



# **Virginia 2026: How Democrats are Rigging the Rules so They Never Lose Power**



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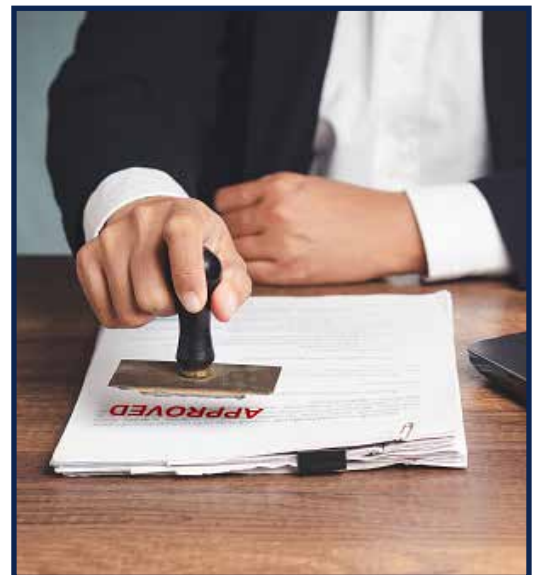
With the election of Gov. Abigail Spanberger, Virginia Democrats achieved full control of Virginia state government for the first time since 2021. Spanberger and the Democrats then launched one of the most blatant efforts in the nation to rig voting rules for partisan gain. Leveraging their unified control, Virginia Democrats passed [54 election bills](#)—more than any state in the nation—including bills to redraw maps for partisan gain, create sanctuary city-style zones around voting locations, change who can vote to push the electorate to the left, expand ranked-choice voting, weaken voter roll safeguards, and even reopened the floodgates to “Zuck Bucks”-style election grants from left-wing nonprofits. Far from “strengthening democracy,” Virginia’s 2026 session is a case study in the left’s agenda to trade election security for political advantage.

In all, lawmakers introduced 103 election-related bills, with Democrats authoring 78% of them and 93% of the measures ultimately sent to Spanberger. The session delivered on virtually every major item on the left’s election-law wish list.

### Power Grab Through Redistricting

The signature item of the 2026 session was [HJR 4/HB 1384](#), a special election to amend the state constitution and redraw Virginia’s congressional maps ahead of the 2026 midterms. If approved by voters, the maps included in [HB 29](#) would take effect immediately, delivering a 10-1 map intended to flip four seats to Democrats.

To get the referendum before voters ahead of the midterms, lawmakers blatantly disregarded numerous legal and constitutional requirements. In Virginia, constitutional amendments are required to pass in two separate legislative sessions with an election in between. But Democrats first passed the measure in 2025 *after* the election had already begun, and then again in January 2026. Moreover, the amendment’s passage violated the rules of the special session it was passed in, and its placement on the ballot ignored a law requiring copies be posted at local courthouses. These infractions were sufficient for a Tazewell County judge to block the entire effort. Democrats [responded](#) by



passing a party-line bill scheduling the election, retroactively repealing the public notice law, and forcing future challenges to be filed in the friendly Richmond City Circuit Court.

Virginia Democrats claim their redistricting drive is merely a reaction to mid-decade redistricting in Republican-controlled states like Texas. That ignores the routine, extreme gerrymandering seen in Democrat trifecta states like New York and Illinois, and [California's](#) blatantly partisan gerrymander in 2025. It also ignores long-running efforts by the left to use court rulings and ballot measures to force more favorable maps in conservative states—Ohio's 2024 [Issue 1](#), for instance, which was backed by Democrat-aligned groups and, like Virginia, explicitly designed to flip numerous congressional seats in the 2026 midterms. Virginia is the latest example of the left's gerrymandering hypocrisy: condemn it when done by opponents, stop at nothing to impose it when it delivers power.

## Sanctuary Voting Laws

Virginia lawmakers moved aggressively to prohibit immigration enforcement at polling locations, essentially creating “Sanctuary Voting” laws. [HB 650](#) and [SB 351](#) prohibit immigration enforcement within 40 feet of a polling place, election board meeting site, or recount location. [HB 1441](#) prohibits local or state law enforcement agencies from entering into agreements with federal immigration authorities unless they agree not to conduct any immigration enforcement activity within 500 yards of any polling place. [HB 286](#) and [SB 337](#) prohibit the deployment of the Virginia National Guard to intimidate or prevent “any person” from voting. Collectively, these measures go far beyond any reasonable effort to prevent genuine voter intimidation. Instead, they exploit election law to hamper federal immigration enforcement and essentially turn areas around polling places into expansive sanctuary zones for illegal aliens.



## Structural Changes to Push Politics to the Left

Virginia became the first state since 2023 to approve legislation expanding ranked-choice voting, or RCV. [SB 176](#) would permit the use of this scheme for any local election. Since 2022, only Maine and Hawaii—two Democrat trifecta states—have enacted laws allowing or requiring RCV. In that same period, 19 states have enacted prohibitions on RCV while voters in six states rejected pro-RCV ballot measures. Republican-led state legislatures, as well as voters in red and blue states alike, reject RCV for good reason: it introduces needless complexity, delays election results, and skews the voting process in ways that systematically push politics to the left.

