



# Richmond Free Press

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## COVID-19 Coronavirus hits Virginia, impacting people, events

By Reginald Stuart  
With the coronavirus sweeping the globe, efforts to mitigate its surge and impact are being felt across the state.



**Questions on coronavirus answered**  
**How is coronavirus spread?** Similar to other cold viruses, including the flu, coronavirus is spread through droplets that spray out from sneezes, coughs and runny noses. When someone coughs, you can inhale them, you can get them on your hands and then touch your mouth, your nose, your eyes. It is transmitted that way. It also may be able to live on surfaces for a certain amount of time, such as doorknobs, cell phones, desks and kitchen counters. You should clean those surfaces, as well as your hands.  
**What are the symptoms?** Similar to a cold or the flu, the symptoms can be mild. During the first two- to 14-day incubation period, you may see common things such as a fever, coughing or shortness of breath. If the symptoms worsen, such as a higher fever or trouble breathing, it could be a sign of something worse. Call your doctor or the local health department.  
**How is it diagnosed?** Diagnosis is made through a test using a sample of sputum or secretion, like a throat or nose swab. The test is sent to a lab where genetic material in the sample is analyzed to see if it matches this strain of coronavirus.  
**Who is at risk?** Anyone can get the coronavirus. Children don't seem to be getting a severe illness. At most risk are people age 60 and older and those with underlying medical conditions, such as diabetes, heart, kidney or lung disease.  
**Is there a vaccine?** Not yet. Officials estimate there may be vaccine trials by mid-year, and perhaps a fully licensed and widely distributed vaccine by the end of the year or later.  
**How can I protect myself?** Wash hands with soap and water at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer that's at least 60 percent alcohol. Avoid touching your face and eyes. Cough into a tissue or your elbow. Wipe down all surfaces.  
**How should I prepare?** You may have to postpone travel plans and prepare to work or study from home. So have a two-week supply of things you need on hand at home, including food and any prescription medications.

Richmond Public Schools, which serves more than 24,000 students from pre-K through 12th grade, announced that all school and division-sponsored field trips, athletic events and conferences have been canceled, beginning Wednesday.

“We will lift this ban once we feel confident that the potential threat to students and staff has abated,” stated RPS Superintendent Jason Kamras in his message. He also asked families to “prepare now for the possibility of canceling school” if any students or staff members are confirmed with coronavirus, also known as COVID-19.

University of Virginia officials also announced Wednesday that on-campus classes have been suspended “for the foreseeable future,” with students who are now on spring break to resume classes online beginning March 19.

Officials said the university will reassess the situation on April 5, allowing any students returning from spring break to have passed the two-week incubation period for coronavirus.

Gov. Ralph S. Northam offers the latest information on the coronavirus and its impact in the state during a news conference Wednesday at the Patrick Henry Building. At the briefing, the governor's second in a week, he was surrounded by a bevy of state health, hospital and other officials, including Mayor Levar M. Stoney.

### Cathy's Camp to be shut down by March 31, displacing homeless

By Jeremy M. Lazarus  
Complete closure and removal. That's what's ahead for Cathy's Camp, the tent community that sprang up in recent months adjacent to the city's winter overflow shelter and across the street from the Richmond Justice Center. Despite failing to identify new resources or shelter space, a homeless task force of public and private service providers rolled out a plan to shut down the camp by the end of March. The camp, which at one time housed more than 100 people, has become a visible symbol of the area's affordable housing crisis that makes an outdoor field the only option for some. The closure is aimed at forcing current camp residents — and newcomers who are



Between 50 to 80 people still live in Cathy's Camp, a tent city for the homeless that sprang up last August adjacent to city's winter overflow shelter and across the street from the Richmond Justice Center on Oliver Hill Way. Local nonprofits have found housing for only about seven of the camp residents in the last two weeks.

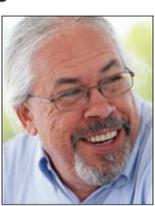


### Foul Racial epithets aimed at Armstrong basketball team spark investigations

By Ronald E. Carrington  
Officials from Richmond Public Schools and the Richmond Branch NAACP are investigating allegations that the Armstrong High School boys basketball team, cheerleaders and fans were taunted with racial epithets during the state playoffs in Northern Virginia in late February. “The team, cheerleaders and Armstrong fans were called ... the N-word by Central High School's teams and fans,” said James E. “J.J.” Minor III, president of the Richmond Branch NAACP and an Armstrong alumnus who talked with the coaches following the Feb. 29 incidents. “Students in the stands wore T-shirts with the Confederate

### General Assembly green-lights preference for Pamunkey tribe in local casino

By Jeremy M. Lazarus  
The General Assembly, eager for a flood of green from casino gambling, gave a Virginia Indian tribe with a well-documented history and continuing practice of racial bigotry, a leg up in two cities — Richmond and Norfolk. A majority of legislators, both African-American and Caucasian, pushed for the Pamunkey Indian Tribe to have preference



Chief Gray  
Portsmouth, Danville and Bristol. The compromise bill that was approved grants the tribe preference in its bid to open a \$700 million hotel-casino resort in Norfolk. While Richmond can undertake competition, the tribe's plan for a \$350 million hotel-casino in the capital city also would receive preference as a minority-controlled operation, which other potential Richmond competitors, such as the Rosie's Gaming Emporium, would need to match. The Free Press reported on the tribe's adoption of white supremacist policies as a survival mechanism in the Feb. 27-29 edition. The story noted that the tribe in the 19th century banished members with relationships with African-



**Bubbles at Byrd**  
Shaun Yerby lifts his year-old son, Christian Moultrie, to catch bubbles blown by the youngster's mother, Catrina Moultrie, and 7-year-old aunt, Ja'nyah Jackson during an outing Wednesday at Fountain Lake in Byrd Park. The sunny, 68-degree day was a draw for people who headed outdoors. Temperatures are expected to be in the low 60s by the weekend.

**General Assembly wrap-up, A2**  
in two of the five Virginia cities that were given the green light for casino gambling. The legislation, approved in both the House of Delegates and state Senate, clears the way for casinos to be built in Richmond, Norfolk,

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# COVID-19

## Coronavirus hits Virginia, impacting people, events

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Similar on-campus class closures have been reported at Virginia Commonwealth University, Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, Virginia Tech, James Madison University and The College of William & Mary as well as schools across the nation, from Howard University in Washington to Harvard University in Massachusetts.

Organizations everywhere are examining whether to continue with planned conferences, concerts and other events. The day-long symposium marking the 30th anniversary of former Gov. L. Douglas Wilder's inauguration, which was planned for March 26 at Virginia Union University, also has been postponed.

"Together we can get through this and we will," Gov. Ralph S. Northam, a physician, said at a news conference Wednesday, where he was surrounded by state health experts.

He also announced Virginia's ninth confirmed case of coronavirus; there have been no fatalities.

