

SENATE COMMITTEE ON PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

COMMITTEE RESOLUTION NO. 1 -- Senate District Criteria

(Proposed by Senator Howell)

RESOLVED, That after consideration of legal requirements and public policy objectives, informed by public comment, the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections adopts the following criteria for the redrawing of Virginia's Senate districts:

I. Population Equality

The population of legislative districts shall be determined solely according to the enumeration established by the 2010 federal census. The population of each district shall be as nearly equal to the population of every other district as practicable. Population deviations in Senate districts should be within plus-or-minus two percent.

II. Voting Rights Act

Districts shall be drawn in accordance with the laws of the United States and the Commonwealth of Virginia including compliance with protections against the unwarranted retrogression or dilution of racial or ethnic minority voting strength. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to require or permit any districting policy or action that is contrary to the United States Constitution or the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

III. Contiguity and Compactness

Districts shall be comprised of contiguous territory including adjoining insular territory. Contiguity by water is sufficient. Districts shall be contiguous and compact in accordance with the Constitution of Virginia as interpreted by the Virginia Supreme Court in the cases of *Jamerson v. Womack*, 244 Va. 506 (1992) and *Wilkins v. West*, 264 Va. 447 (2002).

IV. Single-Member Districts

All districts shall be single-member districts.

V. Communities of Interest

Districts shall be based on legislative consideration of the varied factors that can create or contribute to communities of interest. These factors may include, among others, economic factors, social factors, cultural factors, geographic features, governmental jurisdictions and service delivery areas, political beliefs, voting trends, and incumbency

considerations. Public comment has been invited, has been and continues to be received, and will be considered. It is inevitable that some interests will be advanced more than others by the choice of particular district configurations. The discernment, weighing, and balancing of the varied factors that contribute to communities of interest is an intensely political process best carried out by elected representatives of the people. Local government jurisdiction and precinct lines may reflect communities of interest to be balanced, but they are entitled to no greater weight as a matter of state policy than other identifiable communities of interest.

VI. Priority

All of the foregoing criteria shall be considered in the districting process, but population equality among districts and compliance with federal and state constitutional requirements and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 shall be given priority in the event of conflict among the criteria. Where the application of any of the foregoing criteria may cause a violation of applicable federal or state law, there may be such deviation from the criteria as is necessary, but no more than is necessary, to avoid such violation.

DLS/mrs
3/25/11