive understanding of how your elected leaders represented your conservation values in Richmond.

While some sessions carry more contentious, high-stakes debates than others, our scorecard allows you to distinguish between the rhetoric and the reality of a legislator's record by providing you detailed summaries of what happened inside the State Capitol each session.

How the Votes Were Chosen

With hundreds of bills introduced every session, Virginia LCV carefully tracks and takes

positions on all legislation that impacts conservation. As legislation evolves throughout the lawmaking process, we communicate our position at every step along the way – from subcommittee, to full committee, to the floor of each chamber.

After session's end, we closely examine the votes and determine a selection of votes which best illustrates how legislators prioritized conservation issues. While some votes are easier than others, our look into what happened on the record and behind the scenes gives an encompassing representation of conservation performance.

How the Scores Were Calculated

For every vote recorded on the chosen legislation, legislators receive one "correct

vote" for voting the way of our communicated position. The number of "correct" votes is divided by the total number of possible votes for each legislator, which generates a lawmakers' percentage score for the session. Legislators that sponsored bills supported by Virginia LCV receive a patron credit, which counts as one additional "possible vote" averaged into their final percentage.

Although some legislators perform more poorly than others from year to year, it is important that they hear from you your encouragement to do better. Conversely, we must not take our Legislative Heroes and Leaders for granted – let them know you appreciate their commitment to conservation and look forward to their continued support.



Photo Credit: *Paddling on Clouds* by Denise McLaurin of Haymarket | Courtesy of Scenic Virginia

economies. With 36 parks spread throughout every corner of Virginia, all regions stand to benefit from investments to further develop, grow, and improve these opportunities to connect with our natural resources.

Historically, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has held the ability to purchase or accept the gift of land to be included in a state park with autonomy and without General Assembly oversight. Yet in a continuing trend of the power struggle between the legislative and executive branches, the General Assembly budget sent to the Governor included a provision prohibiting DCR from accepting or purchasing any lands to be used for State Parks without a General Assembly appropriation.

A clear obstacle to making good on his commitment to protecting more open space in Virginia, Governor McAuliffe sent back a friendly amendment to refine the parameters of this prohibition. The Governor suggested allowing DCR to accept in-holdings or contiguous parcels of land to existing state parks, so long as it required no additional operating expenses.

Regrettably, this amendment failed to gain a majority vote in the House of Delegates during the reconvened session.

Land Use & Transportation

X Circumventing Transportation Prioritization Process

Senate Bill 197 – Senator Bill Stanley (R – Franklin)

Senate Bill 365 – Senator Bill Carrico (R – Grayson)

In 2014, the General Assembly passed House Bill 2, a comprehensive overhaul of the planning and funding process for transportation projects in Virginia. This legislation set up a multifaceted procedure in which individual projects can be evaluated through a weighted scoring process. Providing a clear and transparent process, this legislation was a positive step forward for transportation planning in Virginia.

SB 197 was introduced to circumvent this process in order to fast-track the construction and development of Interstate 73 by directing \$40 million each year for construction with money already allocated for improvements to Route 58. Creating a precedent to sidestep the HB 2 process for one project would open up continuous debate for other projects looking for similar treatment.

After an initial vote of the full Senate to defeat the legislation, SB 197 was reconsidered and passed by for multiple days and eventual-

ly passed the Senate by a narrow margin.

Having already rejected similar policy proposals, the House Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee defeated this legislation.

Similar to SB 197, SB 365 also sought to evade the HB 2 prioritization process to fast track the Coalfield Expressway – a controversial and long-fought project of Virginia LCV and the conservation community. HB 2 was a policy set forth to provide a transparent platform for transportation projects to vie for necessary funding. As HB 2 made its way through the General Assembly in 2014, there were no exemptions for good cause.

Since HB 2 has gone into effect, Virginia LCV has held the steadfast position that all transportation projects should compete on their own merits and be scored under the various criteria set forth in the prioritization process.

Understanding the slippery slope SB 365 would lead to, the Senate Finance Committee defeated the bill.

Water Quality

✓ Tracking Toxic Waste Sites in Virginia

Senate Bill 227 – Senator Donald McEachin (D – Henrico)

For the second year in a row,

Virginia LCV has led efforts to create a publicly accessible database of non-federally managed toxic waste sites in Virginia. Although the bill passed the Senate unanimously in 2015, the bill did not receive the required funding it needed, which consequently prevented passage of the legislation. As part of a package of bills Virginia LCV worked to advance to address various toxic waste issues this session, SB 227 sought to accomplish this simple, yet important and commonsense proposal of creating a toxic waste site inventory.

Receiving only one “no” vote in the full Senate and receiving the required funding needed in the Senate version of the budget, the bill failed to pass the House Subcommittee on Chesapeake on an unrecorded voice vote.