Most of the cases, officials said, involve people who have recently returned from international travel. The cases have been reported in Northern Virginia, Spotsylvania and Virginia Beach, with the latest reported Wednesday in Ashland, just north of Richmond.

Nationally, officials on Wednesday reported more than 1,050 confirmed cases of coronavirus, with 35 deaths. The rapid spread of the virus across the globe has resulted in more than 121,500 reported cases and 4,373 deaths.

Gov. Northam said the state has received 300 to 400 medical kits for testing, and is expected to receive many more in the coming days. Each kit can test 50 to 60 people, officials said.

Gov. Northam said the state is making plans for state employees to work remotely and officials have asked public school systems to report attendance data to the state health department as a means of monitoring children's health in local communities.

Health officials urged people, including students, to stay home if they feel sick to stem the possible spread of COVID-19.

Gov. Northam and other officials said they are following guidance from the Atlanta-based federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization for

big picture assessments of the spread of the disease and advice and guidance on steps to take.

The governor said the state is in touch almost hourly with local health authorities as testing expands and health reporting improves. The virus, which is airborne, strikes people regardless of race, creed, national origin, income level or religious belief.

By midweek, about eight members of the U.S. House of Representatives, including Congressman Don Beyer of Northern Virginia, reported they had gone into voluntary isolation, or quarantine, based on their exposure to someone who has contracted the virus.

In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo placed a one-mile radius around New Rochelle, N.Y., in suburban Westchester County on

a health alert, limiting access to the area based on fear some residents were suffering COVID-19 symptoms.

"People are being cautious about this virus because we don't know how much it's going to spread," said Pam Cox, director around strategic communications at Virginia Union University.

She, along with spokespersons for other area colleges and universities, said the institution has set up a coronavirus task force to keep track of its students' health and send out frequent medical alerts. She said the university consults with the Capital Area Health Network for medical guidance.

"You have to be vigilant and stay informed," Ms. Cox said, noting that about 100 VUU students are in study abroad programs. She did not say whether they have been recalled to campus.

## Cathy's Camp to be shut down by March 31, displacing homeless

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still showing up daily — to find a less visible space if they cannot be placed in a shelter or find housing elsewhere, as most cannot.

Nonprofits have found temporary or permanent space for only seven people at Cathy's Camp in the past two weeks. That's only a fraction of the 50 to 80 people currently staying there.

Expected to be finalized Friday, the plan already is being implemented, with notices posted on tents requesting that those living there be gone by Monday, March 30, and tents to come down Tuesday, March 31.

By Wednesday, April 1, Virginia Commonwealth University is expected to post one or more police officers at the site to prevent any new tents from being set up on the land, which is owned by the university and considered environmentally contaminated and listed as a brownfield.

It is not clear if people will be arrested if they refuse to leave the camp.

The decision to shut down the camp complies with the demands of 6th District City Councilwoman Ellen F. Robertson, who regards the camp as a blight on her district and wants other council members to find shelter space in their sections of the city.

The camp's removal — along with dozens of residents who currently have no other place to go — would take place two weeks before the city officially ends the use of the Annie Giles Community Resource Center, the former Conrad Center, as the winter overflow shelter.

Mayor Levar M. Stoney's administration has rebuffed a request from nonprofits in the task force to allow the camp to remain open until the Giles Center closes on Monday, April 15.

Ms. Robertson has criticized the city for opening the shelter at the Giles Center this season, preventing it from being used as a job training and resource center for residents who live in the communities overlooking the jail and city Juvenile Detention Center.

As a shelter, it has provided a bare sur-

vival space on frigid nights. People sleep on thin mats on the floor with the lights kept on in the women's area. The lights and the noise make getting rest difficult, several people have said.

When the center is not open because the temperature isn't forecast to dip below 40 degrees, people sleep on the sidewalk at the front door.

Still, there is a prospect for a federal lawsuit if Cathy's Camp residents relocate to public property, such as the grassy area outside the city Social Services building.

A 2018 federal court ruling from Boise, Idaho, upheld in December by the U.S. Supreme Court, barred authorities in western states from arresting homeless people who sleep on public property if no alternative housing is provided.

The city's top human services official, Reginald E. Gordon, signaled his goal of shutting down the camp in late December, when he ordered Blessing Warriors RVA to dismantle it. He did not enforce the order. But as a member of the task force, he now is making it clear that getting rid of the camp remains a top priority.

"I don't know what will happen when the end of the month comes," said Rhonda Sneed, the co-founder and volunteer leader of the 3,500-member Blessing Warriors RVA that started the camp last August after she found people sleeping in the field without blankets — and with no sign of city or private social workers to assist.

"I am in no way in support of taking the tents down," said Ms. Sneed, "unless they have housing for everyone who is here now and all the new people who keep coming."

While some people have left, "we still have people arriving. I can't stop them. They just want a place to sleep," said Ms. Sneed, a retired U.S. Postal Service employee and Air Force veteran who has fed the homeless for at least four years.

Blessing Warriors RVA has provided sleeping bags, blankets, food, clothing, rides to doctors' appointments, laundry help and other aid to the residents to help them get through the cold.

Ms. Sneed said that includes a preg-

nant woman and people who have been discharged from hospitals and health care facilities. She noted the arrival Monday night of man on a walker who is still recovering from surgery. She also pointed to another person whom MCV discharged and had transported to the camp as the only option for a place to stay.

"We're still working on the housing issue," said Kelly King Horne, executive director of Homeward, a nonprofit that coordinates the regional public and private response to homelessness through the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care.

According to the city and Homeward, Richmond nonprofits house about 1,000 people, but still need 150 new shelter beds and a way to create 300 more units of transitional housing for longer-term stays, for which there is no funding.

The biggest problem, Ms. Horne said, is that there are no housing resources in the area for the most vulnerable, elderly poor people who are ill or disabled and need constant care. She and the partners in homeless services are at a loss as to how to house such individuals who cannot work and require the help of others.

Ms. Sneed and others call short-term shelter beds a Band-aid solution because, after a few days, the people are back on the street looking for somewhere to sleep.

Fifth District Councilwoman Stephanie A. Lynch, a former social worker who is now engaged in housing issues for people with mental illnesses, said Monday night more camps will be popping up around the city if the city doesn't put up more resources for housing.

She noted there are few federal or state resources. One of the biggest pools of money, Medicaid, cannot be used for housing, she said.

Ms. Lynch said area hospitals could consider getting involved as several have done in Pittsburgh and other communities. The hospitals in those communities, she said, have found it is cheaper to move people into apartments and pay their rent than having them take up beds at the hospital because there is nowhere to discharge them.

## Racial epithets aimed at Armstrong basketball team spark investigations

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Stars and Bars, waved the (Confederate) flag and made shooting gestures with their hands," he said.

"Racism is real."

The Armstrong team, composed of African-American players, was taking on Central High School of Woodstock, an all-white team, during the state 3B semifinals held at the Shenandoah County school's gymnasium.

