



**PRINCETON
GERRYMANDERING
PROJECT**

Fixing bugs in democracy

February 26, 2020

The Honorable Eileen Filler-Corn
Pocahontas Building, Room E605
900 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Speaker Filler-Corn:

We are leaders of nonpartisan democracy reform organizations working to improve the redistricting process in North Carolina and Texas. We have been optimistic about the reform efforts in the Commonwealth. We feel they represent a first step towards fairer districts in the South. In order to bring the goal of fairer districts to bear, we urge you to bring the constitutional amendment, SJ18, to the House floor for a vote. Only then can Virginia serve as a model for the region.

If the amendment is not introduced, skeptics will point to Virginia as proof that politicians abandon their good government platforms once they are in power. Currently, North Carolina has a number of redistricting reform options sitting in its General Assembly, but these proposals will take a major step backward if Virginian legislators renege on their promise of reform. Groups in Texas are currently working to organize voters to testify in front of redistricting committees this week. If voters believe that all politicians are self-dealing opportunists, they will become more disillusioned with the electoral process, making it harder to elect candidates who are willing to enact reform. It will also make it harder to bring them out to testify in front of committees if they feel that their voice has no power. As a result, the failure to introduce the amendment will make life more difficult for redistricting reform movements elsewhere.

On the other hand, if Virginia continues on the path of reform, it will take the lead on fair redistricting in the South, aiding reform in North Carolina, Texas, and other states. North Carolinians and Texans want to end gerrymandering, but, like Virginia, we do not have a citizen-led ballot initiative process. Our only hope is electing state lawmakers who will enact meaningful redistricting reform. Virginia can show voters in the South and around the country that sometimes politicians do keep their promises. Virginia has an opportunity to lead the region in redistricting reform, and its newly-elected lawmakers can be champions for a new era of elections that represent the will of the people, not of the politicians.

For these reasons, Virginia must recognize that it can and should act as a model for Southern reform efforts. Virginia is already acting as a leader by passing other important electoral reforms. To continue this momentum, the constitutional amendment should be introduced on the floor, not only for reform in Virginia but to support the rest of the region as well.

Sincerely,
Common Cause, North Carolina
Raleigh-Apex NAACP
Common Cause, Texas
League of Women Voters, Texas
Texas Progressive Action Network
Texans Against Gerrymandering
Princeton Gerrymandering Project