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## Journalist names VCU as one of 37 colleges to virtually monitor students

A journalist listed VCU as one of 37 colleges to purchase and use Social Sentinel, a service he said was used for monitoring student protests.

VCU Police admitted to using the tool, according to university spokesperson Corey Byers. University police entered into a contract with Social Sentinel in November 2015 and ended it in August 2017. It paid \$9,999 its first year and \$15,000 its second year, but did not use it again once VCU Police discontinued their service in 2017.

“VCU Police only used Social Sentinel to find publicly accessible information related to potential threats to security, public safety, harm, self-harm or acts of violence that were posted on publicly accessible accounts, which were on Internet-based, social media platforms,” Byers stated in an email.

VCU Police did not use Social Sentinel to monitor student protests, only to monitor “public social media feeds for threats in and around VCU,” Byers stated. The university did not use any information that wasn’t readily and publicly accessible to anybody on the internet, so it is within student privacy laws for VCU Police to use this tech, according to Byers.

Social Sentinel, which had its name changed to Direct earlier this year, is a service that Navigate360 offers, a technology company that provides various safety services. Its original purpose is to allow its users to scan information on the internet, using artificial intelligence to seek out harmful content or possible violence before it has the chance to escalate, according to their website.

Arijit Sen, a computational journalist for the Dallas Morning News, was the first to expose the practice of universities using the

“

It led me down this rabbit hole of, ‘if UNC is using Social Sentinel to surveil protests, I bet a bunch of other colleges are as well.’”

**Arijit Sen, journalist**

technology to surveil student protests in an article published on Sept. 20. He mentioned VCU in a twitter thread about the article the next day.

Sen said he first discovered the service while attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill campus. Protests had broken out over a statue on campus depicting the confederate soldier Silent Sam.

“There were a lot of protests over the statue going on in 2017 and 2018,” Sen said. “There was a very large police response, so I wanted to know what was going on behind the scenes, what the police and administrators were saying.”

Sen filed a public records request with UNC Police but was denied, he said. There were a lot of record requests by others, be-



VCU Police entered into a contract with Social Sentinel, a social scanning tool, in November 2015. Photo by Kaitlyn Fulmore

cause of the topic, Sen said. Using UNC’s open portal, he requested the information previously requested by others. He received thousands of pages of legal documents months later, and within them, records of UNC using Social Sentinel.

“It led me down this rabbit hole of, ‘if UNC is using Social Sentinel to surveil protests, I bet a bunch of other colleges are as well,’” Sen said.

Sen said he continued to accumulate data via public record requests until 2022.

“Navigate360 is very opaque about how the service works,” Sen said. “They have machine learning models that scan social media, websites and potentially emails for a language of harm, which I think is just a list of keywords like, ‘shoot,’ ‘bomb’ or ‘kill.’ They find tweets that have those words and send them to college police departments. This is the general theory behind it.”

Navigate360 states Social Sentinel is only used to cover violent riots “upon their client’s request” but is not used to monitor peaceful protests, according to its website. Only one school investigated by Sen directly stated to him that they were using it for such purposes.

A marketer working with Navigate360 touted the service to a UNC administrator as a way of mitigating the impacts of “disruptive demonstrations & protests,” according to the Dallas Morning News.

There was no informed consent with students at these universities to use this Social Sentinel, Sen said.

“When you sign up for Facebook, for example, there’s a terms of service, though most people don’t read it. Right? The students are not signing a terms of service with Navigate360, the school is,” Sen said. “When schools bought the service, they either did not say anything at all, or, in a

couple of cases, journalists heard about it.”

Many college police departments have been using taxpayer dollars to pay for Social Sentinel’s services to monitor what students say, according to the Dallas Morning News.

“The Fourth Amendment has considered things like spying. That is clearly an invasion of privacy,” Sen said. “Looking at one person’s tweet is not an invasion of privacy, but when you start to aggregate millions of people’s tweets that might be a potential concern. You can track superhuman levels of tweets and use them for purposes like tracking activist networks.”

The Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution protects people’s right to privacy and protects them from unreasonable intrusions by the government.

“It is chilling to think that universities might have a power imbalance between them and their students,” Sen said. “Even though a lot of schools have canceled their usage of the service, if they were willing to do this once, I would not be surprised if they were willing to do it again.”

See **SOCIAL SENTINEL** on page 2

### List of colleges that have used Social Sentinel

- Arizona State University
- California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
- Shasta College
- University of California, Los Angeles
- University of Connecticut
- Gulf Coast State College
- Florida State University
- Florida Atlantic University
- Palm Beach State College
- Indian River State College
- Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University
- Miami Dade College
- Broward College
- Kennesaw State University
- Anne Arundel Community College
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Jackson College
- Oakland University
- Grand Rapids Community College
- Michigan State University
- Wake Forest University
- North Carolina State University
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Duke University
- North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
- University of North Carolina at Asheville
- East Carolina University
- Oregon State University
- University of Oregon
- University of North Texas
- North Central Texas College
- Texas State University
- Collin College
- University of Texas at Dallas
- University of Virginia
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Virginia State University

## Stories of the week

NATIONAL: U.S national debt surpasses \$31 trillion for the first time.

INTERNATIONAL: World's largest Pokémon collection could sell for more than \$34,000.



A crowd gathers outside the state capitol building to protest human rights violations in Iran. Photo by Jack Glagola

# Protesters gather at state capital against Iranian government human rights violations

**JACK GLAGOLA**  
Contributing Writer

The forecast called for rain — but the weather did not stop Richmond's Iranian community from coming out on Sunday and protesting human rights violations by the ruling regime of Iran.

Protesters stood under umbrellas in the colors of the Iranian flag; they held up the picture of Mahsa Amini, the young woman whose murder sparked the unrest; they waved the Lion and Sun flag of the previous regime that was deposed over four decades ago.

Protests in Iran started last month when Mahsa Amini was brutally killed by “morality police” because she was not wearing the proper hijab, according to Iran Focus, a nonprofit news site. Central to the protests underway in Iran and here are human rights, especially regarding the treatment of women.