According to reports, Armstrong Coach Darryl Watts and Athletic Director Glenn Anderson made a game official aware of a racial slur used against one of the players, sophomore Taemon Doswell. However, the official didn't immediately stop the game.

The officials eventually paused the game, benching both teams before conferring with coaches from Armstrong and Central high schools. The officials then issued a warning to the Central High Falcons before restarting the game.

Despite being rattled by the incidents, the Armstrong Wildcats took the high road and continued playing, although they lost the game to Central 47-37.

Calls by the Free Press to Coach Watts and Mr. Anderson have not been returned.

The incidents have drawn media attention locally and in Northern Virginia, with RPS officials and the civil rights organization now stepping in.

Central High Principal Lori Swartzel confirmed to a Shenandoah County newspaper that she saw the Confederate flag in that school's student section before the game. She said she and Central's athletic director, Justin Broughman, confiscated it, citing a school policy that doesn't allow anything deemed "disruptive" to a school day or event.

She also told the newspaper that school administrators were made aware of what she described as a "gesture" made by a Central High student that had been directed at the Armstrong cheerleaders during the game.

"We've talked to the referees, the Shenandoah Referee Association and the VHSL (Virginia High School League) in order to conduct our own investigation," she told the newspaper.

The VHSL is looking into

the complaints and issued a statement last week that said, in part, "We have had ongoing talks with both schools as we gather facts. As you can guess, we take very seriously player and fan safety at all our regular season and post-season games. We are still in the process of reviewing all the information gathered from the game."

Mr. Minor said Tuesday that he called the VHSL and "advised them" that the league's sportsmanship committee investigating the incidents "should include diversity among its members."

In a statement released March 5, RPS Superintendent Jason Kamras said his office is taking the matter seriously and has been in communication with Shenandoah County Public Schools officials "to ensure that we have a complete and accurate account of the events so that it can be addressed through the appropriate venues."

Richmond School Board Vice Chair Cheryl L. Burke, who represents the 7th District in which Armstrong is located, met on March 4 with the basketball team, cheerleaders and coaches.

"Armstrong's team is upset and they want to know what are we going to do about it as adults," said Ms. Burke, a retired Richmond elementary school principal.

She noted the Armstrong students had been respectful and followed all the rules and expectations when confronted with the situation.

"It's time for the team to get some tender loving care by the community," Ms. Burke said. She also expressed a need to pray for the Falcons.

## General Assembly green-lights preference for Pamunkey tribe in local casino

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Americans and has refused to re-admit families who were banished.

The Free Press has since learned that Chief Robert Gray and the tribal council have ordered a longtime resident on the tribe's reservation in King William County to undergo psychiatric evaluation or face banishment. The resident and tribe member, John M. Collins, has been assaulted for advocating a change in tribal policy to include Indian families with African-American ties.

Richmond's legislative delegation was split over the casino bill, which passed 60-35

in the House and 27-12 in the Senate.

Richmond Sen. Jennifer L. McClellan, a member of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, voted for the bill, while Democratic Sen. Ghazala Hashmi opposed the bill. Democratic Sen. Joseph D. Morrissey did not vote.

Richmond Delegates Dawn M. Adams joined two members of the VLBC, Jeff M. Bourne and Delores L. McQuinn, in supporting the measure.

Richmond Delegate Betsy Carr, who had opposed an earlier House version of the bill, was among five delegates who did not vote on the bill. Also among that group was the chairman of the VLBC

Delegate Lamont Bagby of Henrico, who said before the vote, "I am not in support of (the tribe's) efforts."

Petersburg Delegate Lashrecce Aird was among the 35 House members who opposed the final casino bill.

Under the bill, residents of each of the five cities would have to approve any proposed casino in a referendum. It is unclear at this point when Richmond would hold such a vote.

Separately, while embracing casinos, the legislature also approved outlawing the thousands of gambling machines that have sprung up in convenience stores, truck stops and other outlets.



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SEPTEMBER 17-19, 2020

# Say her name

City of Louisville to pay the family of Breonna Taylor \$12M to settle the wrongful death lawsuit filed after she was shot to death by police during a late-night raid of her home

Free Press wire report

LOUISVILLE, Ky.

Months after the police killing of Breonna Taylor thrust her name to the forefront of a national reckoning on race, the City of Louisville agreed to pay the Black woman's family \$12 million and reform police practices as part of a settlement announced Tuesday.

But Ms. Taylor's mother and others who have taken up her cause said much more must be done to right the wrongs of racial injustice in America.



Ms. Taylor

“Please continue to say her name,” Ms. Taylor's mother, Tamika Palmer, declared at an emotional news conference on Tuesday, evoking the call that has become a national refrain for those outraged by the shooting and police violence.

Ms. Taylor's death sparked months of protests in Louisville and calls nationwide for the officers to be criminally charged. The Kentucky attorney general, Daniel Cameron, is investigating police actions in the March 13 fatal shooting.

“I cannot begin to imagine Ms. Palmer's pain, and I am deeply, deeply sorry for Breonna's death,” said Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer in announcing the terms of the lawsuit settlement.

Standing nearby as the mayor spoke, Ms. Palmer said the police reforms were not enough.

“We must not lose focus on what the real job is, and with that being said, it's time to move forward with the criminal charges, because she deserves that and much more,” Ms. Palmer said.

“As significant as today is, it's only the beginning of getting full justice for Breonna.”

The lawsuit, filed by Ms. Palmer in April, accused police of using flawed information when they obtained a “no-knock” warrant to enter the 26-year-old woman's apartment. Ms. Taylor and her boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, were roused from bed by police, and Mr. Walker said he fired once at the officers, thinking they were intruders. Investigators said police were returning fire when they shot Ms. Taylor several times. No drugs were found at her home.

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## Federal appeals court decision may impact police immunity from lawsuits

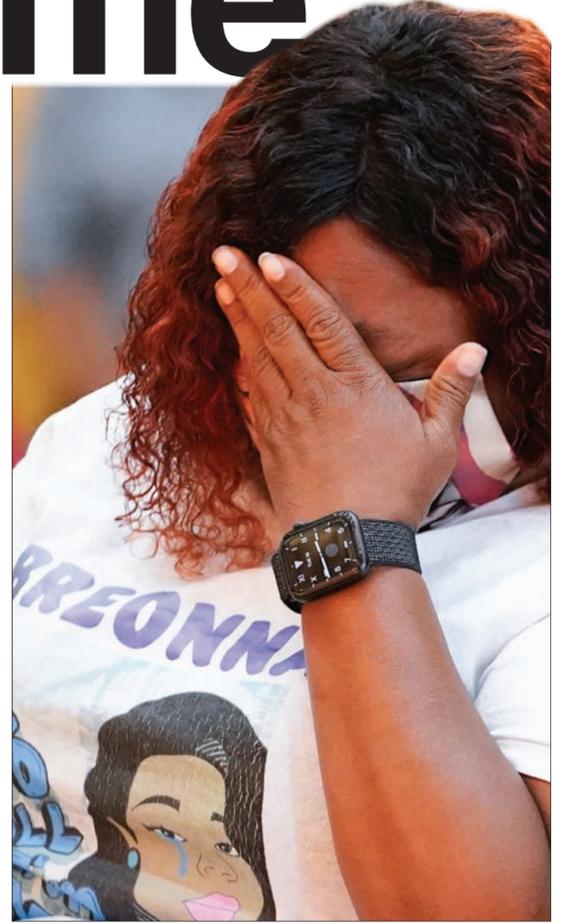
By Jeremy M. Lazarus

When the Virginia Senate sidined a bill last week that would have stripped police officers in the state of immunity from lawsuits alleging brutality and violations of constitutional rights, the result was to leave families to face arduous and expensive court fights to hold officers accountable.

