

Richmond Times-Dispatch

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ELECTION 2022

Voter engagement rules day

Virginians' turnout appears consistently strong in midterms

BY SEAN MCGOEY
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Control of both houses of Congress hung in the balance Tuesday, with key elections in several swing states including hotly contested races in Virginia's 2nd, 7th and 10th congressional districts.

But despite a relative lack of political intrigue in the Richmond area due to redrawn districts, voters turned out in strong numbers for an off-year election.

3.4M

Total votes cast in Virginia in the 2018 midterms, and participation in 2022 could top that.



GET THE LATEST:

Find stories, photos and video from our coverage of Election Day 2022 in the Richmond region. Point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link.

As of 8:30 p.m., more than 1.5 million of Virginia's roughly 6 million registered voters had cast ballots in person on Election Day — nearly halfway to the 3.4 million total votes cast in the previous midterm election in 2018 — with just under 60% of precincts reporting Election Day totals.

An additional 943,000 voters participated in early voting, according to the Virginia Department of Elections — nearly three times as many as in 2018, **TURNOUT, Page A8**



Aidan Lau-Struck, 6, helped his mom, Stephanie Lau, feed her ballot into a machine at the Brighton Green Community Association voting precinct in North Chesterfield on Tuesday. Poll workers at multiple precincts in the area cited large crowds early in the day. EVA RUSSO/TIMES-DISPATCH

Spanberger declares victory in 7th District

BY MICHAEL MARTZ AND ERIC KOLENICH
Richmond Times-Dispatch

FREDERICKSBURG — Rep. Jennifer Wexton, D-10th, won re-election on Tuesday night and Rep. Abigail Spanberger, D-7th, clung to a narrow lead, in two Northern Virginia battleground districts that Republicans had hoped to flip in the midterm elections.

Spanberger declared victory at her election night celebration in Fredericksburg.

"Tonight, as we celebrate, I ask that you reflect on how we can serve our communities, how we can bridge divides, how we can show through our actions a commitment to each other, the truth and the future that we want to create for our country, for our commonwealth, for our communities and most importantly, for our children."

Spanberger pulled ahead late in a close race with Prince William County Supervisor Yesli Vega, the Republican challenger. Vega raced to a big early lead in Republican-friendly rural counties in the new 7th. But with 98% of precincts reporting, **7TH, Page A8**



Former Del. Hala Ayala (center) celebrated the reelection of Rep. Abigail Spanberger on Tuesday with Pamela Yeung (left), a Stafford County supervisor, and Natalie Short. SHABAN ATHUMAN/TIMES-DISPATCH



Kiggans leads in 2nd Congressional District

BY DAVE RESS
Richmond Times-Dispatch

2nd District. Republican Jen Kiggans won 128,301, or 54.8% of votes cast, to 105,147, or 44.9%, with more than 94% of precincts reporting as of 10:24 p.m. Tuesday, according to unofficial state Department of Elections tallies. But there were still **2ND, Page A9**

Rep. Elaine Luria was trailing significantly in her bid for reelection in what was slated to be one of the tightest races for Congress and toughest tests for Democrats like her — the Hampton Roads' suburban



Kiggans

More coverage inside

- ◆ Voters pass bond referendums in Henrico and Chesterfield. **Page A5**
- ◆ Democrat McEachin easily wins reelection in the 4th District. **Page A7**
- ◆ Republican Good gains a second term in the 5th District. **Page A7**
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- ◆ Some voters find issues at polling places. **Page A9**
- ◆ Biden's next two years will be different. **Page A14**

Dems best Trump-backed candidates in blue states

BY SARA BURNETT, JILL COLVIN AND WILL WEISSERT
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats easily repelled Republicans backed by former President Donald Trump in several left-leaning states Tuesday, while tougher tests that could decide control

of Congress and the future of Joe Biden's presidency awaited in more competitive territory.

Despite their liberal history, states like Massachusetts, Maryland and Illinois have elected moderate Republican governors in the past. But the Republicans **CONGRESS, Page A9**



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U.S. pressing reluctant Russia on wartime grain deal in Ukraine

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ELECTION 2022



DANIEL SANGJIB MIN/TIMES-DISPATCH

Vincent Webb filled out his ballot at Sandston Baptist Church on Tuesday. Henrico County voters overwhelmingly approved all measures on a \$511.4 million bond referendum.