✓ Increasing Penalties of Polluters

Senate Bill 228 – Senator Donald McEachin (D – Henrico)

In the 2015 session, identical legislation to Senate Bill 228 passed the Virginia Senate on a comfortable and bipartisan margin. The bill died, however, on a voice vote of a House subcommittee of six legislators. In a second year effort, SB 228 sought to increase the civil penalty that could be leveraged against polluters who have made a violation from a cap of

\$10,000 to \$25,000.

Disappointingly, the bill this year failed on 7-7 vote in the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Natural Resources.

✓ Responsible Coal Ash Closure

Senate Bill 537 – Senator Scott Surovell (D – Mt. Vernon)

As a nation historically built on the reliance of burning coal for energy production, we are faced with a potential legacy of pollution with coal ash and are now beginning the debate on what the safest, long-term strategy is to dispose of this toxic waste.

Coal ash is a product containing a litany of heavy toxic metals that are known to bio-accumulate up the food chain, causing a potential threat to many Virginians that live downstream of a coal ash polluted waterway. Coal ash has previously been stored in coal ash lagoons – or wet ponds where the ash is settled to the bottom of a pond and covered with millions of gallons of water. Many of the sites around the nation where these ponds are located have led to the contamination of nearby surface and ground water, showing elevated – and sometimes excessive – levels of heavy metals like selenium, arsenic, and chromium.

In 2015, the Environmental Protection Agency issued a direc-

tive for the closure of all coal ash ponds across the country. Left with an important decision on how to most safely and confidently dispose of the solid coal ash waste, Virginia has an opportunity to choose the most responsible, and reasonable path forward. Senate Bill 537 called for the storage of the solid waste in dry-lined modern landfills, a practical and realistic safeguard for protecting Virginia’s treasured waterways and Chesapeake Bay.

This proposal, however, is contrary to proposals from Virginia utilities that plan to leave the solid waste in its current place and merely cover the reservoirs with soil and plant vegetation on the surface leaving no barrier between the coal ash and the ground – a practice referred to as “cap in place.” This out-of-sight, out-of-mind approach may seem harmless; however, studies have shown that continual discharge of moisture that is inevitably contained within the coal ash will remain a threat to Virginia’s water resources for generations to come.

SB 537 was a sensible and bipartisan approach to safely dispose of Virginia’s coal ash in the most secured manner. With much regret, the bill was killed on 7-7-1 vote, with the key vote to passing the bill abstaining without cause.

✓ **Timely Spill Notification**

House Bill 977 – Delegate Alfonso Lopez (D – Arlington)
Senate Bill 581 – Senator Donald McEachin (D – Henrico)

House Bill 977 and Senate Bill 581 sought to reduce the window of time allowable to report an unlawful discharge – or spill – into state waters. Currently, a person or entity has 24 hours to report a spill, a timeframe that can prove too detrimental to the health of a waterway or too costly for the impacted locality. The introduced legislation would have cut this timeframe to 12 hours. Additionally, the bills specified that the Department of Environmental Quality should report any spill deemed to have an impact to public health to local newspapers, television stations, and radio stations as soon as practical.

Met with opposition from politeness who argued such a change would be too burdensome to meet the internal inefficiencies of their operations, the bills faced an uphill battle.

The House version was significantly amended to remove the provision changing the timeframe from 24 hours to 12, but retained the specification of media outreach. After the dramatic weakening of the legislation, the bill made it to the full House floor, but failed to

be engrossed (or brought before the full House for vote of passage), subsequently killing the bill – a truly disappointing presentation. The Senate version came before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Recreation as introduced and failed on a 7-7 partisan vote.

Climate Change & Clean Energy

✗ **Obstructing the Clean Power Plan**

House Bill 2 – Delegate Israel O’Quinn (R – Bristol)
Senate Bill 21 – Senator Ben Chafin (R – Russell)

The Clean Power Plan is a new federal standard that aims to reduce carbon emissions from power plants. With this historic attempt to reduce the impacts of climate change has come much opposition from climate change deniers and dirty fossil fuel interests. As expected, these outside special interests brought forth legislation introduced by their allies in the General Assembly.

House Bill 2 and Senate Bill 21 were refurbished bills from the 2015 session that were rightly defeated thanks to a robust campaign from Virginia LCV. The aim of the legislation was to rewrite Virginia’s energy oversight to give the General Assembly unprecedented and unconstitu-

tional authority over the Executive Branch.

Warning of a veto during his State of the Commonwealth address, Governor McAuliffe followed through with this commitment and vetoed the bills when they were sent to his desk on a party-line vote. With your support, we were able to sustain the Governor’s veto and defeat this climate denial legislation.

✓ **Clean Power Plan Budget Language**

Governor’s Amendment #23 to House Bill 30

The General Assembly also passed a budget containing a politically motivated provision that conditioned the use of DEQ’s funding to operate its clean air programs – money that funds air protection permitting, enforcement, planning, and other significant duties of the agency responsible for protecting the health and environment of the Commonwealth – to prohibit the development or submission of a Clean Power Plan to the EPA until after the Supreme Court stay of the rule is released. Not only was this a shortsighted scheme in terms of the missed opportunity to responsibly work to build a state plan best suited for Virginia, it was another example of DC-style politics and climate denial in Richmond.