Virginia also became the first state since 2024 to approve legislation to join the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, a multistate agreement to ignore the results of each state's presidential election and instead award their presidential electors to the candidate who wins the national vote. Virginia was the only current Democrat trifecta state not committed to the Compact, which is designed to shift political power away from politically diverse swing states and allow the most heavily liberal metropolitan areas and populous states to determine every future presidential election.

## Reengineering the Electorate

Legislators approved [HJR 2](#), a constitutional amendment to automatically restore voting rights to convicted felons upon their release from prison, and placed the measure on the November ballot. Virginia's governor currently restores rights on a case-by-case basis, and since 2016, no state without a blanket process for automatic restoration has created one.

Lawmakers also considered [HJR 45](#), a separate proposal to lower the voting age in local elections to just 16 years old. Had it advanced, it would have been one of the most extreme examples of minor enfranchisement in American history. The measure is currently stalled but reflective of a broader left-wing strategy: identify groups likely to support the left—felons, minors, or even illegal aliens in jurisdictions like Washington, D.C.—and give them voting rights to reshape the electorate for political gain.



## Weakening Voter Roll Integrity

Virginia lawmakers advanced numerous bills making it harder to maintain clean voter rolls. [HB 972](#) bars officials from cross-checking the state's entire voter roll against the federal Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) database to identify noncitizens, and from canceling a registration based on a SAVE match. [HB 111](#) further prohibits officials from canceling registrations based on anything other than approved state data, a death notice, or a written request from a voter. Compounding the problem, [SB 658](#) and [HB 319](#) created a working group to study shifting Virginia's automatic voter registration system to an opt-out model. And [SB 57](#) mandates the state rejoin the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a multi-state program nominally devoted to list maintenance that has long been accused of focusing greater efforts on voter registration than cleaning up outdated records. These steps disable independent tools for detecting noncitizens and duplicate or erroneous registrations, bloating voter rolls and creating new opportunities for ineligible voters to register and cast ballots.

## Late Ballot Laws and Zuck Bucks

In 2025, four states passed laws requiring mail ballots to be received by Election Day to be counted. Virginia is swimming against the tide. Democrats passed [HB 82](#) and [SB 58](#) to *extend* the arrival period for late ballots to 5:00 PM on the third day after Election Day while lengthening cure periods. Virginia Democrats already created 45 days of early voting, one of the longest voting periods in the nation, and these reforms extend the voting process still further while risking unnecessary delays.

Meanwhile, [HB 639](#) quietly undermined the state's ban on private election funding. The so-called "[Zuck Bucks](#)" phenomenon — named for the roughly \$400 million channeled by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg through left-wing nonprofits into local election offices in 2020 — prompted more than two dozen states to ban private funding of elections. Virginia's own ban was part of that wave.

This new measure carves out allowances for privately-funded grants and services, as well as federal grants funded wholly or partly by private donations, creating new pathways for left-wing nonprofits to revive "Zuck Bucks"-style influence operations in the state.

## An Unfinished Radical Agenda

Of the measures mentioned in this paper, Gov. Spanberger ultimately signed HJR 4, HB 1384, HB 29, HRJ 2, HB 82, SB 58, SB 658, HB 319, and SB 57. Spanberger returned numerous other bills to the legislature with proposed amendments, which lawmakers may ultimately choose to accept or reject before returning them to her for consideration. Those bills include: HB 650, SB 351, HB 1441, HB 286, SB 337, SB 176, HB 972, HB 111, and HB 639. Ultimately, given liberal election law priorities, there is no reason to believe these measures will not eventually be enacted.

Beyond these bills, lawmakers introduced numerous others which failed to advance—but telegraph the direction of future Democrat efforts. [SB 831](#) would have reduced election certification to a purely ministerial act, forcing officials to certify results even when genuine fraud may affect the outcome. [HB 493](#) proposed initial steps towards online voting, despite grave cybersecurity warnings surrounding internet voting. [HB 71](#) would let jurisdictions offer early voting beyond the requirements of state law, allowing large (and liberal) counties to leverage bigger staffs and budgets to offer more voting opportunities than smaller, rural counties, or even opening the door to 24-hour voting.

Based on data from Ballotpedia, Virginia's 2026 session dwarfs the efforts of other blue states that recently gained trifecta status, including Maryland (7 bills), Massachusetts (1), Michigan (34), and Minnesota (4). In general, these states focused on many of the same issues, including expanded ballot cure periods, automatic registration, and felon voting. But Virginia stands out for the breadth and depth of its efforts to rewrite election rules: A redistricting power grab, sanctuary zones around voting sites, expanded ranked-choice voting, endorsing the national popular vote, reengineering the electorate, weakening voter roll integrity, and more. Democrats used their new-found status to launch a partisan power grab and a deliberate assault on election safeguards.