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Virginia Senate Narrowly Passes Redistricting Measure

Left-leaning organizations protest the off-cycle redistricting of Virginia Senate and House of Delegates districts.

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Virginia's State Senate narrowly passed a bill Monday night that could change the map of senate and house districts across the state.

The Senate bill, which squeezed through with a 20-19 vote, shifts the districts of five se... free r... Northern Virginia—to... an-v...

map of the proposed redistricting in the media box to the right.).

Sen. Barbara Favola (D-31st), who didn't have Falls Church in her district will have a piece of it now. Sen. George Barker (D-39th), who currently represents a large portion of western Alexandria, would see his district moved entirely into Fairfax County. Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30th) would then represent most of Alexandria city.

Under the proposal, the districts of John Edwards (D-21st) Dave Marsden (D-37th), Chuck Colgan (D-29th) and John Miller (D-1st) would also change.

Virginia's legislature last redistricted House and Senate districts in 2011. The proposed district changes would take effect in 2015.

Republican Sen. John Watkins (R-10th) defended the bill as "an effort to create another majority black Senate district," [the Associated Press reports \(http://www.nbc12.com/story/20641751/va-senate-gop-springs-redrawn-senate-lines-on-dems\)](http://www.nbc12.com/story/20641751/va-senate-gop-springs-redrawn-senate-lines-on-dems). But Democratic leaders and liberal organizations across the state decried the bill as violating the state's own constitution, along with a move that doesn't allow for public input or comments.

In a statement from the Virginia Senate Democratic Caucus, Barker said, "A Circuit Court judge recently ruled that the Virginia Constitution does not allow for re-redistricting, which is what this bill would do, in order 'to preclude 'politically convenient' redistricting whenever one political party or the other might gain the upper hand.' This type of action is not permissible under the Constitution."

ProgressVA officials stated, "This move is an obvious violation of the State Constitution, which clearly states that redistricting occurs every ten years. Legislators can't rewrite the rules of the game whenever they want. Voters should be choosing their leaders, not the other way around."

Monday's Senate bill makes amendments to an earlier-passed House bill (HB259). The Senate's amendments to HB259 now goes back to the House for approval or the bills will go to conference, where members of the House of Delegates and Virginia Senate can hash out their differences.