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**SENATE BILL NO. 189**

Offered January 11, 2012

Prefiled January 10, 2012

*A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 3 of Title 24.2 an article numbered 1.1, consisting of sections numbered 24.2-301.2, 24.2-301.3, and 24.2-301.4, relating to criteria for redistricting; establishment of the Virginia Redistricting Commission.*

Patron—Miller, J.C.

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 3 of Title 24.2 an article numbered 1.1, consisting of sections numbered 24.2-301.2, 24.2-301.3, and 24.2-301.4, as follows:**

*Article 1.1.**Virginia Redistricting Commission Act.**§ 24.2-301.2. Virginia Redistricting Commission Act.*

*This article shall be known as the Virginia Redistricting Commission Act.*

*§ 24.2-301.3. Establishment of the Commission; standards for redistricting.*

*A. Commission. House of Delegates, state Senate, and congressional district lines shall be drawn by the Virginia Redistricting Commission (the Commission) and then presented to the General Assembly for enactment in accordance with the Constitution of Virginia. The Commission shall be constituted in January of each year ending in one, perform its duties as stated herein, and be dissolved in the year ending in one.*

*B. Commission membership. The Commission shall consist of five members, four of whom shall be appointed as follows: one each by the President pro tempore of the Senate; the Speaker of the House of Delegates; the leader in the Senate of the political party holding the most seats in the Senate other than the political party of the President pro tempore; and the leader in the House of Delegates of the political party holding the most seats in the House of Delegates other than the political party of the Speaker. These four appointments shall be made by December 1 of each year ending in zero. By January 1 of each year ending in one, these four members shall appoint, upon a vote of at least three members, the fifth member, who shall serve as chair of the Commission. If the four appointed members are unable to appoint the chair within the time allowed therefor, they shall so certify to the Supreme Court not later than January 7 and shall include in that certification the names of the two persons who, in the members' final vote upon the appointment of the chair, received the greatest number of votes. Not later than January 14 following receipt of that certification, the Supreme Court shall by majority vote of its full authorized membership select from the two persons named the one more qualified by education and occupational experience, by prior public service in government or otherwise, and by demonstrated ability to represent the best interests of the people of the Commonwealth, to be the chair.*

*Vacancies in the membership of the Commission shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made within five days of their occurrence. In the case of a vacancy in the chair, if the other members of the Commission are unable to fill that vacancy within that five-day period, they shall transmit certification of such inability within three days of the expiration of the period to the Supreme Court, which shall select the person to fill the vacancy within five days of receipt of that certification.*

*C. Standards for Redistricting. The Commission shall draw district lines in accordance with the following Standards for Redistricting (hereafter referred to as Standards):*

*1. All districts shall be composed of contiguous and compact territory and shall be as equal in population as is practicable and in compliance with federal law. No district shall be composed of territories contiguous only at a point.*

*2. All districts shall be drawn to comply with the Constitution of Virginia, the United States Constitution, federal law, the federal Voting Rights Act, as amended, and relevant case law.*

*3. All districts, to the extent practicable, shall respect the boundary lines of existing political subdivisions. More populous subdivisions shall be divided between or among districts before less populous subdivisions are divided. The number of counties and cities divided among multiple districts shall be as few as practicable.*

*4. All districts shall encompass communities of interest to the extent practicable.*

*5. No district shall be drawn with consideration for the impact on incumbent legislators, members of Congress, or known candidates for office.*

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59 6. No district shall be drawn to promote, or for the purpose of favoring, the interests of a political  
60 party.

61 7. All district boundaries shall be drawn to promote competitiveness to the extent practicable;  
62 however, no district shall be made artificially competitive in violation of the Standards.

63 8. All district boundaries may be drawn to maintain the core geographical areas of existing districts,  
64 to the extent not in conflict with the Standards.

65 D. Commission staff and advisory board. The Division of Legislative Services shall provide to the  
66 Commission sufficient staff with the requisite expertise and other support as shall be reasonably  
67 requested by the Commission. The staff of the Commission shall be under the control of the chair of the  
68 Commission from the time of the appointment of staff to the dissolution of the Commission. The staff of  
69 the Commission shall not be deprived of their employment during this period of time without the express  
70 consent of the Commission. The Commission may request the assistance of outside counsel or experts as  
71 it shall deem necessary.