A prime example of the difficulty can be seen in a case that is now seven years old and involves an attempt by relatives of a homeless African-American to hold five officers accountable for his shooting death in 2013.

In a case that is resonating in Virginia, a Richmond-based federal appeals court has cleared the way for the family's

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Bryan Woolston/Reuters

Tamika Palmer, the mother of Breonna Taylor, weeps during a news conference Tuesday announcing a \$12 million civil settlement between the estate of Breonna Taylor and the City of Louisville in Kentucky.

# Plans to use city schools for day care program break down

By Jeremy M. Lazarus and Ronald E. Carrington

Talks between City Hall and Richmond Public Schools over using five school buildings as day care sites have broken down.

That represents a blow to a planned, but modest expansion of a still limited, city-supported day care initiative to provide supervised and safe learning spaces for students to take virtual classes while their parents work.

The city's program, managed by the YMCA, currently offers slots for a total of 80 children at two churches. Those slots have long been filled, with extended waiting lists of parents



Sandra Sellers/Richmond Free Press  
Mr. Kamras

desperate for a place to send their children so they can work.

The school buildings would have added a total of 500 spaces.

Mayor Levar M. Stoney acknowledged demands are running high.

As the second week of the new school year winds down, Sarah Blackburn said she and her husband have determined that “trying to manage schooling (for their children) and also keep up with our jobs is just not going to be possible.”

City Councilwoman Stephanie A. Lynch, 5th District, who has led City Council in pushing

for a robust day care program, said she is being bombarded by calls from mothers seeking day care help so their children can take their virtual classes with appropriate support.

“More affluent parents can hire aides and babysitters,” Ms. Lynch said. “But there are plenty of families that cannot. And I see this artificial divide in educational opportunity having a real impact on our high-risk, high-needs children that will be felt for years to come.”

Mayor Stoney, who has not opened the city's recreation centers or other city buildings for

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**Free COVID-19 testing**

Free community testing for COVID-19 continues. The Richmond and Henrico County health districts are offering testing at the following locations:

DATE	LOCATION
Thursday, Sept. 17, 9 to 11 a.m.	Robinson Theater Community Arts Center 2903 Q St., East End
Tuesday, Sept. 22, 4 to 6 p.m.	Neighborhood Resource Center in Greater Fulton 1519 Williamsburg Road, East End <i>Rain date: Randolph Community Center on Sept. 24.</i>
Thursday, Sept. 24, 9 to 11 a.m.	Randolph Community Center 1415 Grayland Avenue, West End <i>Rain date: Broad Rock Community Center on Sept. 29.</i>
Tuesday, Sept. 29, 4 to 6 p.m.	Broad Rock Community Center 4165 Ferguson Lane, South Side

People are advised to bring an umbrella in case of inclement weather or to use as shade from the sun while waiting in line. Appointments are encouraged by calling the Richmond and Henrico COVID-19 Hotline at (804) 205-3501 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Walk-up testing will be offered while test supplies last. The Chesterfield County Health Department also is offering free COVID-19 testing at the following locations:

**Walmsley Boulevard United Methodist Church**, 2950 Walmsley Blvd., 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 17; Tuesday, Sept. 22; and Tuesday, Sept. 29.

**Beulah United Methodist Church**, 6930 Hopkins Road, 5 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 23, and Wednesday, Sept. 30.

**Cornerstone Church**, 10551 Chalkley Road, 1 to 2 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 17, and Thursday, Sept. 24; and 5 to 6 p.m. Monday, Sept. 21, and Monday, Sept. 28.

Testing is encouraged for those who have COVID-19 symptoms, and it is free for those who are uninsured or underinsured. Some appointments will be reserved for walk-ups, but appointments are recommended by contacting the Chesterfield County Health Department at (804) 318-8207.

The Virginia Department of Health reported on Wednesday a total of 136,359 positive cases of COVID-19 statewide, along with 10,389 hospitalizations and 2,884 deaths. Officials reported a 7 percent positivity rate statewide.

According to the data, African-Americans comprised 25.6 percent of cases and 26.9 percent of deaths for which ethnic and racial data is available, while Latinos made up 30.9 percent of the cases and 10.3 percent of deaths.

## Need for socialization, enrichment leads families to create education pods for children

By Ronald E. Carrington

Adam and T.Q. Evans thought the best way for their two young sons to learn during the COVID-19 pandemic was through an education pod.

Their sons, Blaize, 8, and Ace, 5, are enrolled at Barack Obama Elementary School.

But when Richmond Public Schools began the school year with virtual online learning, the Evans family wanted the socialization and other educational benefits a small group could provide.

So they joined with a few other families to create Northside Pod Life, two small groups of youngsters – one for pre-kindergarten children and the other for elementary school students – who learn together at the homes of the pod leaders.

The Evanses' goal was to try to create a strong and innovative educational environment for their sons and open it up to other neighbors.

The families involved put together job descriptions for the pod leaders, interviewed interested professionals, did background checks and drew up agreements on how the pods would be run and the health checks to be conducted each day for students and parents.

Adam Evans, whose background and experience includes stints as a teacher in Charlottesville, dean of students at a charter school in Detroit and a consultant for the Virginia Education Association, was the logical person to lead the elementary pod, which meets Monday through Friday at the Evans family home on Barton Avenue.

In addition to the Evanses' sons, the pod includes two other boys, Sebastian



Photo courtesy of the Evans Family

Pod leader Adam Evans works with Sebastian Wisnoski during online instruction with his Richmond Public Schools class at an education pod set up in the Evans family's North Side home. Other youngsters in the pod are, from left, Ace Evans, Blaize Evans and Bastian Van-Zandt.

Wisnoski and Bastian Van-Zandt, both 6 and also students enrolled at Obama Elementary.

Mr. Evans said that during the summer, he happened to get “experience” logging into the RPS online learning platform and how to use it.

“That was foresight that made it easier to navigate and understand the schedules and teaching setup” that has helped him work with the four youngsters.

According to Mr. Evans, the Northside Pod Life follows RPS' virtual learning

schedule. And it offers supplemental enrichment experiences to the youngsters.