Former VCU student Mahyar Zarei said the core of the issue is freedom of expression, and it is nobody's choice but a woman's whether or not she should wear a hijab.

“We are in the year 2022,” Zarei said. “In Iran we go on a different calendar —

they say the year is 1401 — but we're past that age of thinking that women are less than men. This is about basic human rights, and it's kind of weird to say because you wouldn't think we'd be at this point.”

Many of the protesters in attendance on Sunday, including Zarei, were in Washington, D.C. the day before with the same goal — to get government officials to hear the Iranian community's voice.

“The rain's nothing for us here,” Zarei said. “I'm exhausted from yesterday, but the people back home are doing this every day.”

The event in the nation's capital included Iranian communities from the city proper and the surrounding suburbs in Maryland and Virginia, and numbered nearly ten thousand. They marched from Farragut Park all the way to the former Iranian Embassy.

“It was beautiful,” Zarei said. “I couldn't see the front or back of the line.”

Virginia Sen. Ghazala Hashmi, who represents a swath of the Richmond area, made an appearance on Oct. 2. She addressed the crowd and reiterated the importance of women's rights and human rights across the world.

“The profound grief that the Iranian people are feeling translates across all peo-

ples, all languages, and all time,” Hashmi said. “Outrage against injustice is a universal language.”

The authoritarian government of Iran and its denial of fundamental rights afforded to all people, according to Hashmi.

“Democracy and theocracy are not compatible,” Hashmi said.

In her speech, Hashmi said the Iranian “morality police” that carried out the murder of Amini were acting contrary to their intended function.

“You cannot call yourself the ‘moral police’ when your morality requires you to harm, to oppress and to make a mockery of justice,” Hashmi said.

Dr. Iraj Mirshahi, an internal medicine doctor at St. Mary's Hospital and the organizer of this protest, said he decided to have a rally in Richmond because he wants to make sure Virginia leadership remembers that Iranian Americans have a voice here.

“We want our fellow Americans to support us and our elected officials to understand where we are coming from,” Mirshahi said. “We want them to stop negotiating with them — we don't think the regime is going to change.”

The outrage in Iran focused on Amini's

death and the treatment of women by the theocratic Iranian government, according to Mirshahi.

“They have gone beyond that. People are demanding more, because they've been oppressed for 43 years,” Mirshahi said. “They want a democratic, secular government now. This is about women's rights, this is about all Iranian people's rights.”

There is a disparity between the ruling class and the middle and working classes of Iran, Mirshahi said.

“Even with all the sanctions, the leaders are still enjoying a good life while the people of Iran become poorer and poorer,” Mirshahi said. “They're sending their kids to Europe, to America, to Canada, to Australia, while Iranian kids are in the streets — they don't have enough food to eat. The message is strong — we want to condemn what is happening in Iran. We want support from leaders here in the United States.”

Mirshahi said he was optimistic about the future of the protests.

“I think it's a great start because right now, the people involved are the young people — people in their 20s and 30s who weren't around when the Islamic Revolution happened 40 years ago,” Mirshahi said.

The Iranian people want to avoid conflict if possible, but will have to engage for the duration of this regime, according to Mirshahi.

“The Iranians are a peace-loving people,” Mirshahi said. “We want to live in tranquility with the rest of the world. But as long as that regime is there, that is not going to happen.”

## SOCIAL SENTINEL

Continued from front page

Communications law professor William Oglesby said students do not give up their free speech rights by being a student at a university.

“As for minors, courts have made it clear that while they maintain their First Amendment rights, they are more limited. Minors at the college level, however, have all the First Amendment rights that anybody else does,” Oglesby said.

The official VCU Student Email Standard states that the university uses “various

methods” to protect the security of its network and of its users' accounts. Any data utilizing university-owned computer or network resources has the potential to be disclosed under the law or appropriate university business needs.

“It is important that students keep in mind that whatever they say online can be misinterpreted, like using particularly strong language or flaggable words” Oglesby said. “AI monitors do not have a sense of humor.”

Navigate360's website states one in 20,000 scans are truly actionable, captioned with the question, “if you could prevent someone from harming themselves or others would you?”

“It's so important that universities have policies and direction as to what they will do in cases of students in suicidal danger,” Oglesby said.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people from ages 10 to 24, according to the Center for Disease Control

and Prevention.

“People who are at risk of suicide will let it be known in one way or another, that they're contemplating suicide,” Oglesby said. “We may not always recognize it at first, but they will often do that. If they carry it out, people will say, ‘why didn't we hear these cries for help?’ That can happen so easily in college. It is a question of ‘how do you do that, and at the same time, protect their privacy rights?’”

# University police respond

## TO PRESENCE OF GUN VIOLENCE ON CAMPUS

**KATRINA LEE**  
News Editor

**A**ggravated assaults with firearms have increased over the past year, according to data from the Richmond Police Department.

Business marketing student Victoria Adams said she feels like she doesn't know what is going on in terms of crime on campus and it "stresses" her out.

"I'm a first year student here, and I'm from a smaller town and coming to Richmond," Adams said. "I was kind of expecting to have a little bit of crime but like, I feel sometimes that like the VCU police, they don't release enough information for me to feel like I can be more aware."

Adams said she wished that VCU police gave more updates and details on crimes on and near campus, such as if they caught the subject or not.

Graphic design student Mimi Paul said she generally feels safe when they are on campus.

"I feel like the campus is pretty heavily policed in this area right by where all the dorms are and everything, but outside I wouldn't feel safe," Paul said.

“

We are also enhancing police patrols specifically in the Grace Street corridor and in Monroe Park. We are expanding officers' deployment for party-related incidents and noise complaints and we're actively in the process of hiring dispatchers and police recruits."

**Corey Byers**  
VCU Police spokesperson

There was a shooting less than four blocks away from campus last month. RPD officers responded to the 200 block of South Laurel Street for a report of a shooting on Sept. 5, according to RPD in an email statement.