\$511M bond referendum passes in Henrico, centers on schools

BY ANNA BRYSON
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Henrico County voters overwhelmingly approved all measures on a \$511.4 million bond referendum.

The referendum contained four yes or no questions in the areas of schools; recreation and parks; fire station and public safety; and flood prevention and stormwater drainage.

County officials held nearly 160 community meetings ahead of the election to inform Henrico residents about what it means to issue general obligation bonds and how voters' approval of the measures will affect county projects.

"We appreciate everyone who voted in the bond referendum and are grateful for our residents' confidence in Henrico to deliver promised large projects touching every corner of the county," said Henrico Deputy County Manager for Administration Brandon Hinton. "As always, Henrico will be good stewards of these newly au-

thorized resources and will closely monitor interest rates and financial markets to ensure utmost responsibility to our taxpayers before issuing any bonds."

The largest category in the referendum is \$340.5 million for Henrico County Public Schools projects, which amounts to about two-thirds of the bond referendum.

"Investing in our schools is investing in the future of our community, and we are grateful the citizens of Henrico County and our elected leaders value our successful public schools," said Henrico School Board Chair Marcie Shea. "The projects in the referendum create learning spaces that support innovation and collaboration by funding new schools and renovations of buildings that, in some cases, are more than 50 years old."

The most expensive schools project is the rebuild of Quioccasin Middle School, which is estimated to cost about \$89 million. The 1971 building has an

odd layout that creates challenges for people who use wheelchairs.

Other schools that county officials plan to rebuild by issuing general obligation bonds are Jackson Davis Elementary (\$36 million); R.C. Longan Elementary (\$37 million); and Highland Springs Elementary (\$45 million).

As of 8:30 p.m., all of the measures had passed with more than 80% approval.

The six projects in the fire and safety category amount to \$83.85 million and include the rebuilding of three firehouses.

The stormwater drainage projects category is priced at \$50 million and will address the more than 7,000 homes in the county with drainage problems. The smallest category, parks and recreation, is slated for \$37 million and will pay for a new park in the Three Chopt area and improvements to Deep Bottom Park in Varina and Tuckahoe Creek Park.

abryson@timesdispatch.com
(804) 649-6945
Twitter: @AnnaBryson18

Chesterfield voters broadly approve \$540M bond project

BY LUCA POWELL
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Chesterfield County is moving forward with a plan to sell half a billion dollars in bonds to build schools, fire stations, libraries and parks across the county.

At 9 p.m. on Tuesday evening, the referendum had the approval of more than 76% of voters in the county. Over 63,000 voted "yes" on the referendum, with just over 20,000 voting "no."

The result is welcome news for county officials, who had pinned the financing of multiple multimillion-dollar projects to the referendum. One of the most visible projects will be a new high school in the developing western side of the county.

Other projects include new fire stations, which Chesterfield officials say barely fit modern-day firetrucks, and several library expansions across town.

The county estimates \$375 million of the bond financing will go toward schools, with \$135 earmarked for the new Western 360 Area High School.

"We've been having the community conversation for the better part of five years," said Matt Harris, deputy county administrator of finance and administration with Chesterfield County. "This encapsulates the entire needs of the community."

Chesterfield ramped up a media campaign to publicize the bond project this summer, sponsoring several town halls, podcasts and Facebook live events to discuss the need for the bonds.

The central challenge, officials said, was Chesterfield's rapid growth, which had begun to strain county resources.

Since 2010, 50,000 new residents have moved into the county, according to U.S. census statistics. And in the past five years, the county's public school system also tacked on another 2,000 school-age children.

County public safety officials have also felt the strain. The spike in residents has translated into a spike in calls. Chesterfield County Fire and EMS data shows they received 6,000 more calls in 2021 compared with 2017 — a steady, gradual uptick that has kept pace with the county's growth.

That strain has led to what Harris called "response gaps," which the investments from yesterday's referen-

dum will close, he hopes.