The students participate in lessons about social justice and caring for their community, Black history, protecting the environment and horticulture and urban farming, to name a few. They get hands-on lessons with the chicken coop in the backyard and three chickens that lay eggs daily.

There's also a trampoline that the youngsters play on during the break after

Please turn to A4

## City of Louisville to pay the family of Breonna Taylor \$12M to settle the wrongful death lawsuit filed after she was shot to death by police during a late-night raid of her home

Continued from A1

Dissatisfaction with the settlement extended to “Injustice Square” in downtown Louisville, where demonstrators have gathered daily for 113 days, demanding justice for Ms. Taylor. Some who listened to the announcement over a loudspeaker near a memorial for Ms. Taylor said the price for a life seemed low, the promised reforms too little and too late.

“It’s just not enough,” said Holly McGlawn, who noted how much Ms. Taylor might have made had she lived. She was young, she could have worked for another 40 or 50 years, she said.

“You can’t put a price on a Black woman being able to sleep at night and know she’s not going to get murdered,” Ms. McGlawn said.

“Justice delayed is justice denied. There was a better way to handle this,” agreed Shameka Parrish-Wright, who has been part of the daily demonstrations where the city often faced peaceful protesters with force. “I’m hearing apologies now that should have happened early on.”

Ms. Palmer left the news conference with one of her attorneys, Benjamin Crump, and met with protesters at the nearby park. She surveyed the original art of her daughter, prayed and wiped away tears.

She had just two words to say: “Pressure applied,” a saying her daughter often used as an emergency medical tech.

Mr. Crump said the \$12 million payout is the largest such settlement given out for a Black woman killed by police.

The settlement “sets a precedent for Black people,” he said.

“When (police) kill us, we expect full justice. We expect justice for the civil rights that you took from this human being. And then we expect full justice from the criminal justice system.”

In the time since Ms. Taylor’s shooting, her death — along with that of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police and the killing of others — has become a rallying cry for protesters seeking a reckoning on racial justice and police reform. High-profile celebrities including Oprah Winfrey and LeBron James have called for the officers to be charged in Ms. Taylor’s death.

Ms. Palmer’s lawsuit accuses three Louisville police officers of blindly firing into Ms. Taylor’s apartment the night of the raid, striking Ms. Taylor several times. One of the officers, Jonathan Mattingly, went into the home after the door was broken down and was struck in the leg by the gunshot from Mr. Walker.

The warrant was one of five issued in a wide-ranging investigation of a drug trafficking suspect who was a former boyfriend of Ms. Taylor’s. That man, Jamarcus Glover, was arrested at a different location about 10 miles away from Ms. Taylor’s apartment on the same evening.

The settlement includes reforms on how warrants are handled by police, Mayor Fischer said.

Other reforms seek to build stronger community connections by establishing a housing credit program to encourage officers to live in certain low-income areas in the city. Officers also will be encouraged to perform two paid hours of volunteer work every two weeks in the communities where they serve. The city also will track police use of force incidents and citizen complaints.

The city already has taken some other reform measures, including passing a law named for Ms. Taylor that bans the use of the no-knock warrants. Police typically use them in drug cases over concern that evidence could be destroyed if they announce their arrival.

Mayor Fischer fired former Louisville Police Chief Steve Conrad in June and last week named Yvette Gentry, a former deputy chief, as the new interim police chief. Chief Gentry is the first Black woman to lead the force of about 1,200 sworn officers.

The department also fired Brett Hankison, one of the three officers who fired shots in Ms. Taylor’s apartment that night. Mr. Hankison is appealing the dismissal.

The largest settlement previously paid in a Louisville police misconduct case was \$8.5 million in 2012, to a man who spent nine years in prison for a crime he did not commit, according to news reports.

## Federal appeals court decision may impact police immunity from lawsuits

Continued from A1

lawsuit to proceed against the officers in Martinsburg, W.Va.

Once again rejecting a lower court’s efforts to dismiss the suit on the grounds the officers had qualified immunity that barred the suit, the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that the officers who fired 22 rounds into Wayne Jones as he lay prone and unresponsive can be brought before a judge and jury to answer for their actions in a civil trial. The officers were cleared long ago of criminal culpability, leaving only the civil suit seeking monetary compensation.

Writing for the three-judge panel, Judge Henry F. Floyd wrote that Mr. Jones was “clearly incapacitated” at the time the five officers formed a circle and began firing.

In the events that led to Mr. Jones’ death, a police officer noticed Mr. Jones walking in the street rather than on a sidewalk and sought to arrest him for the violation.

Before the shooting, the officers pinned Mr. Jones to the ground. Judge Floyd noted a jury could find that Mr. Jones was in custody at that point and that there was no need for the officers to begin shooting.

“Because it was clearly established (at the time) that officers may not shoot a secured or incapacitated person, the officers are not entitled to qualified immunity,” he stated in the June 9 opinion in which Chief Judge Roger L. Gregory and Judge Stephanie Thacker joined.

The case is important in the states and localities within the 4th Circuit’s jurisdiction as it sets parameters for when officers can be sued in cases alleging excessive force. Along with West Virginia, the 4th Circuit’s territory includes Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina and South Carolina.

The case shows the kind of huge financial risks that local taxpayers could face if qualified immunity is stripped away and police officers are successfully sued for violating constitutional rights.

The family of Mr. Jones is seeking \$200 million in damages as a result of his death. The appeals court’s decision ensures the case will go to trial.

In its ruling, the appeals panel upheld the lower court’s determination that the City of Martinsburg is immune from suit under the doctrine of sovereign immunity and previous precedents. The bill the Virginia Senate declined to hear would have removed immunity for local and state governments and private employers.

This was the third time that the Richmond-based appeals court has considered aspects of the civil suit filed by his estate, and the third time the appeals court has rejected the lower federal court’s attempt to throw the case out.

The Virginia Senate has not completely ruled out legislation to limit police immunity and has set up a subcommittee to write a narrower bill that could be heard in the next regular legislative session that will begin in January.

## Need for socialization, enrichment leads families to create education pods for children

Continued from A1

morning classes.

Planned are career development “porch chats” in which community guests will come and speak with the children outside and share their life experiences.

“Our goal is to really try to develop the whole child as much as possible,” said Mrs. Evans, who works from home.

Mr. Evans was working as an assistant principal in Chesterfield County before becoming the pod leader. Under the families’ agreement, he is paid \$300 a week.

His wife said the pod has both structured and open learning.

“We really like to let the students lead the learning and foster their curiosity,” Mrs. Evans said after the pod’s first week.

“Social interaction is very important, which helps with a child’s social and emotional needs since there has been no personal, real-life interaction with their teachers and classmates since March,” Mr. Evans said.

Florencia Fuensalida and John Van-Zandt are happy with their decision to enroll their son, Bastian, in the pod.

Ms. Fuensalida said they felt it important for Bastian to be part of a pod rather than learn alone at home.