The university alert system notified students nearly two hours after the event.

RPD officers located two male victims suffering from gunshot wounds. Both males were transported to a local hospital for non-life-threatening injuries. As of Sept. 14, RPD could not provide any further information on the current state of investigation, according to RPD spokesperson Chelsea Taylor.

VCU police spokesperson Corey Byers stated in an email that VCU police are assisting the RPD in the investigation. She also stated VCU police listens to the community by taking feedback from students,

family, staff and local residents, as well as issuing an annual safety survey.

"The VCU Police leadership team has actively listened to community concerns during the first few weeks of classes and is enhancing safety strategies for the academic year," Byers stated. "The department's top goals are to increase the visibility and deployment of officers, increase engagement with community members and to be relentless in our follow up on all incidents."

To that end, VCU police has recently hired a dozen new officers and has expanded their units for more coverage in and around campus.

"We are also enhancing police patrols specifically in the Grace Street corridor and in Monroe Park," Byers stated. "We are expanding officers' deployment for party-related incidents and noise complaints and we're actively in the process of hiring dispatchers and police recruits."

VCU police will be focusing on the entire Grace Street corridor from Ryland to Belvidere Streets due to the number of students living there, according to Byers.

Yearly homicides involving firearms in the city were 50 as of Oct. 2, 2021 and 38 as of Oct. 2, 2022, according to the RPD website.

Pastor Ralph Hodge is the co-president of Richmonders Involved to Strengthen our Communities, an organization dedicated to holding public officials accountable for solving Richmond's critical problems, according to the organization's website.

The organization has focused on the issue of gun violence because there was an increase in gun related crime in the city at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Hodge.

"You're going to see this rise, so I think it's worse and I think if we don't do something, we're headed to what we had in the '80s, in regard to violent crime, and right now you're just seeing it more and more," Hodge said.

Violent crime in Richmond since 1986 has been steadily declining from 5,205 cases to below 2,500 cases in the mid-2000s, according to the Urban Strategies Council.

RISC is advocating for a gun violence problem analysis, which is an overview of gun violence in the city which would provide data and information on common factors around the issue. The data from the analysis would indicate where and on whom the resources should be focused, according to Hodge.

"The problem analysis is the first step to doing Gun Violence Intervention

because that really helps you target where your interventions need to go because the gun violence analysis really highlights these are the key factors, key demographics, and answers a bunch of questions," Hodge said.

RISC is planning to meet with several community leaders who take part in gun violence prevention to advocate for a problem analysis including VCU, according to Hodge.

Democrat congressman Donald McEachin of the 4th Congressional District gave \$1 million in grant money to university leaders on April 14 for VCU's new program titled RVA Gun Violence Prevention Framework, according to a previous report from The Commonwealth Times.

The framework is still in the process of receiving the funding, but is currently in the planning process of the framework, according to VCU Health program manager Rachele Hunley.

The framework has different components including an intensive case management component, a shooting and homicide review commission, a credible messenger component, a prevention component and more aiming to curb gun violence in the

city, according to Hunley.

The intensive case management component of the framework works with Bridging the Gap, a program at VCU Health which provides community violence intervention, Hunley said.

"Any type of violence related injury, we start at the bedside. We have either a peer support so someone who's experienced with violence or an intervention specialist, who's essentially like a case manager, they start to work with the family," Hunley said.

The plans for this framework began three years ago. The first stage of the process was to create a steering committee where community activists, individuals affected by gun violence, large organizations and grassroots providers took part in creating recommendations for the framework.

"Community voice was at the center of developing this framework," Hunley said.

Hunley wanted to highlight that this framework will take time to implement and see results from the multiple components.

"Next steps for us is to continue to meet with our collaborative. We are hoping to put forth some more implementations and next steps to the public," Hunley said.



A shooting occurred near VCU's campus off of Idlewood Avenue and Laurel Street, injuring two students. Photo by Alessandro Latour

# VCUarts alum stars in Tyler Perry's 'A Jazzman's Blues'

**PEGGY STANSBERY**  
Contributing Writer

*VCUarts alum Joshua Boone recently* starred in his biggest production to date — Tyler Perry's "A Jazzman's Blues" that debuted on Netflix last month.

This love was further cultivated at VCU, and he became inspired to pursue a path on Broadway, according to Boone. Boone said the university helped him grow and learn ideas that spoke to his work and the world.

"VCU exposed me to life in a way that I saw the seeds of that exposure all around me when I left school," Boone said.

Boone headed to New York after graduating in 2010 and pursued a career on Broadway, film and TV, according to Boone. There he eventually landed roles within those industries.

"I have always wanted film and TV more than anything in terms of storytelling," Boone said. "But coming up through the public school system and my teachers getting me involved with theater, I developed a distinct love for the stage."

Boone said he was drawn to "A Jazzman's Blues" because of its script and themes of humanity.

"As a lesser known actor you want the opportunity to showcase what you can do, and this script offered that through and through," Boone said. "I was grateful for the themes involved in the story that hopefully help humanity in the process, because that's what it's all about at the end of the day."

People are focused on fighting for their specific cause without realizing they are helping promote a separatist culture, Boone said. He hopes the film shows how connected humans are.

"We are further distancing ourselves from each other than finding the commonalities," Boone said. "I hope this film helps us see our commonalities more."

Boone said he hopes the film will attract more work that aligns with his goals.



Whatever form his art takes, Boone said he wants to "lead with love" and create art that makes people feel something unique.

"The overarching goal is to have an impact on the human psyche, the human conscious and the human spirit through this work in a way that helps humanity on the grandest and largest scale," Boone said.

VCUarts Theatre Professor David Toney said Boone's acting in "A Jazzman's Blues" is acting that you don't see everyday.

"I don't think that you see acting like that everyday where the actor isn't the most important thing, but the story is the most important thing," Toney said. "What I liked a lot about what Josh did is that he was completely unselfconscious."

Toney used the opening scenes of "A Jazzman's Blues" for instruction in his class, he said.