Bond referendums allow counties to raise money for capital projects. The county sells a bond, usually to a financial institution, as a means to raise money. This new bond sale will be the 11th time the county has used a referendum to finance capital projects.

Chesterfield officials sold the referendum to residents as a responsible financial maneuver to upkeep and invest in the county, and said the measure would not cost residents a dime.

"No meals tax associated with these. No new tax of any other variety," Harris said. "No other new taxes. We can manage this with the resources that exist today. County, schools, public safety, you name it, we still have the ability to do that."

Communicating that point to some Chesterfield residents hasn't been easy. The \$540 million price tag came in at \$200 million more than the most recent bond referendum in 2013. Some Chesterfield residents were left uneasy by that referendum, which went over budget by nearly \$100 million.

Resident Wayne Carbinier, who voted "no" on the referendum, said the county should have used money it has on hand, rather than take on new debt.

"If you look at their budget, they have had a surplus that they could apply to this annually," Carbinier said.

Carbinier said he would have preferred that the county design the referendum to have modular votes. He said he would have voted "yes" on the school upgrades but "no" on the library expansions.

Mike Uzel, a local realtor, also objected to the referendum. Uzel thinks the Chesterfield Board of Supervisors should be asking more from the developers who are building new residential units, which are in turn facilitating the county's rapid population growth.

"Literally thousands of homes, apartments and townhomes are approved without the infrastructure to go with those," Uzel said. "So, every eight years or so, the county comes around and says we don't have the schools to cover the needs of our county. My question is: Is it because the developers are not paying their fair share?"

lpowell@timesdispatch.com
(804) 649-6103
Twitter: @luca_a_powell

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ELECTION 2022

Good tops Throneburg to win second term in 5th

BY CHARLOTTE RENE WOODS
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Republican incumbent Rep. Bob Good staved off Democratic challenger Josh Throneburg on Tuesday to win a second term representing Virginia's 5th District in Congress.



Good



Throneburg

With all precincts reporting, Good had about 61.4% of the vote to about 38.4% for Throneburg. Good campaigned as a fiscal conservative and vowed to continue his efforts to cut federal spending. He is also proud to be considered one of the least bipartisan members of Congress.

"I'm not in Congress to work with the Democrats, I'm there to defeat the Democrats!" he said enthusiastically to a crowd when he was chosen as the

Republican nominee in a convention this past May.

In a statement on election night, Good called representing the district one of the "greatest privileges" of his life and said he is grateful for continued support of his voters.

"I am committed to continuing to fight for you in Washington and I pledge to work relentlessly to secure the border, balance the budget, put parents and children first in education, restore our constitutional freedoms and hold the Biden administration accountable," Good said.

Referring to voters he met during the campaign, Throneburg said: "I will not forget the many residents of the Fifth District I met during this race: the good, hardworking people who simply want a better, fairer, more just world for their families and their communities."

"I will pray for Bob Good, and pray that he can rise to the challenge of being a representative who helps those people build the world they seek."

Good's win secured the



High schooler Michael Toast, working as an election page at the Mechanicsville Branch Library in Hanover County on Tuesday, handed a voting sticker to a young observer.

DANIEL SANGJIB MIN/TIMES-DISPATCH

somewhat reliably Republican seat in Congress in an election year where Republicans across the nation worked to flip seats and gain a majority in the House of Representatives. The 5th District

stretches from Charlottesville and Albemarle County south to Halifax on the North Carolina border and contains all or part of 24 cities and counties.

Following redistricting, in which the state Su-

preme Court redrew the boundaries of Virginia's congressional districts, the 5th District has inched closer to Richmond. It now includes about 13,400 voters in western Hanover County as well as all

of Louisa, Powhatan and Goochland counties.

The district's areas with the highest concentration of votes are Albemarle, Pittsylvania and Campbell counties, along with the city of Lynchburg.

Good, a former Campbell County supervisor, worked as an associate athletic director for development at Liberty University. Throneburg is an ordained minister who was lead pastor at a church in Massachusetts before moving to Charlottesville in 2019.