The couple, who also have an infant daughter, both work from home. They said they realized their son wasn’t going to sit and work on a computer for a long period of time. He needed attention that they said would be tricky and hard to provide.

They felt it was important for him to be part of a pod. So Ms. Fuensalida took part in the group’s development of the pod and helped to interview candidates.

“It is special for Bastian to be here with his peers,” Mr. Van-Zandt said, noting the youngster was bored sitting in front of a computer during the first two days of virtual instruction.

“As the days progressed, he felt it was so awesome to be with his friends in the pod and have play time,” Mr. Van-Zandt said. “He is starting to adjust to the technological aspects of school. He now also talks about Mr. Evans. He wants to show things to Mr. Evans.”

Mr. Evans said the next goal is create a nonprofit called



Ronald E. Carrington/Richmond Free Press

After a morning of online learning, Richmond Public Schools students in the Northside Pod Life’s elementary group use a mid-day recess to feed the chickens and gather eggs laid by hens in the backyard of pod leader Adam Evans. The youngsters are, from left, Bastian Van-Zandt (back to camera), Sebastian Wisnoski, Blaize Evans (holding egg basket) and Ace Evans with his dad and pod leader at the chicken coop.

Educate RVA, which will provide additional support to families in Richmond.

“We want to disrupt the school to prison pipeline,” he said. “There are so many opportunities to provide learning, positive

educational experiences and social opportunities to all children, especially boys.”

For details on Northside Pod Life, email educate4RVA@gmail.com.

## Plans to use city schools for day care program break down

Continued from A1

the day care program, announced two steps Wednesday in a bid to get a more sizeable program in place.

First, he announced the city would put up \$1 million in federal CARES Act funds — one-third of the \$3 million he has promised for the program — to subsidize placement at neighborhood child care operations.

Applications for interested providers who currently have extra space, adequate liability insurance and a demonstrated approach to dealing with COVID-19 are to be posted on the city’s website on Friday, Sept. 18, he said.

How long it will take the city to review and award the funding remains a question.

Secondly, Mayor Stoney said he and several members on City Council plan to write the Richmond School Board before its next meeting on Monday, Sept. 21, urging that the board follow the same model RPS adopted to allow nonprofit providers like Next Up to use school buildings for after-school programming.

That model involves the school system creating a memorandum of understanding

with the private providers seeking to offer day care during school hours, currently identified as the YMCA of Greater Richmond, the Peter Paul Development Center and the Richmond Behavioral Health Authority.

“We are not asking the school system to assume any additional liability or to run the programs,” Mayor Stoney said. “We don’t need to re-invent the wheel.”

However, School Board members consider it a bait-and-switch after approving on Aug. 31 the city’s request to use the buildings for the day care program.

The board, which has supported Superintendent Jason Karmas’ plan for the city to use five school buildings, expected the city to agree to a memorandum of understanding that would ensure the city undertakes all of the operating expenses, including being responsible for ensuring that child care regulations are followed and dealing with any lawsuits if any child were injured or became sick.

“To quote Malcolm X, ‘We’ve been hoodwinked and bamboozled,’” School Board member Felicia D. Cosby, 6th District, said after the board was informed Monday night that the

Mayor Stoney’s administration would not sign the draft memorandum of understanding.

Instead, on the advice of interim City Attorney Haskell C. Brown III, Mayor Stoney’s administration led by his senior policy adviser, Eva Colen, told RPS officials just hours before the School Board meeting that the deals should be made between RPS and the nonprofit providers.

Mr. Kamras asked board members if they are willing to enter into individual agreements with these organizations to operate day care centers at Huguenot High School, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School and Linwood Holton, Miles Jones and Blackwell elementary schools.

School Board Chair Linda Owen, 9th District, put off any decision until the next meeting, after the board heard from its attorney, Jonnell P. Lilly, who confirmed the city’s position.

She told the board Mr. Brown recommended that the city not sign an agreement “that would make them liable for following child care regulations because they are not the organizations in the building. The city sees itself as the facilitator providing the grants for the child care providers and linking them to RPS.”

Like Ms. Cosby, School Board member James “Scott” Barlow, 2nd District, did not like the sudden change. He said he did not vote on Aug. 31 to approve the deal because such issues where not ironed out.

“I believe that the city should have some skin in this process,” he said, describing the city’s position as a fundamental change.

Meanwhile, the School Board also is hearing pleas to shorten the school day.

Teachers are expressing concern about having to be glued to a computer screen for long hours, including follow-up meetings and training.

Parents are finding it exhausting to motivate their children to stay online for long hours, the board was told, and are worried about the eye strain their children could experience in being online for so long.

Board member Elizabeth Doerr, 1st District, reminded the Zoom viewers no school district had extensive experience in virtual learning.

At this point, Mr. Kamras does not support any reduction in class time and remains upbeat about the number of students logging in daily and learning. He said he would deliver a performance update to the board next Monday.

## Local News

## RPS program aims to bring stability, academic success to homeless students and their families

By Ronald E. Carrington

For Demeka Artis and her three children, home was, for more than a year, bouncing from hotel to hotel and worrying about food and paying bills.

That pressure and insecurity has disappeared thanks to Richmond Public Schools' Center for Families in Transition, or C-FIT, a new program helping Richmond students and their families find permanent housing and new hope.

In October 2019, Ms. Artis lost her cashier's job at a fast food restaurant on Broad Street, which meant no major income for her family and eviction from their apartment in Woodland Crossing in South Side.

From then until May 2020, Ms. Artis said the family's life was filled with strife as they moved from hotel to hotel around the city with the help of various Richmond human services programs. They didn't have a stable place to call home.

Ms. Artis was on the verge of giving up her search for assistance in finding an affordable home for her family when she found C-FIT through a North Side church. The C-FIT program helped Ms. Artis find a three-bedroom apartment in Highland Park to call home, and assisted the family with furnishings for their new home and food support.

"We all have somewhere to live," Ms. Artis said recently through a huge smile. "I have a

key now, and I can go in and out of my own place. The weight on both shoulders has gone from 200 pounds to 75 or 50 pounds. Now I feel awesome."

RPS' program is designed to be a resource hub for and collaboration with families in transition. The program works in partnership with families, the schools and the community to connect homeless families and students with support services needed for success and stability. That includes clothing, school supplies and weekly grocery deliveries.

The program also supports families with the goal of ensuring all students graduate with a high school diploma.

By the end of 2021, RPS and the nonprofit Housing Families First hope to help 130 students and their families move from motel rooms or living in a car to stable housing.

Ms. Artis and her children—Kemiya Dodson, 16, a 10th-grader at George Wythe High School; Jeremiah Dodson, 14, a ninth-grader at Armstrong High School, and Amica Dodson, 8, a third-grader at Overby-Sheppard Elementary School—are the first of the group to be settled in a new home.

