

INTRODUCED: September 9, 2019

A RESOLUTION No. 2019-R052

To express the Council's support for the passage of voter redistricting reform legislation by the General Assembly of Virginia.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patron – Mr. Agelasto, Mr. Addison

\_\_\_\_\_  
Approved as to form and legality  
by the City Attorney  
\_\_\_\_\_

PUBLIC HEARING: OCT 14 2019 AT 6 P.M.

WHEREAS, on June 17, 2019, in *Virginia House of Delegates v. Bethune-Hill*, 587 U. S. \_\_\_\_ (2019), 139 S. Ct. 1945 (2019), the United States Supreme Court entered a final judgement dismissing the appellants' appeal, effectively affirming the lower Court's finding that 11 Virginia voting districts were racially gerrymandered in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution's Equal Protection Clause and must be remedially redrawn; and

WHEREAS, OneVirginia2021, an organization advocating for fair redistricting in the Commonwealth of Virginia, holds the view that the Commonwealth's voting districts belong to the citizens of Virginia and not to political parties or politicians and that the practice of

AYES: 9 NOES: 0 ABSTAIN: \_\_\_\_\_

ADOPTED: OCT 14 2019 REJECTED: \_\_\_\_\_ STRICKEN: \_\_\_\_\_

permitting the majority political party to control voter redistricting is an outdated scheme that stifles healthy political competition and compromise; and

WHEREAS, OneVirginia2021, has advocated for the adoption of an amendment to the Constitution of Virginia that would create a bipartisan commission to draw the Commonwealth's voting districts in an open and transparent process, using clear, objective, and well-defined redistricting criteria; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Chapters 821 and 824 of the 2019 Acts of Assembly of Virginia, the General Assembly of Virginia proposed an amendment to the Constitution of Virginia to create a Virginia Redistricting Commission, which would be charged with the duty and authority to establish Virginia voting districts drawn in accordance with the requirements of federal and state laws that address racial and ethnic fairness using clear, objective, and well-defined criteria; and

WHEREAS, for the proposed amendment to become effective, at least one of the two joint resolutions that passed the General Assembly of Virginia during its 2019 session must pass again during the 2020 session of the General Assembly of Virginia and then be put before and approved by the electorate in the 2020 general election; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that it is in the best interests of the citizens of the city of Richmond that the proposed amendment and any enabling legislation depoliticizing voter redistricting be enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia during its 2020 session and put before the electorate in the 2020 general election;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND:

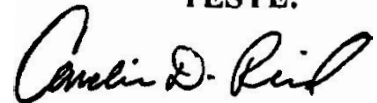
That the Council supports the passage of the proposed amendment and any enabling legislation depoliticizing voter redistricting by the General Assembly of Virginia during its 2020 session so that it may be put before the electorate in the 2020 general election.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Council hereby urges the General Assembly of Virginia, during its 2020 session, to enact the proposed amendment and any enabling legislation depoliticizing voter redistricting.

**A TRUE COPY:**

**TESTE:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amber D. Rind". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**City Clerk**



# Richmond City Council

The Voice of the People

Richmond, Virginia

## Office of the Council Chief of Staff

### Council Ordinance/Resolution Request/Research

**TO** Allen Jackson, City Attorney

**THROUGH** Meghan Brown, Interim Council Chief of Staff *MLB*

**FROM** Joyce L. Davis, Council Policy Analyst  
Office of the Council Chief of Staff *JLD*

**COPY** Parker Agelasto, 5<sup>th</sup> District Council member  
Amy Robins, 5<sup>th</sup> District Liaison  
Haskell Brown, Deputy City Attorney