A first-time candidate, Throneburg had hoped to become the first Democrat elected in the district since 2008. Though a Democrat, Throneburg said he grew up in a rural and Republican area of Illinois where he considered himself a Republican for some of his adult life. With sharp partisanship on national issues, he hoped his bipartisan approach to legislating and experience as a minister would help him connect with voters.

cwoods@timesdispatch.com
(804) 649-6254
Twitter: @charlottewoods

Wittman glides to reelection in 1st District, winning nearly 60% of vote

BY ANDREW CAIN
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Rep. Rob Wittman, R-1st, on Tuesday glided to re-election in a newly drawn district that now includes the western portions of Chesterfield and Henrico counties.

With 96% of precincts reporting, Wittman had 59.6% of the vote to 39.3%



Wittman

for Democrat Herb Jones. David Foster, a conservative independent, trailed far behind.



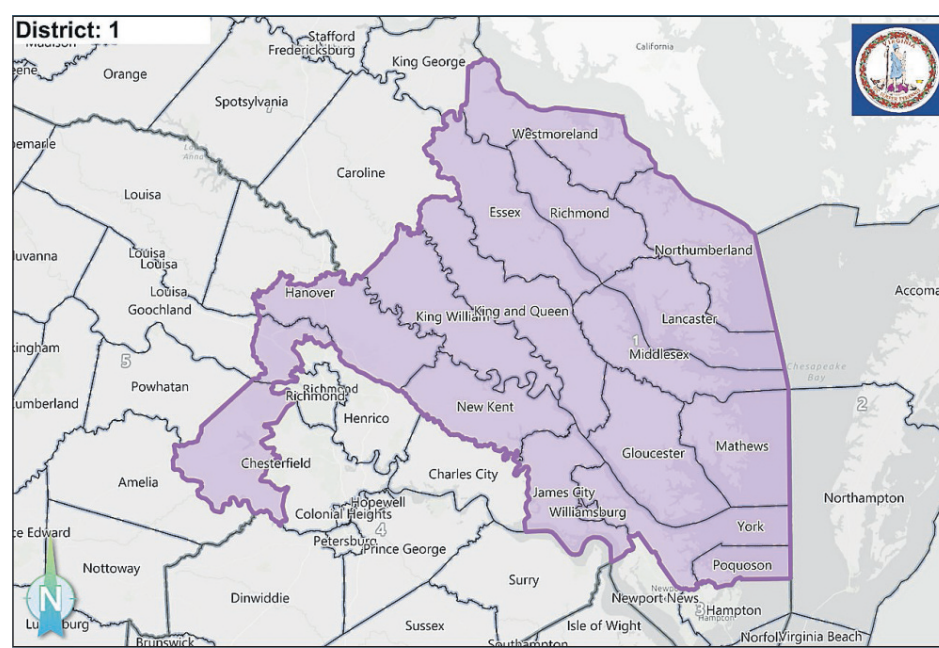
Jones

If Republicans win control of the House, Wittman hopes to move up in the leadership of the House

Armed Services Committee, an influential post for military and defense spending in Virginia.

Wittman, a 15-year incumbent, is the senior Republican in Virginia's congressional delegation.

The state Supreme Court redrew Virginia's congressional districts in December, shifting the 7th District to Northern Virginia. Western Chesterfield and western Henrico, the base of the old 7th, now anchor the redrawn



The 1st Congressional District, represented by Republican Rob Wittman, now includes western Henrico and western Chesterfield counties as well as part of Hanover County. Those three counties form the new district's largest voter blocs.

1st district, accounting for 43% of its voters. The district also includes eastern Hanover County and all of New Kent County.

The sprawling district now includes all or part of 18 cities and counties. It extends from Westmoreland County on the Northern Neck, south to York County and Poquoson, and west to the Richmond suburbs.

Wittman, who grew up in Henrico County, served in the House of Delegates for two years before he was first elected to Congress. He previously spent about 20 years in local

government on the Montross Town Council and the Westmoreland County Board of Supervisors.

Wittman worked in state government for two decades as an environmental health specialist and as a field director for the state health department's Division of Shellfish Sanitation.

Jones, who grew up in Roanoke, retired as a colonel after 30 years in the U.S. Army, including 10 years on active duty. He received a Bronze Star for his service in Iraq.