On a morning in early September, Lakesha Allen, a family support specialist in RPS' C-FIT program, pulled up in a maroon pickup truck filled with groceries and household supplies for the Artis family.



Ronald E. Carrington/Richmond Free Press

From left, Lakesha Allen, a staff member with Richmond Public Schools' new Center for Families in Transition program, and Superintendent Jason Kamras, pause to talk after delivering food and household products to RPS parent Demeka Artis and her children, Amica, 8, Jeremiah, 14, and Kemiya, 16, at their new apartment in Highland Park.

Ms. Allen said that she has helped Ms. Artis' family with clothing and school supplies as well as going through the housing process to make sure they have housing stability. She also donated a bedroom set that was sitting in her garage.

"It is a blessing to have someplace to call your own instead of living in hotels, couch surfing or staying at friends' homes on different days, and not knowing where you're going to stay the next day," Ms. Allen said.

"I am so proud of Ms. Artis and her family because they worked so hard to get into a new home," Richmond Schools Superintendent Jason Kamras said after meeting the family that morning. "Ninety-nine point nine percent of the credit goes to her," Mr. Kamras said.

Details about the C-FIT program, including volunteer and donation efforts, are available by contacting Ms. Allen at lallen3@rvaschools.net or (804) 780-6288.

## Plans in the works to create several 24-hour homeless shelters

By Jeremy M. Lazarus

Frizzell Stephens wishes he had a roof over his head.

At 69, Mr. Stephens, who walks with a cane and has other health problems, finds himself sleeping outdoors after losing his bed in a men's shelter — the cause of which is a matter of dispute between him and shelter officials.

But one thing is certain: He is on the street with no place to stay.

That soon could change for him and others who are facing difficulty in getting space indoors as nights turn cold and winter approaches.

Although it is still uncertain

how many people like Mr. Stephens would need such help, Fifth District City Councilwoman Stephanie A. Lynch said that city officials are rushing to create three to four 24-hour shelters around the city for homeless people during inclement weather.

She told the Free Press negotiations are underway with churches and others with potential space who could make it available, and with existing shelter providers who could operate the space. Under the plan, the city would pick up the tab using federal CARES



Mr. Stephens

Act, emergency shelter and Community Development Block grants.

The new initiative would provide counseling and connections to other programs, possibly include shuttle transportation to the shelter sites and be open for more hours daily than in the past.

Ms. Lynch, first made the disclosure at the Oct. 1 meeting of City Council's Education and Health Committee, and said the goal is to have the new operation in place within a few weeks.

Ms. Lynch said the new

initiative would improve service and be less costly than continuing the city partnership with homeless service providers to shelter people in hotels and motels using federal dollars.

And it could be timely given the concern that more individuals and families could face evictions early next year when it is still winter.

"But we are going to need a dedicated funding stream to support this effort," Ms. Lynch said. "The federal funding is going to run out and we are going to need to come up with the resources to make it sustainable."

The goal would be to replace the traditional cold weather

shelter the city has long operated when temperatures fall to 40 degrees or below, but that previously only provided overnight shelter with no services, she said. "We can do better," she said.

Officials with Mayor Levar M. Stoney's administration, including Sharon Ebert, deputy chief administrative officer for economic and community development, who has been the key figure on shelter issues, have not responded to Free Press queries seeking confirmation.

Surprisingly, Mr. Stephens has money in the bank, but the bank won't let him access it because he cannot prove his

identity with acceptable documents. His birth certificate is insufficient. He lost his photo ID, and the upheaval from the pandemic has left him unable to get a replacement from the state Department of Motor Vehicles.

DMV now requires people to make online appointments, but Mr. Stephens' cell phone is not working and he does not have access to a computer. Even if he had access, it can take two months or more to get an appointment because DMV is so overwhelmed with requests.

"I just have to do the best I can to survive," Mr. Stephens said. "I can only hope things will get better."

Explanation for Proposed Constitutional Amendment To Be Voted on at the November 3, 2020, Election

**PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT**  
Article II. Franchise and Officers.  
Section 6. Apportionment.  
Section 6-A. Virginia Redistricting Commission

### BALLOT QUESTION

Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended to establish a redistricting commission, consisting of eight members of the General Assembly and eight citizens of the Commonwealth, that is responsible for drawing the congressional and state legislative districts that will be subsequently voted on, but not changed by, the General Assembly and enacted without the Governor's involvement and to give the responsibility of drawing districts to the Supreme Court of Virginia if the redistricting commission fails to draw districts or the General Assembly fails to enact districts by certain deadlines?

### EXPLANATION

#### Current Law

Under the current Constitution, the General Assembly and the Governor are responsible for drawing new election districts for the U.S. House of Representatives, the state Senate, and the House of Delegates. These districts are required to be compact and contiguous, and to have populations that are equal to each other.

#### Proposed Law

The proposed amendment would shift the responsibility of drawing these election districts from the General Assembly and the Governor to a bipartisan commission, made up of 16 persons, half being members of the General Assembly and half being citizens of the Commonwealth. This commission would draw the election districts for the U.S. House of Representatives, the state Senate, and the House of Delegates and then submit the maps to the General Assembly for approval. If the commissioners are unable to agree on proposals for maps by a certain date, or if the General Assembly does not approve the submitted maps by a certain date, the commission is allotted additional time to draw new districts, but if maps are not then submitted or approved, the Supreme Court of Virginia becomes responsible for drawing these election districts.

The eight legislative commissioners are appointed by the political party leadership in the state Senate and the House of Delegates, with an equal number from each house and from each major political party. The eight citizen commissioners are picked by a committee of five retired circuit court judges. Four of the retired judges are selected by party leaders in the Senate and the House from a list compiled by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia. These four judges pick the fifth judge from the same list. This selection committee then chooses citizen commissioners from lists created by party leaders in the Senate and the House. Members and employees of Congress or the General Assembly cannot be citizen commissioners. Each party leader in each house gives the selection committee a list of at least 16 candidates, and the committee picks two from each list for a total of eight citizen commissioners.

For a plan to be submitted for the General Assembly's approval, at least six of the eight citizen commissioners and at least six of the eight legislative commissioners must agree to it. Additionally, for plans for General Assembly districts to be submitted, at least three of the four Senators on the commission have to agree to the Senate districts plan and at least three of the four Delegates on the commission have to agree to the House of Delegates districts plan. The General Assembly cannot make any changes to these plans, and the Governor cannot veto any plan approved by the General Assembly.

The amendment also adds a requirement that districts provide, where practicable, opportunities for racial and ethnic communities to elect candidates of their choice.

A "yes" vote will make a bipartisan commission responsible for the initial drawing of election districts.

A "no" vote will leave the sole responsibility for drawing the districts with the General Assembly and the Governor.