72 1. Outside counsel or experts shall be certified by the Commission as nonpartisan at a public  
73 meeting. Each outside counsel or expert shall pledge in writing that he will not, for at least five years  
74 from the date of certification by the Commission, run for election in the congressional, Senate, or House  
75 of Delegates districts drawn pursuant to this article.

76 2. No outside counsel or expert shall be appointed by the Commission who is related to any member  
77 of the General Assembly or member of the Virginia delegation to the United States Congress as father,  
78 mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, niece, husband, wife,  
79 grandfather, grandmother, grandson, granddaughter, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law,  
80 daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, stepfather, stepmother, stepson, stepdaughter, stepbrother,  
81 stepsister, half-brother, or half-sister.

82 3. Outside counsel or experts shall never have held elected partisan public office or political party  
83 office and shall not have received income during the past 12 months from the General Assembly, a  
84 committee thereof, the United States Congress, a committee thereof, a political party, a partisan  
85 candidate, or a committee controlled by a partisan candidate. No individual who is, or was in the past  
86 five years, a registered lobbyist under Article 3 (§ 2.2-418 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 2.2 may serve  
87 as outside counsel or expert to the Commission. Restrictions on previous employment by the  
88 Commonwealth shall not be construed to prevent an employee of a Virginia institution of higher  
89 education from becoming an outside counsel or expert.

90 § 24.2-301.4. District map creation process.

91 A. General. All deadlines defined in this section, excepting the public meeting of the Commission at  
92 which it decides on operating procedures and other rules, may, at the discretion of the Commission, be  
93 extended by the number of days after January 1 in the year ending in one before the Commonwealth is  
94 provided with the enumeration data and census geography provided by the U.S. Bureau of the Census  
95 pursuant to P.L. § 94-171. Notwithstanding this subsection, the Commission shall provide the First  
96 Official District Plan to the General Assembly no later than April 1 of the year ending in one. If the  
97 Commission so decides, it may create and deliver the district plans for the General Assembly and the  
98 United States Congress as separate bills.

99 B. Rulemaking. The Commission shall, before February 25 of the year ending in one, hold a public  
100 meeting at which it shall decide upon and cause to be published on paper and on the Internet the  
101 operating procedures and other rules under which it will perform its duties. It also will publish a  
102 schedule of public meetings to be held during the map creation process. All district maps produced by  
103 the Commission shall be in accordance with the Standards set out in § 24.2-301.3. The Commission  
104 shall keep records of its decisions, directions given to staff, and all other actions and activities as may  
105 be required to comply with the federal Voting Rights Act as amended and relevant laws and cases.

106 C. Initial map creation with data restrictions. Upon the receipt of census data, the Commission and  
107 its staff shall create initial district maps. No individuals other than the Commission members, its staff,  
108 and its certified counsel and experts shall be allowed to participate in the creation of initial maps.  
109 Initial maps shall be released to the public via the Internet and other means as determined by the  
110 Commission. Initial maps shall be created without the use of any of the following restricted data:

111 1. Data, hereafter Type 1, regarding election outcomes, voting history, voting trends or patterns, or  
112 the partisan affiliation of voters.

113 2. Data, hereafter Type 2, regarding the place of residence of incumbent legislators, members of  
114 Congress, or known candidates for such offices.

115 3. Data, hereafter Type 3, regarding demographic information, except that provided to the public  
116 generally by the U.S. Bureau of the Census or required by the federal Voting Rights Act as amended or  
117 other law.

118 D. Plan testing. Once an initial map or multiple initial maps have been created, the Commission may  
119 access restricted data of Types 1 and 2, only as provided to the Commission by the State Board of  
120 Elections on the request of the Commission, for the purpose of ensuring that the initial plans comply

fully with the Standards using this data. In no case shall such data be provided by the General Assembly, a member or committee thereof, a member of the United States Congress, an official of a political party, a partisan candidate, a current partisan office holder, a member or official of a committee controlled by a partisan candidate, any of their employees, agents, or contractors, or any individual who is, or has in the past five years been, a registered lobbyist under Article 3 (§ 2.2-418 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 2.2.