Recognizing the poor judgment of this provision, Governor McAu-

liffe recommended an amendment to allow DEQ to develop a state plan while the rule is debated in the courts. This would have best positioned us to responsibly develop a plan curtailed to suit all of the Commonwealth’s interests, not something that is rushed last minute and runs the risk of having a federal plan implemented without Virginia input. Not surprisingly, the House of Delegates rejected this amendment on a party-line vote.

✗ **Extension of Coal Subsidies**

House Bill 298 – Delegate Terry Kilgore (R – Scott)
Senate Bill 44 – Senator Bill Carrico (R – Grayson)

Having gone into effect over 25 years ago, the coalfield employment enhancement tax credit in Virginia has long been a taxpayer handout to coal companies guised as a crutch to support mining jobs and working families of Virginia’s coalfields. Since its outset, however, this tax credit has done little to sustain – let alone grow – coal jobs in Virginia.

Despite the clear data that the tax credit continued to result in an increasingly unsuccessful trend and was deemed the most ineffective tax credit on Virginia’s books by the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission, fossil fuel allies in the General Assembly could not resist

putting forth legislation to extend the expiration date of the credit without any significant reforms. In 1988, the tax credit was valued at roughly \$260 per employee. By contrast, in 2015, the credit was valued at over \$12,000 per employee. This is a telling contrast that leads to questioning any motivation behind extending this failed policy. The extension of this tax credit would have been a fiscally irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars, and more importantly, a disappointingly empty proposal to aid the economic wellbeing of the coalfield region in the Commonwealth.

Gratefully, the Governor provided the backstop to kicking this can down the road by vetoing both House Bill 298 and Senate Bill 44. With Virginia LCV's urging, the Senate was able to successfully uphold these vetoes and bring an end to a decades-old fossil fuel subsidy.

✓ Advancing Energy Efficiency Measures in Virginia

House Bill 1053 – Delegate Terry Kilgore (R – Scott)

Senate Bill 395 – Senator Kenny Alexander (D – Norfolk)

As Virginia continues to fall behind neighboring states and the rest of the nation when it comes to renewable energy and energy efficiency, the 2016 session provided no

boost. With a handful of bipartisan bills filed to move the ball forward in various and thoughtful ways, the General Assembly's Commerce and Labor Committees rejected the premise of advancing any of these objectives, opting instead to consider these ideas in a special summer subcommittee.

The only bills among these to receive serious consideration were HB 1053 and its companion SB 395. As introduced, these bills sought to allow Virginia utilities to recover performance incentives for implementing energy saving measures. By doing so, the legislation required the Department of Mines, Minerals & Energy (DMME) to coordinate with the State Corporation Commission (SCC) and other stakeholders to develop a standardized protocol to verify and validate energy savings or energy efficiency measures.

Met with challenges from opponents, the legislation was dramatically scaled back to something more palatable for skeptics. Ultimately, the bills were amended to direct the SCC to evaluate and prepare a report on the establishment of uniform protocols when measuring, verifying and validating energy efficiency measures implemented by investor-owned electric utilities.

The legislation passed the General Assembly and was signed into law by the Governor.



Photo Credit: **View from Hawksbill Gap** by Denise McLaurin of Haymarket | Courtesy of Scenic Virginia

✓ **Establishing the Virginia Shoreline Resiliency Fund**

Senate Bill 282 – Senator Lynwood Lewis (D – Accomac)

Resiliency efforts in Virginia are becoming of ever-greater importance as our coastal communities continue to face the impacts of climate change in the way of sea level rise and its consequent recurrent flooding. While there are ongoing collaborative efforts aimed at tackling the many challenges presented by climate change, funding remains at the forefront of the discussion. Making our communities more resilient to the impacts of flooding is an issue that everyone can agree on. However, as these projects are enormously expensive, finding the necessary resources is a challenge.

Senate Bill 282 established the Virginia Shoreline Resiliency Fund to provide residents and businesses with funding for flooding mitigation projects through a low-interest loan program. Although monies were not directed to the Fund, the passage of this legislation is a huge step in the right direction to fighting the impacts of climate change in Virginia.

✓ **Energy Consumption Goals**

House Bill 1174 – Delegate Rip Sullivan (D – Arlington)

In 2007, Virginia set forth its first detailed energy plan. This inaugural plan, required to be revisited every four years thereafter, set forth many ambitious goals for Virginia's energy future. Among the many suggestions to grow the clean energy and energy efficiency sectors in Virginia was a goal to reduce electric use in 2022 by 10

percent of retail use in 2006 through energy efficiency and conservation.

House Bill 1174 was introduced to create a level of accountability to achieving an energy consumption reduction goal. The legislation directs the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy (DMME) to consult with the State Corporation Commission (SCC) to annually report on progress the Commonwealth is making towards achieving this 2007 goal.