"I actually played it for my acting class so they could see what simple acting is, not in a sense of easy, but as in what it looks like to simply do what an actor does," Toney said.

VCUarts theatre performance student Avery Johnson said Boone helps show VCU students that opportunities are out there.

"It shows we are getting good training by coming to

VCU," Johnson said. "It really is inspiring to see someone else, especially a man of color, do it and be the leading man in a movie like that which has so much depth."

There was a lot of buzz in his classes about Boone's role in "A Jazzman's Blues" and students felt excited to see a VCU alum starring in a Netflix film, Johnson said.

"For the students, one of the things about becoming a professional actor is your feeling that you can do it," Toney said. "Because this is a very tough profession, you really need to have faith in yourself. I think what Joshua represents is a signpost that I can do this too."

“

It shows we are getting good training by coming to VCU. It really is inspiring to see someone else, especially a man of color, do it and be the leading man in a movie like that which has so much depth."

**Avery Johnson**, theatre performance student

**VCUarts alum Joshua Boone poses for a headshot.**

Photo courtesy of Drew Gurian

# Richmond's Craft + Design show returns after shutdown

**BAILEE PADGETT**  
Contributing Writer

Members of Richmond's community walked through Main Street Station while indulging in unique art after a two-year shutdown due to COVID-19.

“

We really have retained the best artists in the country, because they say Richmond is one of the most hospitable places. This region has a very art-buying and art-interested community that loves to engage with an audience that really knows what they are buying.”

**Stefanie Fedor, Visual Arts executive director**

“We are amazed really, the work is incredible,” said Richmond local and attendee Erin Harper. “I love coming to these things because you get to see the love and passion that goes into the things these artists make.”

The Visual Arts Center of Richmond presented its 58th annual Craft + Design show at Main Street Station from Oct. 14-

16, for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

The Visual Arts Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to celebrating and supporting the creative life of all people, according to its mission statement. A jury of five craft collectors, artists, or art overseers look at applications from artists around the country in different media categories. These artists are then chosen and invited to come and set up their shops to create a balanced and thoughtful show over the course of three days, according to executive director Stefanie Fedor.

This year, featured artists were able to visit Richmond and display their crafts and artwork for the community of art-lovers to experience. The weekend was full of activities, with a preview party on Friday night and Richmond Magazine's Susan Hable as a speaker on Sunday, according to the Visual Arts website.

“Throughout the weekend we have a big beer garden and demonstrations from teachers,” Fedor said. “We also have the clay olympics with different ceramics that battle each other so we have plenty going on over the weekend that is geared to a wide audience.”

The featured artist this year is Sarah Djarnie-Brown, the owner of Shop Volta, a handmade doll shop. Each of her dolls were created through salvaged resources including wood, fabric, wool and various other recycled materials, according to Visual Arts website.

“A lot of my stuff is one of a kind, and it's about sustainability and to be the featured artist this year and to be working with VisArts — it's such a huge honor,” Djarnie-Brown said. “When I found out I was going to be the featured artist, I was

really happy to be working with them.”

The Visual Arts staff invited her to apply for the show after showcasing her work at the Smithsonian's Future Focus craft show earlier in April for her first craft show, according to Djarnie-Brown.

“These shows are really new to me so for someone to accept my work is amazing,” Djarnie-Brown said. “I have been doing this since about 2018 so I wasn't sure which avenue I could showcase these dolls, so being accepted in itself was an honor to me. The Visual Arts Center has been helping people explore their creativity since 1963, and so I think being able to go to a space is incredible.”

Volunteers of the Visual Arts Center helped to organize and manage the event. Taren Woelk is a local member of the community and heard about the event after attending classes offered at the center, Woelk said.

“I have taken a few classes at the visual arts center and I saw that they had this going on and I wanted to give back to this group because they have a lot going on,” Woelk said. “They do a lot of really cool stuff and I learn a lot there.”

After undergoing the COVID-19 shutdown and having to have an online market, the event returned in-person with over 150 artists displaying their works, according to Stefanie Fedor.

“We really have retained the best artists in the country, because they say Richmond is one of the most hospitable places,” Fedor said. “This region has a very art-buying and art-interested community that loves to engage with an audience that really knows what they are buying.”



1. The handmade dolls made by artist Sarah Djarnie-Brown wear matching accessories.  
2. Pine resin sculptures put on display at the Craft + Design 2022 show.  
3. Guests take in the bright lightbulb sculptures at the Craft + Design 2022 show.  
Photos by Ryan Dutcher.

**Stat of the week**

Stat of the week: VCU sophomore Kendall Phillips finished in No. 74 at the Atlantic 10 Championships, while sophomore Nia Warren finished No. 66, according to VCU Athletics.

# VCU RECEIVES MILLIONS IN DONATIONS *for Athletics Village*



Sports Backers Stadium is located near the eventual construction site of the VCU Athletic Village. Photo by Alessandro Latour

**ARRICK WILSON**  
Sports Editor

**V**CU received donations for the Athletics Village project which will house 41.7 acres of facilities for tennis, soccer, outdoor track and field and indoor multipurpose facilities, according to VCU Athletics.

A new tennis facility inside the VCU Athletics Village received a \$1 million donation from the West Charitable Trust, along with a \$2.5 million anonymous donation, according to VCU Athletics.

VCU men's tennis head coach Anthony Rossi said the new village will not only affect the sport, but the fan experience as well.

"A new tennis facility will give us an opportunity to compete for top recruits nationally and internationally," Rossi said. "It will also give fans an incredible tennis experience."

The money donated will be used to help develop the United States Tennis Association-style courts at the new VCU athletic village, according to VCU Athletics.

“

The project will be a game-changer for the young men and women who will be able to call it home. The ways in which this will change the student-athlete experience are, quite honestly, much deeper than most will ever know.”

**Dave Giffard, men's soccer head coach**

Christopher Kowalczyk, assistant athletic director for VCU Athletics Communications, stated the new facility will house more courts in comparison to the current village tennis courts at Thalhimer Tennis Center.