E. Release of plan for public comment. When the initial plans have been conformed to the Standards, and no later than April 1 of the year ending in one, the Commission shall hold a public meeting at which it shall certify a single district map plan as the Plan for Public Comment. All relevant details of the Plan and information on the Standards shall be released at the public meeting and on the Internet.

F. Public comment period. During a period of time of no fewer than 15 days, the Commission shall hold at least three public meetings at which it will receive public comment on the Plan for Public Comment. Each meeting shall be held in a different congressional district. These meetings shall be publicized as the Commission determines, attended by all Commission members unless excused, held at times convenient for the public to attend, held for no less than three hours each, and held in geographically disparate areas of the Commonwealth. A record of each meeting shall be made, and the Commission shall cause the comments or a reasonable summary thereof to be published on the Internet and by such other means as the Commission determines.

G. Modifications of Plan. At the conclusion of the public comment period, the Commission may modify the Plan for Public Comment to account for the comments, and the modified Plan shall comply with the Standards.

H. Submission of Plan to General Assembly. Within 15 days of the completion of the public comment period, the Commission shall hold a public meeting at which it certifies a Redistricting Commission Plan, by a majority of at least four members. It shall cause its Plan to be submitted to the General Assembly in the form of a bill for introduction.

I. Legislative process.

1. The bill to enact the Commission Plan and any other bill to delineate House of Delegates, state Senate, or congressional district boundaries shall be considered by the appropriate standing committee of the House and Senate (hereafter referred to as Committee).

2. If the Committee votes to report the Commission Plan bill without amendment, it shall report the bill. If the Committee votes to report the Commission Plan bill with amendments or any other bill with or without amendments, it shall cause its action to be communicated to the Commission. Within seven days the Commission shall make a recommendation to the General Assembly whether or not the General Assembly should agree to the Committee's report. The house receiving the Committee's report shall not vote on the bill reported by the Committee until it has received the recommendation of the Commission.

3. If the Commission Plan bill is rejected by the Committee or the General Assembly, the Commission may, at the discretion of the chair, prepare and release a new plan in accordance with the Standards in the form of a bill and present it to the General Assembly for consideration and introduction.

4. If the house of origin passes the Commission Plan bill without amendment, the bill shall be communicated to the second house. If the house of origin passes the Commission Plan with amendments or passes any other bill with or without amendments, it shall cause its action to be communicated to the Commission. Within seven days the Commission shall make a recommendation to the second house whether or not it should agree to the bill as passed in the first house.

5. The process outlined in subdivisions 2 and 4 shall apply to consideration in the second house. When any bill is adopted by both houses and transmitted to the Governor, the Commission shall review the bill and make its recommendation to the Governor as to his actions on the bill.

6. If the Governor proposes amendments to the bill, the Commission shall review his amendments and make recommendations to the General Assembly whether or not it should agree to the Governor's amendments at least one day prior to the General Assembly's consideration of the amendments.

7. The Commission, when required to submit a recommendation, shall evaluate the outcome of implementing the bill or amendment and determine whether the bill or amendment has been drafted in accordance with the Standards set forth in subsection C of § 24.2-301.3. When reviewing any bill or amendment for recommendation, the Commission may use any data it deems necessary to analyze the measure's outcome. If the Commission decides, by a majority vote, that the proposed bill or amendment is not in accordance with the Standards, the Commission shall delineate the manner in which the proposed bill or amendment deviates from the Standards and report such to the Clerk of the House and the Clerk of the Senate within the required time. The Commission may, at its discretion, propose changes to the measure in question that would conform the measure to the Standards. Meetings at which the Commission votes to make a recommendation shall be public and allow for public participation.

182        *J. Submission under § 5 of the Voting Rights Act. On passage of a bill, and its enactment into law,*  
183 *to define the election districts for the General Assembly and the United States House of Representatives,*  
184 *the Commission shall cooperate with and assist the Attorney General or other relevant authority to the*  
185 *extent necessary to complete the submission of the bill pursuant to § 5 of the Voting Rights Act.*

186        *K. Dissolution. On notification of clearance as required by the Voting Rights Act, the Commission*  
187 *shall be dissolved. The Commission shall be reconstituted with the identical membership in any case in*  
188 *which the federal government or a court determines that modifications to the plan are required. The*  
189 *reconstituted Commission shall follow, as closely as practicable, the process set out in this article to*  
190 *meet the requirements of the government or court.*