After passing the House of Delegates with overwhelming support, the bill was defeated in the Senate Committee on Commerce and Labor on a party-line vote.

✓ **Solar Development Funding**

Governor's Amendment #10 to the Budget, House Bill 30

Virginia has been fortunate to see announcements of new solar development projects over the past year. However, the Commonwealth still drastically lags behind neighboring states and a majority of the nation in the amount of solar energy we have. With that understanding, Virginia's elected leaders should be doing everything possible to reduce barriers to solar development and show companies looking to invest and create jobs that Virginia is serious about embracing the imminent clean energy future.

Governor McAuliffe originally allocated \$1 million each year over the biennium to the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy (DMME) for the development of solar energy across Virginia. However, this funding was stripped from the budget sent to the Governor from the General Assembly.

With the opportunity to revise the multi-billion dollar budget, Governor McAuliffe renewed his commitment to seeing the growth of this industry

by again allocating \$1 million each year – this time to include prioritization for projects (jobs) in the economically depressed region of Southwest Virginia.

In a rejection of clean energy jobs and advancing the Commonwealth's clean energy economy, the House of Delegates overruled the Governor's amendment.

Good Government

✓ **Criteria Used for Redistricting**

Senate Bill 59 – Senator Janet Howell (D – Fairfax) and Senator Jill Vogel (R – Fauquier)

Virginia LCV has long supported efforts to reform how the Commonwealth draws our political boundaries. While we are often met with skepticism as to how this issue relates to conservation values, there is a valid argument that advocacy organizations of all kinds depend on the morale and participation of voters to fulfill their missions. That is becoming increasingly difficult in a Virginia where voter turnout in years when there is no statewide ticket has dropped to below 30 percent. This is due partly to a declining feeling that voters' voices actually make a difference.

Currently, the legislature, which is charged with drawing new maps every 10 years, can use political data when determining districts. This means legislators can choose their voters by roughly determining the number of Democrats and Republicans that will reside in a particular district. Senate Bill 59 would have prevented this inclination and the use of such political data in redrawing new legislative districts.

The bill passed the Senate, but was given quick consideration and tabled (defeated) on a voice vote in the House Subcommittee on Elections.

Behind-the-Scenes: Conservation wins, losses

The 2016 edition of the Conservation Scorecard highlights significant votes taken by members of the General Assembly. The scores are reflective of the general sentiment presented toward conservation values this year in Richmond. However, what the numbers do not show are the many battles that took place without a tangible vote to hold legislators accountable to.

Conservation Budget Measures

For example, the introduced budget included \$40 million for land conservation, but was ultimately cut in half in the final budget. This is still a historic amount of land conservation funding, but because this reduction happened in a conference committee between select members of the House and Senate, there was no up or down vote to score.

Another example is giving legislators their due credit for including upwards of \$60 million for farmers in rural Virginia to implement best management practices that reduce pollution from agricultural operations. This money was included in the final budget, but received no lone vote to score. Also included in the final budget was \$20 million to fund the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund – a key component needed to help meet our Chesapeake Bay cleanup goals.

Other noteworthy funding discussions that took place in 2016 occurred around the bond package. In his original proposal, Governor McAuliffe included \$140 million for the creation of two new state parks and for the maintenance of others. As these negotiations overlapped with budget conversations, the park money in the bond became a political football and was cut from both final packages by General Assembly budget leaders. With no up or down vote to highlight, still

underscoring this missed opportunity is important.

Proffer System Upended

One controversial measure that made its way through the General Assembly and to the Governor on a veto-proof majority was legislation to upend Virginia's proffer system. Proffers are an essential tool for local governments that allow localities to charge fees to developers when approving projects that will cause added strain to local infrastructure like schools, roads, and other basic government services.

Senate Bill 549 and House Bill 770, backed

Virginia LCV will continue our work to hold legislators accountable for the votes – recorded or not – they take that impact the conservation values held so deeply by so many Virginians.

by developers, sought to limit local governments' ability to accept and negotiate proffers – setting a troubling precedent for the future of growth and development for many of Virginia's growing regions. With various localities leading the opposition and seeking specific carve-outs that best suited them, the defensive strategy to stop this dicey legislation quickly became an uphill battle – one that eventually proved too steep for victory. As local governments decide how to interpret the ambiguous language in much of the new law, Virginia LCV is committed to working at the General Assembly to repair this legislation's significant unintended consequences.

Fracking FOIA Bill Defeated

Lastly, Virginia LCV was a leading voice in defeating a proposal by the oil and gas industry.

In an attempt to avoid being held accountable for the chemical cocktails they use in their fracking operations through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), SB 706 would have exempted fracking companies from having to disclose this important information to families, first responders, and local governments. This legislation would have set a dangerous standard for oil and gas companies to hide behind the guise of "trade secrets" and would have prevented landowners from knowing what substances could potentially be contaminating their drinking water. With mounting bipartisan opposition to the legislation, Virginia LCV was able to leverage this imminent defeat and,

consequently, the patron of the bill withdrew his proposal.