The new tennis facility within the upcoming VCU Athletics Village will replace the current Thalhimer Tennis Center, featuring 12 outdoor courts and six indoor courts, according to Kowalczyk.

The new tennis facilities will help develop a growing tennis community in Richmond. Kowalczyk stated.

"In addition to developing an underdeveloped corridor in Richmond, the tennis facility will also serve the large, vibrant tennis community in Richmond. There will be a shared use agreement with the community," Kowalczyk stated.

VCU women's tennis head coach Vivian Segnini said the new facilities will not only affect the community in Richmond, but VCU internationally.

"It will also attract tennis players from other regions in the country and internationally as well and Richmond's tennis will grow and VCU will be in the radar of even more people," Segnini said. "There are only reasons to be happy about this change."

VCU men's soccer head coach Dave Giffard said having new facilities will

change and improve the possibilities available for the program at VCU.

"The project will be a game-changer for the young men and women who will be able to call it home," Giffard said. "The ways in which this will change the student-athlete experience are, quite honestly, much deeper than most will ever know."

VCU's track and field programs currently train year-round on the outdoor concourse of the Stuart C. Siegel Center, according to Jon Riley, VCU men's and women's track and field head coach. Training outdoors means that the teams have to shovel snow off of the track in order to practice, which takes a toll on the runners' legs, Riley said.

"The athletic village's indoor track facility will be a game-changer. It will not only change how we train, but it will also allow us to attract more tier-one prospects," Riley said.

The athletic village project is expected to be done in phases and will take roughly five to seven years to complete.

## *CT Sports' pick of the week*

**BERSABEH KEMAW**  
Contributing Writer

For this week's CT Sports' pick of the week, I have the Philadelphia Eagles defeating the Houston Texans in week nine of the NFL regular season on Thursday, Nov. 3.

The Eagles have remained undefeated in the regular season with a record of 6-0, crowning them as the only undefeated team in the NFL.

Key players for the Eagles this season have been quarterback Jalen Hurts,

who has a total of 1,514 yards this season, as well as wide receiver duo A.J. Brown and DeVonta Smith, according to ESPN. The Eagles have an elite offensive line, as well as a great defensive line, who are both assisting in securing wins on the field.

The Texans hired head coach Lovie Smith this season, who believes that quarterback Davis Mills will continue to get better throughout the season, according to the NFL.

Although Mills has been making noticeable improvements throughout the season so far, it's just not enough to carry

the team to a win. The Texans also struggle with a weak defense that has allowed for opposing teams to run many yards and secure numerous touchdowns.

The Texans have a record of one win and four losses, with one tied game, placing them last in the AFC South division, according to the NFL.

Wide receiver Nico Collins, who is the season leader in receiving yards for the Texans, was an anticipated key player for the team. However, with his questionable return due to a groin injury caused by their game against the Raiders, it is not looking

too sunny for the Texans, according to ESPN.

The Texans and Eagles have only met five times, and each time, the Eagles have defeated them, according to The Football Database.

The Eagles should be able to keep their undefeated streak against the Texans with their strong offensive and defensive line, along with their key quarterback.

## PRESS BOX

# VCU men's basketball's new additions will help them go far

**THAILON WILSON**  
Staff Writer

From transfers to freshmen, VCU men's basketball added some key pieces that will help the team in the upcoming 2022-2023 basketball season.

The coaching staff worked together in order to find, evaluate and sign recruits — as a result, they were the No.1 ranked recruiting class in the Atlantic 10 Conference, according to 247 Sports.

The recruiting class consisted of four star recruits: Alphonzo "Fats" Billups, Christian Fermin, Obinnaya Okafor and Toibu "Tobi" Lawal.

Billups is a 6-foot-7-inch combo guard with playmaking, shot-making prowess and no slouch on the defensive side. He was also ranked in the top 100 in the ESPN 2022 Recruiting Class.

“

VCU has added the necessary pieces to be competitive in the A-10 again this year. The team has added a bunch of pieces that help to round out the team as a lot of other teams in the A-10 had lost key pieces to graduation.”

Thailon Wilson, Staff Writer

Billups said in an interview with college recruiting and sports website ON3 that he believes the game style of VCU fits his own.

“I picked VCU because I feel it's the best for my type of playstyle,” Billups said. “The coaches are great, the players are great, and the school is great.”

His playstyle surely matches with VCU's style of fast pace offense and suffocating defense. He will without a doubt make an impact as a shot making defender.

Fermin, who also was a top 150 national prospect, is a 6-foot-10-inch center from Pennsylvania who is known for his athleticism and sneaky shooting ability, according to the Pocono Record. Fermin will be the tallest member on the team and will be a great addition for defense and rebounding, according to VCU Athletics.

The diamond in the rough prospect however, is Lawal. Lawal is a 6-foot-8-inch forward from London who has a vertical inside the 40-inch range. He dunks every ball he touches and he is able to block shots that come his way with his leaping ability.

Lawal should be a possible dynamic duo with VCU point guard Adrian "Ace" Baldwin Jr. who is a good lob setter. Lawal will catch those lobbs and be an instant spark plug for the team and will spark hype for the fans.

VCU head coach Mike Rhoades said in an interview with The Commonwealth Times last month that Lawal's athleticism and work ethic will be important for this team.

“He's got a lot of great potential and upside — he plays really hard. He's just super athletic,” Rhoades said.

This recruiting class has a lot of potential for the future of the program, but VCU also looked to the NCAA Transfer Portal to add some key veteran experience to boost the team's success as well.

In the transfer portal, the Rams picked up University of Michigan junior guard Zeb Jackson, University of Michigan graduate forward Brandon Johns Jr. and University of Hartford senior forward David Shriver.

Jackson is a combo guard who has very high leaping ability that is similar to Lawal at a smaller 6-foot-5-inch frame. Jackson also has shotmaking ability that will be important points for the black and gold.