Following his retirement, Jones spent 12 years

as New Kent County's elected treasurer. His career in the financial services industry included a stint as director of investor relations at Colonial Downs, Inc. He now runs Pyramid Technology, a firm he started with his brother to provide IT support, project management and logistics consulting.

Foster, a Navy veteran who has worked in the construction industry, ran as a conservative independent, with an "America first platform."

acain@timesdispatch.com
(804) 649-6645
Twitter: @AndrewCainRTD

Special election for Midlothian supervisor seat too close to call

BY SEAN MCGOEY
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Republican Jennifer McNinch held a razor-thin lead over Democrat Mark Miller in a special election Tuesday to represent the Midlothian magisterial district on the Chesterfield Board of Supervisors until the end of 2023.

As of 8:30 p.m., the latest totals from the Chesterfield registrar's office had McNinch up by just 33 votes, though their count does not reflect the Virginia Public Access Project's estimate of more than 10,000 early ballots that have yet to be counted.

A Miller win would double the number of Democrats on the board, while McNinch prevailing would leave Dale District Supervisor Jim Holland as the lone Democrat.

McNinch and Miller ran to fill the seat vacated by former Supervisor Leslie Haley, who resigned in June to join Attorney General Jason Miyares's office as deputy attorney general for government operations and transactions.

Tara Carroll, former chair of the Chesterfield County Republican Committee, served as the interim Midlothian supervisor after being unanimously approved at the board's June 29 meeting. Carroll sought the Republican nomination as well, but voters chose

McNinch at a party canvass event at Midlothian Middle School in August. Miller was unopposed on the Democratic side.

Both candidates raised between \$25,000 and \$30,000 according to data from the Virginia Public Access Project, with a slight edge to McNinch.

McNinch, a division director for a government contractor who was born at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina and grew up in Memphis, Tenn., and Leesburg, centered her platform on several hot-button conservative issues, including opposition to "the implementation of Critical Race Theory and other radical curriculum in our schools" and "radical policies demonizing and defunding our police."

Miller, a counselor who worked for Chesterfield's mental health department for 13 years before taking his current position at Brightpoint Community College, campaigned on the need to focus on Midlothian's existing infrastructure — fixing aging schools, solving traffic congestion on county roads and supporting first responders — before forging ahead with proposed condominium and townhome developments in the western part of the district.

smcgoey@timesdispatch.com
(804) 649-6012
Twitter: @SeanMcGoey

Democrat McEachin wins rematch with Benjamin

BY ANDREW CAIN
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Rep. Don McEachin, D-4th, appeared to be cruising to reelection on Tuesday in a rematch of his 2020 contest with Republican Leon Benjamin.

With 87% of precincts reporting, McEachin had 62.04% of the vote to 37.75% for Benjamin. McEachin had defeated Benjamin by nearly 91,000 votes two years ago.

"I want to thank the voters of Virginia's Fourth Congressional District for their confidence in me," McEachin said. "It is an honor and privilege to serve my constituents, and I promise to remain dedicated and vigilant in fighting for our priorities and values."



McEachin



Benjamin

The 4th District includes all or part of 15 cities and counties, stretching from Richmond to Brunswick, Greenville and Southampton counties. It gets about three-fourths of its votes from Richmond and from eastern Henrico and eastern Chesterfield counties.

McEachin, who has held the seat since 2017, had declined to appear publicly with Benjamin because his opponent would not acknowledge McEachin's victory in the 2020 contest and that of

President Joe Biden.

"As I am sure you know and understand, for our democracy to survive and thrive, we must trust facts and elections," McEachin told his challenger in a letter in mid-August. "I simply cannot and will not engage with someone who won't accept the premise of our democracy — leaders chosen by elections — and, moreover, pretends absurd assertions are facts."

Benjamin said he has questions about the 2020 election and has asserted the contest was stolen from Trump.

In late July, Benjamin issued a news release calling election integrity "the single most important issue facing America today."

As the election neared, Benjamin tempered his

message to focus on other issues, such as inflation, which Republicans hope will lead them to a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives.

A lawyer and an ordained minister, McEachin previously served two stints in the Virginia House of Delegates, sandwiched around a 2001 loss for attorney general. He then represented Richmond in the state Senate for nine years before he was first elected to Congress.

