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Virginia Senate: What's at Stake

Democrats primed for gains, but chamber control still in the air

WASHINGTON, DC— Democrats are expected to pick up seats in both chambers in the Virginia legislature tomorrow, with the possibility of flipping the Senate. Republicans currently control both chambers.

“Democrats have a real shot at flipping the Virginia Senate,” says DLCC Executive Director Michael Sargeant. “We’re happy to have helped support local Democrats’ efforts. This is a larger story than the demographic shifts in Northern Virginia. This is a story about a strong Democratic ground game and a willingness to roll up their sleeves and solve local problems once elected.”

Democrats only need to flip four seats to gain control of the Virginia Senate. The margin is currently 23 Republicans to 17 Democrats.

This election is also important because it is the last before the 2011 redistricting. The state Senators elected tomorrow will redraw Congressional and legislative district lines that will be used for the next decade.

“Virginians have a real choice tomorrow,” says DLCC National Political Director John Winston. “They can choose Democrats, who are fighting for access to affordable healthcare, a quality education, and a solution to transportation problems, or the GOP, who now have hard-core social conservatives as their candidates.”

Control of the Senate will come down to the following races:

- Senate District 1: Democrat John Miller versus Republican Tricia Stall (Republican open seat)
 - Stall signed a petition saying she favors ending funding for education at the federal, state and local level.
 - The local paper, The Daily Press, said in its editorial endorsing John Miller that: “His opponent, Republican Tricia Stall, represents only the extreme anti-tax, anti-government wing of her party, which is why many who ordinarily support mainstream Republican candidates are standing instead with Miller.”
- Senate District 6: Democrat Ralph Northam versus Republican Incumbent Nick Rerras in Norfolk

- Rerras said that people with mental health issues are “possessed by demons.”
 - During a judicial job interview, Rerras attacked those who would oppose a change in domestic violence legislation as “FemiNazis.”
- Senate District 22: Democrat Dr. Michael Breiner versus Republican Ralph Smith (Republican open seat)
 - As Mayor of Roanoke, Smith cut funding for hospital care by 38% and then later said it is unfair to criticize him for this because hospital care for seniors and needy children is just a line item in a budget, no different than cutting pencils or paper clips.
- Senate District 27: Democrat Karen Schultz versus Republican Jill Holtzman Vogel (Republican open seat)
 - Holtzman Vogel was co-counsel for the Bush-Cheney Presidential campaign during the Florida recount.
 - She has been called “right of Attila the Hun on stem cells and choice” by the retiring incumbent Republican state Senator.
 - She is a Bush political appointee to the Energy Department.
- Senate District 28: Democrat Albert Pollard versus Republican Richard Stuart (Republican open seat)
 - Stuart has called himself a 100% Pro-Life conservative.
- Senate District 34: Democrat Chap Peterson versus Republican Incumbent Jeannemarie Devolites Davis
 - She is a paid federal lobbyist who works part time from home promising the firm’s clients access to her husband, Congressman and former chair of the NRCC, Tom Davis.
 - She accepted a \$17,000 vacation to Italy from a local developer and then failed to report the trip on her state financial disclosure reports.
- Senate District 37: Democrat Janet Oleszek versus Republican Incumbent Ken Cuccinelli
 - Cuccinelli has taken credit for being the person in the state Senate that killed funding for stem cell research in Virginia.
 - Cuccinelli attacked a George Mason University health fair because it featured a presentation on safe sex, date rape, abstinence and AIDS testing.
- Senate District 39: Democrat George Barker versus Republican Incumbent Jay O’Brien
 - O’Brien was the deciding vote in committee to kill an employment non-discrimination bill.
 - The Washington Post said Jay O’Brien “puts ideology before prudence and opposes the reforms that his constituents need.”
 - He was a leading voice in the General Assembly for a new law to outlaw all abortions, even in cases of rape or incest.

The DLCC's mission is to build and maintain winning, state-of-the-art campaign committees through a continuing partnership with legislative leaders, professional staff, and supporters. Since its inception, the DLCC has been an integral part of the success that Democrats have had winning at the legislative level.

In addition to targeting critical resources to states, the DLCC also seeks to provide important services and instill best practices and economies of scale at the state legislative level. By changing the market and the quality of services available for legislative candidates the DLCC has continued to change the paradigm of how state legislative elections are won.