Shriver is a designated shooter pick-up by the Rams this offseason. VCU has great shotmakers who can also shoot very well in Baldwin and guard Jayden Nunn, but the team doesn't necessarily have a defined sharpshooter — Shriver fits right into that role.

Shriver shot 5-from-7 from the three point line in a scrimmage on Oct. 22 against Villanova University in Washington D.C., according to Bracket Forecast. Shriver accumulated 15 points just from downtown.

Johns is also coming from the University of Michigan, with a lot of veteran experience and ability to help the team. Johns showed his versatility in the black and gold game in which he scored 13 points and four rebounds.

Rhoades said Johns is a great presence and his ability to play shows on the court.

“He's been so much fun to coach since the day he got here. Positive energy, so into it, loves VCU,” Rhoades said. “You would have thought he's here for four years. Pretty cool, but when he gets on the court, he can play.”

VCU has added the necessary pieces to be competitive in the A-10 again this year. The team has added a bunch of pieces that help to round out the team as a lot of other teams in the A-10 had lost key pieces to graduation.

## GAME RESULTS

### OCTOBER 25

**WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL - VS. DAVIDSON**  
LOSS 3-1

### OCTOBER 28

**WOMEN'S SOCCER - VS. NO. 6 SAINT JOESPH'S**  
LOSS 1-0  
*Atlantic 10 Tournament*

**WOMEN'S FIELD HOCKEY - VS RICHMOND**  
WON 2-1

**WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL - AT LOYOLA CHICAGO**  
LOST 3-0

### OCTOBER 29

**MEN'S SOCCER - AT ST. BONAVENTURE**  
WON 2-0

**MEN'S BASKETBALL - VS. SHIPPENSBURG**  
WON 88-53

**WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL - AT LOYOLA CHICAGO**  
LOST 3-0

**WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY - AT ATLANTIC 10 CHAMPIONSHIPS**  
15TH OUT OF 15  
*Mechanicsville, Virginia*

**MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY - AT ATLANTIC 10 CHAMPIONSHIPS**  
14TH OUT OF 15  
*Mechanicsville, Virginia*



VCU freshman forward Christian Fermin tries to grab a rebound in a scrimmage against Shippensburg University on Oct. 29. Photo by Guy Enkh

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### Stories of the week

**NATIONAL:** Midterm elections took place on Tuesday, Nov. 8.

**INTERNATIONAL:** The United Nations Climate Change Conference began on Nov. 6 with leaders around the world will meet until Nov. 18 discussing and negotiating topics around climate change.