**DATE** August 5, 2019

**PAGE/s** 1 of 3

**TITLE** Resolution to Virginia General Assembly to Enact Redistricting Reform in the Commonwealth of Virginia

RECEIVED

AUG 14 2019

OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY

This is a request for the drafting of an ☐ Ordinance ☒ Resolution

**REQUESTING COUNCILMEMBER/PATRON**

Councilmember Parker Agelasto

**SUGGESTED STANDING COMMITTEE**

Government Operations

**ORDINANCE/RESOLUTION SUMMARY**

Resolution to the 2020 Virginia General Assembly to Request Redistricting Reform in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**BACKGROUND**

The patron is requesting a Resolution urging the members of the Virginia General Assembly to pass the redistricting reform resolution in the upcoming 2020 session, along with any enabling legislation necessary to implement the amendment, in order to allow the voters in the Commonwealth to vote on a measure that would depoliticize the drawing of district lines, through the creation of a transparent, bi-partisan redistricting commission, using clear, objective and well-defined redistricting criteria.

Redistricting is the process of drawing new electoral district boundaries in order to equalize district populations. This Resolution is requested to the 2020 Virginia General Assembly to request redistricting reform in the Commonwealth of Virginia. A sample Resolution is as follows:

WHEREAS, on June 17, 2019, in the matter of *Virginia House of Delegates v. Bethune-Hill*, the United States Supreme Court entered a final judgment confirming that eleven House of Delegates districts were unconstitutional racial gerrymanders because they concentrated African-American voters into eleven House districts,

while diminishing the influence of African-American voters in surrounding House districts, all of which necessitated the redrawing of 26 House of Delegates districts in order to remedy the constitutional violation; and

WHEREAS, OneVirginia2021, a volunteer organization that seeks to end all forms of gerrymandering in the Commonwealth, holds the view that Virginia's state legislative and congressional districts belong to the people and not to any legislator or political party, and further, that Virginia's entrenched practice of redistricting by the majority political party in each legislative chamber is an outdated scheme that stifles political competition, discourages compromise and ensures continuing control by the party in power; and

WHEREAS, OneVirginia2021 has advocated for the adoption of an amendment to the Virginia Constitution that would implement a bi-partisan commission to draw Virginia's legislative and Congressional districts, in an open and transparent process, using clear, objective and well-defined redistricting criteria; and

WHEREAS, HJR 615 and SJR 306, two identical resolutions for a constitutional amendment providing for the creation of a sixteen member bi-partisan redistricting commission, passed with overwhelming support across party lines in the 2019 Session of the Virginia General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, either of the said resolutions must be passed again in its identical form in the 2020 Session of the Virginia General Assembly, and then approved by a majority vote of the electorate in the November 2020 General Election, in order to become effective; and

WHEREAS, in light of the recent ruling by the Supreme Court of the United States highlighting the damage and discord of rampant gerrymandering, and building upon the progress that has been achieved in advancing redistricting reform in the Commonwealth, the Council believes it is in the best interests of the citizens of the City of Richmond that the City urge the members of the Virginia General Assembly to pass, in its second reading, the pending redistricting reform resolution in the upcoming 2020 Session, along with any enabling legislation necessary to implement the amendment, in order to allow the voters in the Commonwealth an opportunity to vote on a measure that would depoliticize the drawing of district lines through the creation of a transparent, bi-partisan redistricting commission, using clear, objective and well-defined redistricting criteria.

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND:

That the City of Richmond, Virginia, urges the members of the Virginia General Assembly to pass in its second reading the pending redistricting reform resolution in the upcoming 2020 Session, along with any enabling legislation necessary to implement the amendment, in order to allow the voters in the Commonwealth to vote on a measure that would depoliticize the drawing of district lines, through the creation of a transparent, bi-partisan redistricting commission, using clear, objective

and well-defined redistricting criteria.

The requested introduction date is September 9, 2019.

#### FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Fiscal Impact Yes ☐ No ☒

Budget Amendment Required Yes ☐ No ☒

Estimated Cost or Revenue Impact \$

Attachment/s Yes ☐ No ☒

Richmond City Council Ordinance/Resolution Request Form/Updated | 10/20/19/uz