While many of these end results were not "scored," it is vitally important that conservation voters know all of the significant policy discussions that took place during the General Assembly session.

As the political voice of the conservation movement in the Commonwealth, Virginia LCV will continue our work to hold legislators accountable for the votes – recorded or not – they take that impact the conservation values held so deeply by so many Virginians. With your continued support and engagement, we can make certain that the special interests of polluters and other opposition to our principles do not seize the day.

2016 Legislative Leadership Awards

Senator Scott Surovell (D-Mt. Vernon)

Virginia LCV recognizes Senator Scott Surovell for introducing Senate Bill 537, which would have mandated safe closure of all of our state's coal ash ponds by requiring this toxic waste to be excavated and transferred to dry, lined, and permitted landfills and then requiring remediation of these sites. By doing so, this bill would have eliminated the very real risk to our water resources posed by capping this waste in place in outdated, unlined ponds. This bill was one vote short of making it to the full Senate. We thank Senator Surovell for his leadership and we fully intend to work with him to make this bill a reality in 2017.



Delegate Randy Minchew (R-Loudoun)

Virginia LCV also recognizes Delegate Randy Minchew (R-Leesburg) for introducing House Bill 908. This bill strengthened protections for our state's historic resources, scenic areas and environment from the extension of electrical transmission lines by requiring the State Corporation Commission to first determine whether a proposed transmission route presents an "adverse impact" to these assets. This bill was continued to 2017. We thank Delegate Minchew for his leadership and look forward to working with him to make these commonsense protections law in Virginia.



Bill Patrons

Where conservation victories begin

Virginia LCV recognizes the efforts of legislators that promote and lead on conservation issues each session. These patrons are acknowledged for the value of their commitment in each of the final scores. Note that though some members introduce multiple bills that receive Virginia LCV support, each member receives acknowledgment for only one patron credit.

Land Use & Transportation

Delegate John Bell (D) – HB 533; Hearings related to transmission line siting

Delegate Randy Michew (R) – HB 908; Consideration of historic resources

Delegate Joseph Yost (R) – HB 1118; Natural gas company eminent domain

Delegate Greg Habeeb (R) – HB 1261; Interstate gas pipeline safety program

Water Quality

Delegate Barry Knight (R) – HB 150; Management of menhaden fishery

Delegate Kaye Kory (D) – HB 479; Sign postage for pollution notice

Delegate Alfonso Lopez (D) – HB 977; Spill notification

Delegate David Bulova (D) – HB 1085;

Establishing the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund

Delegate Scott Lingamfelter (R) – HJ 31; Designation of Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week

Senator Emmett Hanger (R) – Budget Amendment; Supplemental agriculture BMP funding

Senator John Cosgrove (R) – SB 98; Management of menhaden fishery

Senator Scott Surovell (D) – SB 537; Safe coal ash closure

Senator Donald McEachin (D) – SB 581; Spill notification

Climate Change & Clean Energy

Delegate Loupassi (R) – HB 444; Utility notice to customers of renewable options

Delegate Chris Stolle (R) – HB 903; Center for Recurrent Flooding Resiliency

Delegate Ron Villanueva (R) – HB 351; Virginia regional cap and trade

Delegate Lee Ware (R) – HB 352; Energy efficiency programs

Delegate Paul Krizek (D) – HB 618; Community solar gardens

Delegate Keith Hodges (R) – HB 1048; Designating a Chief Resiliency Officer

Delegate Terry Kilgore (R) – HB 1053;

Establishing energy efficiency protocols

Delegate David Toscano (D) – HB 1137; Net metering

Delegate Rip Sullivan (D) – HB 1174; Electric consumption reduction goal

Senator John Edwards (D) – SB 139; Agricultural net metering

Senator Lynwood Lewis (D) – SB 282; Virginia Shoreline Resiliency Fund

Senator Kenny Alexander (D) – SB 395; Establishing energy efficiency protocols

Senator Barbara Favola (D) – SB 647; Clarifying renewable energy and biomass

Senator John Miller (D) – SB 700; Sea level rise and transportation projects

Senator Frank Wagner (R) – SB 745; Utility notice to customers of renewable options