**District 1: Rob Wittman (R) 56.76%**



**District 7: Abigail Spanberger (D) 51.93%**



**District 2: Jen Kiggans (R) 52.04%**



**District 8: Don Beyer (D) 73.25%**



**District 3: Bobby Scott (D) 67.03%**



**District 9: Morgan Griffith (R) 73.25%**



**District 4: Donald McEachin (D) 63.86%**



**District 10: Jennifer Wexton (D) 52.86%**



**District 5: Bob Good (R) 57.86%**



**District 11: Gerry Connolly (D) 66.24%**

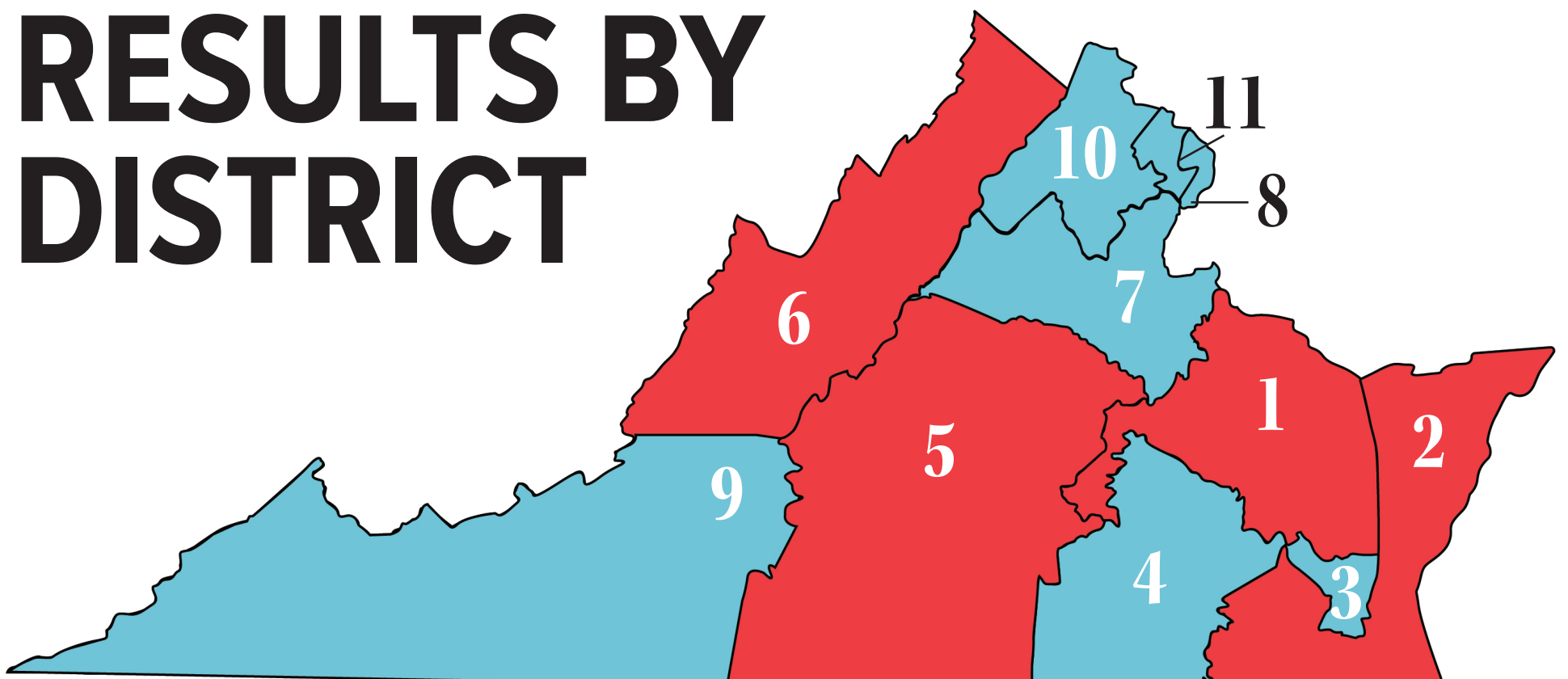


**District 6: Ben Cline (R) 65.55%**



*Results as of 1:23 a.m.*

# HOUSE RESULTS BY DISTRICT





# Multiple students vote blue on Tuesday

## WITH REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN MIND



“

I guess sometimes it doesn't feel like it really does make a difference, but I'd rather take time out of my day especially on a day like this where we don't have classes. The university gave us the day off, specifically giving us time to do this. Yeah, I think it's important just to give it a shot.”

**Chandler Girman**, senior English student

“

Our generation is the worst to vote. So I am trying to make a difference as cheesy as that sounds. Everyone is like 'it's one person' but this one person can change everything.”

**Lillian Dunns**, junior voice performance student

**KATRINA LEE**  
Contributing Writer

**C**AMPAIGN SIGNS FOR both Democrat incumbent Donald McEachin and Republican Leon Benjamin surrounded the University Student Commons Tuesday morning, as students and Richmond residents gathered to vote for the 2022 midterm elections.

VCU's campus resides in the 4th Congressional District, which has been represented by McEachin since 2017. The congressional seat was the only race on the ballot this year in the city of Richmond.

VCU alum Tahjana Shields said she has voted in every election since she turned 18. Shields said she was motivated to return to the polls once again on Tuesday to exercise her right and have her voice heard.

“I just feel like, you know, specifically Black Americans have always been under-represented,” Shields said. “So if I can offer my ability to seize the rights that were won by my ancestors, I feel like I can contribute to what they were fighting for.”

Along with many others at the commons, Shields said she was there to vote for the incumbent, with reproductive rights as the issue on the forefront of her mind.

“My biggest issue is that a lot of Republican candidates never match up with my beliefs. And it's not to say all democrats do. But right now, that's the best way to combat the right,” Shields said.

The Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade on June 24, dismantling the federal right for individual's access to abortion and giving individual states the power to limit, ban or protect abortion rights.

Senior English student Chandler Girman shared Shields' concern over the overturning of Roe v. Wade. Girman said she is personally affected by the decision, for she has an illness that can cause difficult pregnancies.

“There's a high chance that I, at some point in my life, if I do get pregnant, I will need like an abortion for my own safety. And I'm really scared about the fact that might not be able to happen. So I figured that we should get a representative in there,” Girman said.

Girman said although she felt a responsibility to vote in this election, she sometimes feels like her vote is a “drop in the bucket.”

“I guess sometimes it doesn't feel like it really does make a difference, but I'd rather take time out of my day especially on a day like this where we don't have classes,” Girman said. “The university gave us the day off, specifically giving us time to do this. Yeah, I think it's important just to give it a shot, why not try?”

Others at the polls felt more optimistic about their vote. Junior voice performance student Lillian Dunns said she was motivated to vote on Tuesday because she hopes to change the current voting trends.

“Our generation is the worst to vote. So I am trying to make a difference as cheesy as that sounds,” Dunns said. “Everyone is like 'it's one person' but this one person can change everything.”

In the 2020 presidential election, 18-24 year olds had the lowest voter turnout among voting-aged people at 48%. However, this was an 8.6 percentage point increase from 2016, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Students were able to vote at other polling locations near campus, such as the Institute for Contemporary Art at VCU and George W. Carver Elementary School, according to the student's registered address on campus, according to the City of Richmond's website.

Polling locations were open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., according to the Virginia Department of Elections website.

Richmond resident Kinsely Vamzamet said he decided to vote to maintain “basic human rights” and said he is worried about the state of our country. Vamzamet voted for McEachin, in opposition to the republican candidate, Leon Benjamin.

“My primary reason for voting is just to have a Democratic majority, so we can retain some of those rights,” Vamzamet said.

A total of 470 seats, 35 Senate seats and 435 House of Representatives seats were up for election, according to Ballotpedia.

Indispirary studies senior Emily Wood said she came early to the polls in order to “vote blue.”

“Especially at the local level, I feel like that's where the most change will be and have the most direct effects,” Wood said.

### More student voices

“

If people aren't voting they should be voting.”

**Megan O'Casey**, senior fashion design student

“

It's so important. It's kind of like there's a lot of people that complain about stuff but they don't vote and that's really your only chance to have any say whatsoever.”

**Sam Pruyn**, senior political science student

“

My motivation for coming to vote today is to keep republicans out of office.”

