

# **ONE VIRGINIA 2021**

## **VIRGINIANS FOR FAIR REDISTRICTING**

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## **Rigged election districts face critical hearing this week in lawsuit to enforce standards in Virginia Constitution**

RICHMOND – How much backroom dealing can politicians hide from voters is the question on Thursday in an important court hearing in the lawsuit to require legislators to follow the Virginia Constitution, not their political self-interest, when they draw election districts.

Backed by the non-partisan reform group OneVirginia2021: Virginians for Fair Redistricting, lawyers representing citizens from around the state are having the first hearing over the redistricting case filed in September 2015. Key General Assembly leaders and their political consultants objected to routine requests for information involving communications related to drawing districts for the House of Delegates and Virginia Senate in 2011. The officials claim that “legislative privilege” shields all of the material from disclosure.

“What could they be hiding?” asked Brian Cannon, executive director of OneVirginia2021: Virginians for Fair Redistricting. “It’s clear we need reform when entrenched politicians manipulate voter maps for partisan advantage and then try to hide it.”

On Thursday, Jan. 7, at 11:00 a.m. in Judge Marchant’s courtroom, the court will hear arguments about which communications should be protected and which should be disclosed because they are political, not legislative. Disclosure is key to discovering why election district boundaries were twisted and warped to benefit one candidate over another, or one party over another, thus cheating voters of their right to choose their representatives in free, fair elections.

The Virginia Constitution, in language intended to guard against such political gerrymandering, commands in Article II, Section 6: “Every election district shall be composed of contiguous and compact territory.” OneVirginia2021’s suit simply asks the courts to require the legislature to give proper *priority* to these constitutional principles – compactness in particular – rather than draw politically friendly districts based on an area’s tendency to support one party or the other in previous elections, or whether the incumbent likes the boundaries.

“The lack of transparency speaks for itself,” Cannon said. “The fact that they don’t want us to know why they manipulated voting districts is a clear indicator that voters need to see these documents.”

OneVirginia2021: Virginians for Fair Redistricting is a group of dedicated Virginians from across the political spectrum who believe congressional and state legislative districts belong to the citizens of our Commonwealth, and not to any legislator, special interest, or political party. We advocate for a fair process, not a particular political outcome.

Cannon and lead attorney Wyatt Durette Jr. are available for interviews. Copies of the lawsuit and arguments for discovery are available at [www.onevirginia2021.org/compact](http://www.onevirginia2021.org/compact).

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