Senator Richard Stuart (R) – SB 779; Net metering

Good Government

Delegate Steve Landes (R) – HB 555; Redistricting reform

Senator Janet Howell (D) – SB 59; Redistricting reform

Senator Jill Vogel (R) – SB 59; Redistricting reform

House Scorecard

✓ = right X = wrong NV = Not Voting AB = Abstained

Delegate	District	Party	2016 Score	2015 Score	Career Score <small>(Since 2000)</small>	HB 30: Solar Funding Amendment	HB 30: Park Acquisition Amendment	HB 30: Clean Power Plan Amendment	HB 2: Clean Power Plan Barrier	HB 298: Coal Tax Credits Veto	HB 908: Transmission Line Siting	HB 977: Timely Spill Notice	HB 1053: Energy Efficiency Advancement	HB 1174: Goal for Energy Consumption	SB 282: Resiliency Fund	Patron Credit
Adams	16	R	13%	33%	32%	X	X	X	X	X		NV	X	✓	X	
Aird	63	D	100%	NA	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Albo	42	R	44%	80%	44%	X	X	X	X	X		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Anderson	51	R	38%	67%	44%	X	X	X	NV	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Austin	19	R	33%	67%	47%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Bagby	74	D	100%	NA	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bell, J.	87	D	100%	NA	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bell, R.B.	58	R	0%	29%	36%	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Bell, R.P.	20	R	0%	50%	38%	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Bloxom	100	R	44%	57%	50%	X	X	X	X	X		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Boysko	86	D	100%	NA	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bulova	37	D	100%	100%	94%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Byron	22	R	22%	57%	39%	X	X	X	X	X	NV	X	✓	✓	X	
Campbell	6	R	44%	80%	44%	X	✓	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Carr	69	D	100%	100%	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cline	24	R	0%	43%	34%	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Cole	88	R	0%	33%	47%	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Collins	29	R	33%	NA	33%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Cox	66	R	33%	67%	42%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Davis	84	R	33%	80%	42%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Dudenhefer	2	R	33%	NA	33%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Edmunds	60	R	38%	83%	56%	X	X	X	X	X		✓	✓	NV	✓	
Fariss	59	R	33%	60%	49%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Farrell	56	R	33%	100%	38%	AB	X	AB	AB	AB		X	AB	AB	✓	
Filler-Corn	41	D	100%	100%	98%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Fowler	55	R	33%	67%	47%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Freitas	30	R	0%	NA	0%	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Garrett	23	R	33%	67%	44%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Gilbert	15	R	0%	20%	28%	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Greason	32	R	22%	67%	48%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	X	
Habeeb	8	R	36%	43%	40%	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓
Head	17	R	22%	40%	41%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	X	
Helsel	91	R	33%	67%	55%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	

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Delegate	District	Party	2016 Score	2015 Score	Career Score <small>(Since 2000)</small>	HB 30: Solar Funding Amendment	HB 30: Park Acquisition Amendment	HB 30: Clean Power Plan Amendment	HB 2: Clean Power Plan Barrier	HB 298: Coal Tax Credits Veto	HB 908: Transmission Line Siting	HB 977: Timely Spill Notice	HB 1053: Energy Efficiency Advancement	HB 1174: Goal for Energy Consumption	SB 282: Resiliency Fund	Patron Credit
Heretick	79	D	89%	NA	89%	✓	✓	✓	✓	X		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Herring	46	D	100%	100%	96%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Hester	89	D	100%	100%	93%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Hodges	98	R	40%	67%	50%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hope	47	D	100%	100%	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Howell	28	R	33%	67%	48%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Hugo	40	R	40%	57%	49%	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	
Ingram	62	R	33%	67%	43%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
James	80	D	89%	100%	81%	✓	✓	✓	✓	X		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Jones	76	R	13%	71%	42%	X	X	X	X	X		X	AB	✓	X	
Keam	35	D	100%	100%	98%	✓	✓	✓	✓	NV	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Kilgore	1	R	45%	57%	40%	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Knight	81	R	40%	67%	42%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kory	38	D	100%	100%	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Krizek	44	D	100%	NA	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Landes	25	R	20%	50%	44%	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	✓	X	✓
LaRock	33	R	22%	67%	32%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	X	
Leftwich	78	R	33%	67%	47%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
LeMunyon	67	R	44%	67%	54%	X	X	X	X	X		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Levine	45	D	100%	NA	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Lindsey	90	D	100%	100%	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		NV	✓	✓	✓	
Lingamfelter	31	R	40%	67%	52%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lopez	49	D	100%	100%	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Loupassi	68	R	40%	63%	46%	X	X	X	X	X	✓	NV	X	✓	✓	✓
Marshall, D.	14	R	40%	63%	37%	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	
Marshall, R.	13	R	33%	50%	59%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Mason	93	D	100%	100%	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Massie	72	R	33%	67%	43%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
McClellan	71	D	100%	100%	98%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
McQuinn	70	D	100%	100%	92%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Miller	50	R	10%	67%	37%	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	
Minchew	10	R	67%	71%	70%	✓	✓	X	X	X		NV	✓	✓	✓	✓
Miyares	82	R	33%	NA	33%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Morefield	3	R	0%	67%	42%	X	X	X	X	X		NV	NV	NV	NV	
Morris	64	R	0%	17%	29%	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	