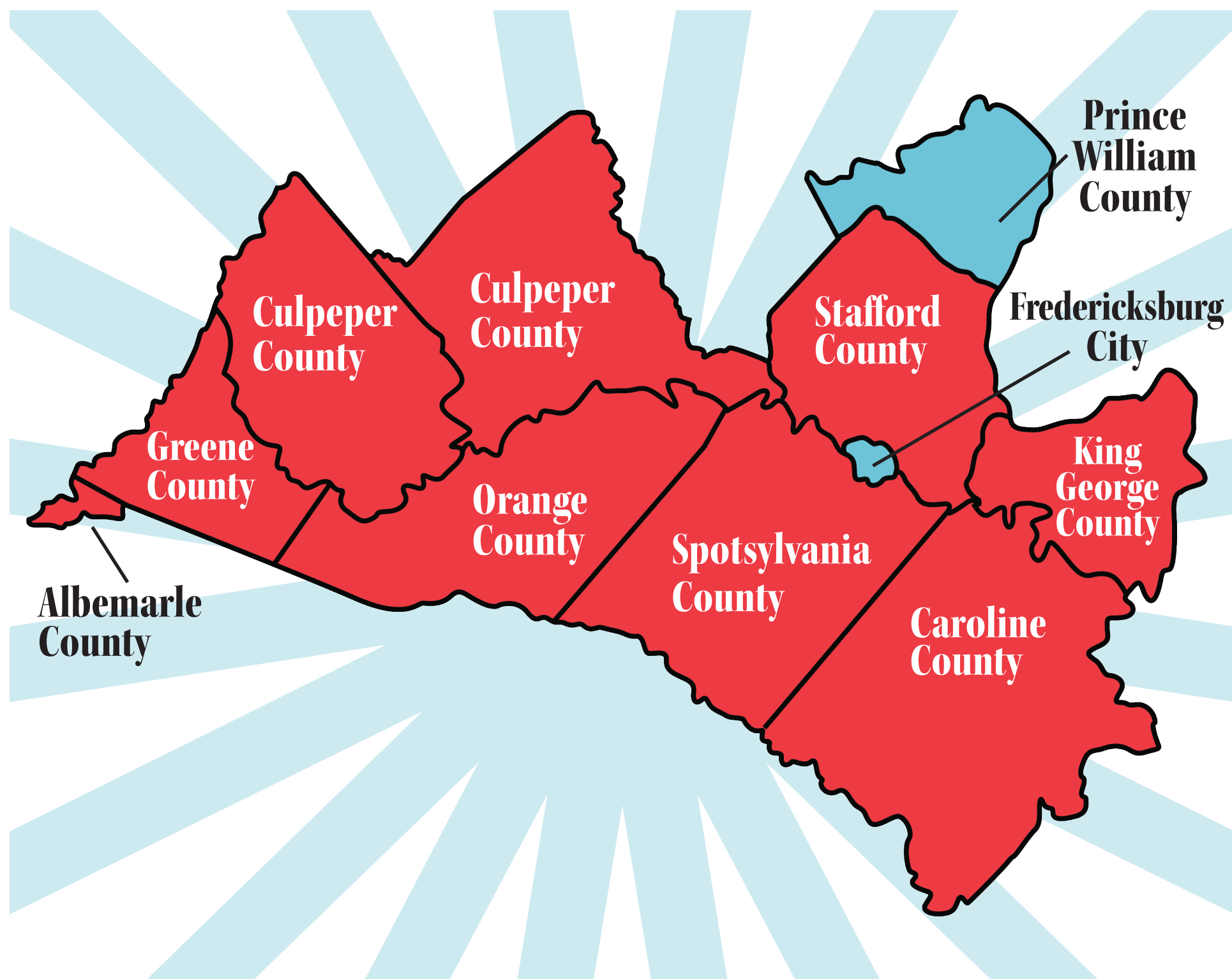
**Olivia Carlton**, junior vocal performance student

1. Emily Wood holds up an 'I Voted' sticker after voting in the University Student Commons.
2. Lillian Dunns, poses for a photo after voting on election day
3. Olivia Carlton, holds up an 'I Voted' sticker after voting in the University Student Commons.
4. Nico Lopez, poses for a photo after voting in the University Student Commons.

Photos by Jay Stonefield

# ABIGAIL SPANBERGER

## WINS 7TH DISTRICT



Infographic by Clare Wislar  
Information compiled by Diana Ho

**VARSHA VASUDEVAN**  
Staff Writer

**D**emocratic incumbent Abigail Spanberger won the House of Representatives election of the 7th Congressional District on Tuesday.

Spanberger maintained her seat with 51.93% of votes, while her Republican challenger Yesli Vega received 48.07%, according to the Virginia Public Access Project website, as of 1:47 a.m.

“I stand before you this evening with a deep and abiding love for this country and a profound sense of responsibility,” Spanberger said in her victory speech. “Thank you and I look forward to serving you all again these two years.”

Spanberger declared victory before all precinct reports and before the Associated Press called the election in her favor.

Spanberger was a former U.S. Postal Inspection Service and U.S. Central Intelligence Agency officer, who in 2018 became the first elected Democratic representative of the 7th District since 1968, according to her website.

“

I stand before you this evening with a deep and abiding love for this country and a profound sense of responsibility. Thank you and I look forward to serving you all again these two years.”

**Abigail Spanberger**  
7th District representative

Spanberger helped introduce the Student Loan Disclosure Transparency Act and legislation that allowed Head Start programs to receive federal work study aid, according to her website. The Student Loan Disclosure Transparency Act of 2021 requires federal loan lenders to disclose in-

formation monthly about interest rates and the estimated owed balance, according to Congress.

Spanberger’s platform includes advocating for strengthening national security and lowering costs for healthcare and consumer goods. She voted in favor of legislation such as the Inflation Reduction Act, which allows Medicare to negotiate drug prices, and reintroduced the Paycheck Fairness Act, which required proof of job-related reasons for pay disparities, according to her website.

As a parent with children attending public schools in Virginia and a 2001 graduate from the University of Virginia herself, Spanberger is passionate about “strengthening” the public education system, her website stated.

Spanberger raised a total of \$8.4 million for this election as of Oct. 19, according to VPAP.

Spanberger’s challenger, Vega, is the “embodiment of the American Dream” as the daughter of Salvadoran immigrants and is passionate about honoring law enforcement and “conservative principles,”

according to her website.

Vega’s platform focused on funding law enforcement, advocacy for a free-market driven economy through a “constitutionally limited government” and election reform by requiring photo IDs to be able to vote, according to her website.

Vega raised \$2.9 million for the election as of Oct. 18, according to VPAP.

Senior homeland security and emergency preparedness student Jorion Tinsley said he is registered to vote in Richmond, but does not plan on voting because he distrusts most politicians.

“I kind of feel like they’re all dishonest and kind of self-serving,” Tinsley said. “That’s why they’re running for office. Just to advance their own name.”

Tinsley said he does not feel as though he has enough power as a citizen to make a change in the government system through voting.

“Sometimes I feel like it’s just one vote; it gets lost in the shuffle,” Tinsley said. “I’ve never thought that my vote really made a difference.”