**FULL TEXT OF AMENDMENT** [Proposed new language is underlined. Deleted old language is stricken.]

Amend Section 6 of Article II of the Constitution of Virginia and amend the Constitution of Virginia by adding in Article II a section numbered 6-A as follows:

#### ARTICLE II FRANCHISE AND OFFICERS

#### Section 6. Apportionment.

Members of the House of Representatives of the United States and members of the Senate and of the House of Delegates of the General Assembly shall be elected from electoral districts established by the General Assembly pursuant to Section 6-A of this Constitution. Every electoral district shall be composed of contiguous and compact territory and shall be so constituted as to give, as nearly as is practicable, representation in proportion to the population of the district. Every electoral district shall be drawn in accordance with the requirements of federal and state laws that address racial and ethnic fairness, including the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States and provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended, and judicial decisions interpreting such laws. Districts shall provide, where practicable, opportunities for racial and ethnic communities to elect candidates of their choice.

The General Assembly shall reapportion the Commonwealth shall be reapportioned into electoral districts in accordance with this section and Section 6-A in the year 2011 2021 and every ten years thereafter.

Any such decennial reapportionment law shall take effect immediately and not be subject to the limitations contained in Article IV, Section 13, of this Constitution. The districts delineated in the decennial reapportionment law shall be implemented for the November general election for the United States House of Representatives, Senate, or House of Delegates, respectively, that is held immediately prior to the expiration of the term being served in the year that the reapportionment law is required to be enacted. A member in office at the time that a decennial redistricting law is enacted shall complete his term of office and shall continue to represent the district from which he was elected for the duration of such term of office so long as he does not move his residence from the district from which he was elected. Any vacancy occurring during such term shall be filled from the same district that elected the member whose vacancy is being filled.

#### Section 6-A. Virginia Redistricting Commission.

(a) In the year 2020 and every ten years thereafter, the Virginia Redistricting Commission (the Commission) shall be convened for the purpose of establishing districts for the United States House of Representatives and for the Senate and the House of Delegates of the General Assembly pursuant to Article II, Section 6 of this Constitution.

(b) The Commission shall consist of sixteen commissioners who shall be selected in accordance with the provisions of this subsection.

(1) Eight commissioners shall be legislative members, four of whom shall be members of the Senate of Virginia and four of whom shall be members of the House of Delegates. These commissioners shall be appointed no later than December 1 of the year ending in zero and shall continue to serve until their successors are appointed.

(A) Two commissioners shall represent the political party having the highest number of members in the Senate of Virginia and shall be appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate of Virginia.

(B) Two commissioners shall represent the political party having the next highest number of members in the Senate of Virginia and shall be appointed by the leader of that political party.

(C) Two commissioners shall represent the political party having the highest number of members in the House of Delegates and shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates.

(D) Two commissioners shall represent the political party having the next highest number of members in the House of Delegates and shall be appointed by the leader of that political party.

(2) Eight commissioners shall be citizen members who shall be selected in accordance with the provisions of this subdivision and in the manner determined by the General Assembly by general law.

(A) There shall be a Redistricting Commission Selection Committee (the Committee) consisting of five retired judges of the circuit courts of Virginia. By November 15 of the year ending in zero, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia shall certify to the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the leader in the House of Delegates of the political party having the next highest number of members in the House of Delegates, the President pro tempore of the Senate of Virginia, and the leader in the Senate of Virginia of the political party having the next highest number of members in the Senate a list of retired judges of the circuit courts of Virginia who are willing to serve on the Committee, and these members shall each select a judge from the list. The four judges selected to serve on the Committee shall select, by a majority vote, a judge from the list prescribed herein to serve as the fifth member of the Committee and to serve as the chairman of the Committee.

(B) By January 1 of the year ending in one, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the leader in the House of Delegates of the political party having the next highest number of members in the House of Delegates, the President pro tempore of the Senate of Virginia, and the leader in the Senate of Virginia of the political party having the next highest number of members in the Senate shall each submit to the Committee a list of at least sixteen citizen candidates for service on the Commission. Such citizen candidates shall meet the criteria established by the General Assembly by general law. The Committee shall select, by a majority vote, two citizen members from each list submitted. No member or employee of the Congress of the United States or of the General Assembly shall be eligible to serve as a citizen member.

(c) By February 1 of the year ending in one, the Commission shall hold a public meeting at which it shall select a chairman from its membership. The chairman shall be a citizen member and shall be responsible for coordinating the work of the Commission.

(d) The Commission shall submit to the General Assembly plans for districts for the Senate and the House of Delegates of the General Assembly no later than 45 days following the receipt of census data and shall submit to the General Assembly plans for districts for the United States House of Representatives no later than 60 days following the receipt of census data or by the first day of July of that year, whichever occurs later.

(1) To be submitted as a proposed plan for districts for members of the United States House of Representatives, a plan shall receive affirmative votes of at least six of the eight legislative members and six of the eight citizen members.

(2) To be submitted as a proposed plan for districts for members of the Senate, a plan shall receive affirmative votes of at least six of the eight legislative members, including at least three of the four legislative members who are members of the Senate, and at least six of the eight citizen members.

(3) To be submitted as a proposed plan for districts for members of the House of Delegates, a plan shall receive affirmative votes of at least six of the eight legislative members, including at least three of the four legislative members who are members of the House of Delegates, and at least six of the eight citizen members.

(e) Plans for districts for the Senate and the House of Delegates shall be embodied in and voted on as a single bill. The vote on any bill embodying a plan for districts shall be taken in accordance with the provisions of Article IV, Section 11 of this Constitution, except that no amendments shall be permitted. Such bills shall not be subject to the provisions contained in Article V, Section 6 of this Constitution.

(f) Within fifteen days of receipt of a plan for districts, the General Assembly shall take a vote on the bill embodying that plan in accordance with the provisions of subsection (e). If the General Assembly fails to adopt such bill by this deadline, the Commission shall submit a new plan for districts to the General Assembly within fourteen days of the General Assembly's failure to adopt the bill. The General Assembly shall take a vote on the bill embodying such plan within seven days of receipt of the plan. If the General Assembly fails to adopt such bill by this deadline, the districts shall be established by the Supreme Court of Virginia.

(g) If the Commission fails to submit a plan for districts by the deadline set forth in subsection (d), the Commission shall have fourteen days following its initial failure to submit a plan to the General Assembly. If the Commission fails to submit a plan for districts to the General Assembly by this deadline, the districts shall be established by the Supreme Court of Virginia.

If the Commission submits a plan for districts within fourteen days following its initial failure to submit a plan, the General Assembly shall take a vote on the bill embodying such plan within seven days of its receipt. If the General Assembly fails to adopt such bill by this deadline, the districts shall be established by the Supreme Court of Virginia.

(h) All meetings of the Commission shall be open to the public. Prior to proposing any redistricting plans and prior to voting on redistricting plans, the Commission shall hold at least three public hearings in different parts of the Commonwealth to receive and consider comments from the public.

(i) All records and documents of the Commission, or any individual or group performing delegated functions of or advising the Commission, related to the Commission's work, including internal communications and communications from outside parties, shall be considered public information.