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Murphy	34	D	100%	100%	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
O'Bannon	73	R	33%	67%	45%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
O'Quinn	5	R	25%	57%	50%	X	X	X	X	X		NV	X	✓	✓	
Orrock	54	R	33%	67%	45%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Peace	97	R	33%	57%	51%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Pillion	4	R	33%	67%	43%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Plum	36	D	100%	100%	93%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Pogge	96	R	22%	67%	35%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	X	
Poindexter	9	R	22%	33%	35%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	X	✓	
Price	95	D	100%	NA	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Ransone	99	R	22%	57%	35%	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	✓	✓	
Rasoul	11	D	100%	100%	95%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Robinson	27	R	44%	67%	50%	X	✓	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Rush	7	R	33%	67%	42%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Sickles	43	D	100%	100%	95%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Simon	53	D	100%	100%	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Spruill	77	D	100%	100%	71%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Stolle	83	R	40%	67%	48%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sullivan	48	D	100%	100%	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Taylor	85	R	33%	67%	47%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Torian	52	D	89%	100%	92%	✓	✓	✓	✓	X		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Toscano	57	D	100%	100%	98%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tyler	75	D	100%	100%	85%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Villanueva	21	R	45%	63%	50%	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ward	92	D	100%	100%	85%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Ware	65	R	36%	56%	49%	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓
Watts	39	D	100%	100%	85%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Webert	18	R	11%	57%	51%	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	✓	
Wilt	26	R	33%	57%	42%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Wright	61	R	33%	67%	43%	X	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Yancey	94	R	44%	57%	51%	✓	X	X	X	X		X	✓	✓	✓	
Yost	12	R	56%	67%	54%	✓	X	X	X	X		NV	✓	✓	✓	✓
Average			53%	61%												

Senate Scorecard

✓ = right X = wrong NV = Not Voting AB = Abstained

Senator	District	Party	2016 Score	2015 Score	Career Score (Since 2000)	SB 21: Clean Power Plan Barrier	SB 44: Coal Tax Credit Veto	SB 59: Redistricting Reform	SB 197: I-73 Development	SB 227: Toxic Waste Site Inventory	SB 228: Increases Polluter Fines	SB 365: Coalfield Expressway	SB 395: Energy Efficiency Advancement	SB 537: Coal Ash Pond Closure	SB 581 Toxic Spill; Public Notice	HB 1174 Goal for Energy Consumption	Patron Credit
Alexander	5	D	100%	100%	85%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Barker	39	D	71%	80%	82%	✓	X	X	✓	✓		✓	✓				
Black	13	R	22%	29%	35%	X	X	✓	✓	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Carrico	40	R	29%	40%	36%	X	X	X	X	✓		X	✓				
Chafin	38	R	22%	43%	38%	X	X	✓	X	✓	X		X	X	X	X	
Chase	11	R	33%	NA	33%	X	X	✓	X	✓			X				
Cosgrove	14	R	50%	60%	46%	X	X	✓	X	✓			✓			X	✓
Dance	16	D	89%	100%	80%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	AB*	✓	✓	
Deeds	25	D	100%	100%	86%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				
DeSteph	8	R	50%	67%	56%	X	X	✓	X	✓			✓				
Dunnavant	12	R	57%	NA	57%	X	X	✓	X	✓		✓	✓				
Ebbin	30	D	100%	100%	98%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Edwards	21	D	71%	100%	84%	✓	X	✓	X	✓			✓				✓
Favola	31	D	100%	100%	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓
Garrett	22	R	17%	20%	40%	X	X	X	X	✓			X				
Hanger	24	R	50%	75%	46%	X	X	✓	X	✓	AB	✓	✓	X	X		✓
Howell	32	D	100%	100%	88%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓
Lewis	6	D	89%	100%	86%	✓	X	✓	✓	NV	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Locke	2	D	100%	80%	85%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				
Lucas	18	D	100%	100%	74%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				
Marsden	37	D	100%	86%	86%	✓	✓	✓	NV	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
McDougle	4	R	43%	40%	45%	X	X	✓	X	✓		X	✓			X	
McEachin	9	D	100%	100%	91%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
McPike	29	D	100%	NA	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				
Miller	1	D	100%	100%	85%	✓	**	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Newman	23	R	50%	60%	35%	X	X	✓	X	✓		✓	NV			X	
Norment	3	R	57%	67%	50%	X	X	✓	X	✓		✓	✓				
Obenshain	26	R	20%	14%	36%	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Petersen	34	D	100%	88%	89%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Reeves	17	R	33%	20%	48%	X	X	✓	X	✓			X				
Ruff	15	R	40%	29%	37%	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X		
Saslaw	35	D	100%	100%	70%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	
Stanley	20	R	50%	14%	47%	X	X	✓	X	✓	X		✓	✓		X	

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Stuart	28	R	27%	38%	50%	X	X	✓	X	✓	X		X	X	X	X	✓
Sturtevant	10	R	33%	NA	33%	X	X	✓	X	✓			X			X	
Suetterlein	19	R	13%	NA	13%	X	X	NV	X	✓	X		X	X	X		
Surovell	36	D	86%	100%	93%	✓	✓	✓	X	✓			✓				✓
Vogel	27	R	75%	100%	86%	X	X	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓
Wagner	7	R	63%	40%	41%	X	X	✓	X	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Wexton	33	D	100%	100%	95%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				
Average:			66%	70%													

* This abstention led to the defeat of Senate Bill 537 without any known conflict of interest, the typical reason given by a legislator to abstain on a piece of legislation. For this reason, it lowered the overall score.

