

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



SENATE

Senate of Virginia
Richmond

NEWS RELEASE
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For immediate release

In anticipation of the decennial redistricting process that will take place in 2011, Senator Janet D. Howell today announced that the redistricting subcommittee of the Senate of Virginia Committee on Privileges and Elections has scheduled a series of four public hearings throughout the Commonwealth. The four different public hearings will take place in October, November, and December of this year. Details on the membership of the subcommittee and the dates, times and locations of the hearings are set out on page 2 of this release.

Senator Howell, chairman of the Committee and its redistricting subcommittee, stated that the hearings are designed to promote and facilitate the participation of the public in the important redistricting process. The Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections has jurisdiction over measures relating to redistricting. The Committee will provide several opportunities to ensure that the public is fully involved at every stage of the redistricting process.

During the previous decennial redistricting process, public hearings were held jointly with the Committee's House counterpart, the House of Delegates Committee on Privileges and Elections and its redistricting subcommittee. However, the leadership of the House has decided to discontinue this practice, choosing instead to schedule its own series of hearings without Senate participation, effectively depriving the public of the opportunity of addressing members from both houses of the General Assembly at the same time. Senator Howell expressed her regret that the House is following a course that is disrespectful of the public's time and wasteful of public funds.

Senator Howell emphasized that through its scheduled hearings, the Committee is fulfilling its responsibility to ensure public involvement by offering a forum for citizens from every part of the Commonwealth to provide their input directly to members of the Committee and actively participate in the redistricting process from the beginning. Senator Howell stressed the importance of active participation from the public at the earliest stage of the redistricting process, calling attention to the fact that the General Assembly and most counties have a very narrow window of time in which to complete redistricting and enact redistricting plans before the November 2011 elections. The scheduled hearings will afford members of the subcommittee and the public a meaningful opportunity to exchange information and views in advance of the anticipated special session to redistrict in 2011.

Senator Howell noted that estimates of the current populations of the present House, Senate, and congressional districts are now available through the Division of Legislative Services on the Internet in the August 2010 issue of Drawing the Line 2011, its redistricting newsletter. The site for Drawing the Line 2011 is <<http://dls.gis.state.va.us/>>. Senator Howell, however, underscored the limited utility of these estimates, noting that they are too speculative for drawing detailed district plans. It is important, though, in light of the narrow window for completing redistricting for 2011, that the public have all possible information made available to them in order to fully participate in the redistricting process from the outset.

The subcommittee seeks public comment on all aspects of the redistricting process, including the criteria to be considered when preparing redistricting plans and potential district changes to legislative and congressional districts.

Additional public hearings will be scheduled subject to the receipt of the final census data.

Questions may be directed to Jack Austin [jaustin@dls.virginia.gov], Division of Legislative Services at (804) 786-3591. Persons wishing to register in advance to speak at the hearings may do so by contacting Hobie Lehman [hlehman@senate.virginia.gov], Senate Committee Operations at (804) 698-7450. Persons wishing to be notified of future hearings may also contact Hobie Lehman. Persons who are unable to attend the public hearings may submit their written comments to Hobie Lehman via email, fax [(804) 698-7672], or mail [P.O. Box 396, Richmond, VA 23218].

Senate of Virginia
Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections -- Redistricting Subcommittee

Schedule of Redistricting Public Hearings

Wednesday, **October 27th** - 7 pm, Natural Science Center, Virginia Western Community College
3102 Colonial Avenue, SW, Roanoke, VA

Thursday, **November 4th** - 7 pm, Herndon Town Council Chambers
765 Lynn Street, Herndon, VA

Thursday, **December 2nd** - 7 pm, The Forum, Building A, Tidewater Community College
120 Campus Drive, Portsmouth, VA

Friday, **December 17th** - 11 am, Senate Room B, General Assembly Building
Capitol Square, Richmond, VA

Subcommittee Members

The Honorable Janet D. Howell, Chairman*
The Honorable Harry B. Blevins
The Honorable R. Creigh Deeds*
The Honorable Stephen H. Martin*
The Honorable Donald A. McEachin
The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.†
The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
The Honorable Mary Margaret Whipple

*Senate Members of the Joint Reapportionment Committee

†Senate Minority Leader