** Senator Miller passed away between the regular legislative session and the reconvened veto session. He was a consistent conservation champion and will be sorely missed.

Photo Credit: *Scuffletown Road in Barboursville* by Deb Snelson of Henrico | Courtesy of Scenic Virginia





Conservation needs redistricting reform

A central foundation to the democratic process is the competition of ideals – a foundation that, when functioning purely, provides an outcome where no one set of ideals vastly overpowers the other. In Virginia, however, this foundation has been crumbling. Voter engagement – or in this case the lack thereof – is a testament to this concerning trend.

Gerrymandering is the model of drawing political district boundaries to benefit one political party above another. The term “gerrymander” was derived in the early 1800s when Massachusetts Governor, Elbridge Gerry, signed legislation that carved new districts to benefit his own political party. The resulting map boundaries looked similar to that of salamanders, hence arriving at the term gerrymander. Fast-forward to 2016 and one has to look no further than Virginia to see the practice alive and well.

In the Commonwealth, we have elections every year, which means Virginia should be a robust example for the rest of the nation in the exercising of our civic duties. Unfortunately though, the driving forces of gerrymandering have led to lackluster voter confidence that their voices are being heard, or that the issues they

care most about like conservation are given the true attention they deserve. To illustrate the impacts of gerrymandering, in 2015, only 61 of all 140 seats actually held competitive races and, perhaps more telling, all 122 incumbents that ran for re-election were successful in their ventures. Fewer than 30 percent of registered voters participated in the election process in both 2011 and 2015 – years when only state legislative and local candidates were on the ballot. This is unacceptable, and we are seeing roadblocks to more significant advances in conservation policy as a result. In Virginia, we elect lawmakers for set terms. At the end of those terms, we must be able to adequately evaluate their records and their prioritization of conservation.

In order for Virginia LCV to be successful in securing conservation victories, we depend heavily on voter engagement. Voters that share our values and want their elected leaders to advance clean energy, strengthen clean water safeguards, and protect open spaces should feel confident that the districts in which they live are not so calculated that their votes, voices, and values are being decided before they can even cast a ballot.

With the authority to redraw legislative boundaries resting with the legislative branch, it is no surprise that redistricting reforms have been met with strong opposition from both Democrats and Republicans—specifically from the few that hold the keys to giving reforms a fair shot before the House Privileges and Elections Committee.

Redistricting is a meticulous process that deserves objectivity and deliberateness to benefit the entire Commonwealth. Regrettably, without independent oversight and with the use of tools currently in their toolbox, legislators are able to manipulate the maps to their liking – the so-called process of legislators choosing their voters instead of voters choosing their legislators. Carving one neighborhood, or even one street on one block, out of a district and into another is just one of the backroom tactics employed under the current process.

One very unnecessary tool legislators are currently equipped with in Virginia is the ability to use political data while drawing new maps. Using political data instead of only raw population data – the only metric needed in virtuously outlining new districts – allows legislators to predetermine the outcome of elections. For example, this methodology provides the opportunity to pack a majority of Democrats into one precinct and a majority of Republicans into another, eventually yielding X many Democratic districts

and X many Republican districts.

In searching for a solution to make the redistricting process more honorable and entrusting, Virginia LCV has consistently supported reform, such as the establishment of an independent commission to oversee the process. In the 2016 session, Virginia LCV was proud to support several bipartisan bills that offered a very reasonable, yet significant change to the redistricting process. These bills would have placed parameters on the criteria used in redistricting to limit the use of political data. The Senate version of these, SB 59, passed the full Senate on a 36-3 vote, yet failed to receive a recorded vote in the House Subcommittee on Elections – a troubling tendency in an attempt to inhibit a public record on the issue.

While these bills failed, they generated awareness and discussion around redistricting that had previously been absent, giving us optimism for the sessions to come before 2021 – when districts will be redrawn again. It is imperative to the success and future of our conservation principles that we revamp our redistricting process to restore the trust and eagerness to participate that our democratic process once knew. Without reform, turnout will continue to decline, our opponents will continue to win the day, and the DC-style of stagnant governing will continue to overtake the Commonwealth.





Photo Credit: *Morning Light* by Theresa Rasmussen of Fredericksburg | Courtesy of Scenic Virginia

The Virginia League of Conservation Voters is the political voice of conservation in the Commonwealth. We work tirelessly to protect all of Virginia's treasured natural resources – clean air and water, thriving communities and rural landscapes, productive farms and forests, historic battlefields and Main Streets, and ample public lands and open spaces.

Virginia LCV is a nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization and gifts to it and its Political Action Committee are non-tax deductible.



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