Benjamin, a U.S. Navy veteran, is senior pastor of New Life Harvest Church in South Richmond. In 2017, he finished second for the 9th District seat on Richmond City Council.

Benjamin also is founder of Coalition of Leaders United, a group he says is dedicated to advancing conservative values and restoring moral clarity in America.

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Twitter: @AndrewCainRTD

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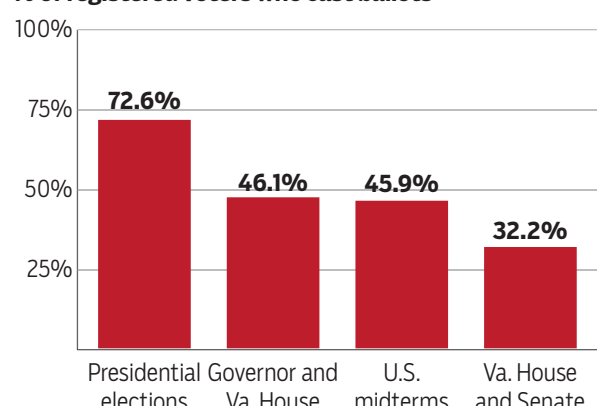
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ELECTION 2022

Virginia turnout by election type since 2000

Less than half of registered Virginia voters typically head to the polls, except in presidential election years.

% of registered voters who cast ballots



Source: Virginia Department of Elections SEAN MCGOEY/TIMES-DISPATCH

Turnout

From Page A1

before the General Assembly authorized a 45-day window for early voting.

That puts 2022 on track to potentially see more votes cast than 2021's gubernatorial election.

Many voters cited economic issues as the reason they went to the polls Tuesday.

Bond referendums in Chesterfield County and Henrico were of significant interest, as both counties sought to issue more than \$500 million in debt to finance projects ranging from a rebuild of Quioccasin Middle School in Henrico to Chesterfield taking ownership of police precinct buildings that the county currently rents.

Henrico voters could vote yes or no on projects totaling \$511.4 million in four separate categories — schools, parks and recreation, fire and public safety, and flood prevention and stormwater drainage — while Chesterfield voters could either approve or deny the county's entire \$540 million plan.

Diann Liptak, a Democratic voter and Election Day volunteer in Chesterfield, said she held her nose and voted yes even though more money would go to the police department, which she said has a bad reputation.

John Thorpe, a self-identified independent Chesterfield voter who works in the construction industry, said he voted against the bond package.

"They don't need the money," said Thorpe, who



Voters cast their ballots at Short Pump Elementary School in Henrico County on Tuesday.

DANIEL SANGJIB MIN/TIMES-DISPATCH

voted for incumbent Rep. Don McEachin, D-4th, after losing trust in the Republican Party due to what he felt was a failure to "talk about the issues" and an embrace of racism by the party.

"They have my property taxes for that."

Other voters were more focused on national issues.

Henrico voter Mike Young called himself a "lifelong Republican voter who voted for [President] Joe Biden to get things back to normalcy, and I have not liked what I have

seen since he was elected."

While the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade caused Young, 30, to question his allegiances to the Republican Party, he disapproved of Biden's plan to relieve as much as \$20,000 in federal student loan debt to borrowers making less than \$125,000 a year.

"While I'm not opposed to forgiveness by any means, I thought the unconstitutional way that one man decided to write off billions of dollars worth of debt is not an administration that I want to

support," Young said.

Whitman Thornton, 74, said he voted Democrats down his ballot in Chesterfield because he worries that his Social Security benefits will be jeopardized if Republicans control Congress.

"I don't want to lose it. That'll hurt me bad," Thornton said. "Democracy is more important than worrying about gas prices."

Del. Schuyler Van Valkenburg, D-Henrico, who was not on the ballot Tuesday, went to polling places across the county

to thank poll workers for their hard work throughout the day. He said that from what he saw, turnout appeared consistently strong.

"People, whichever party they're in, have been engaged for the last five [or] six years," Van Valkenburg said, "and I think what we're seeing today is that that continues to be the case."

smcgoey@timesdispatch.com (804) 649-6012 Twitter: @SeanMcGoey

Staff writers Andrew Cain, Lyndon German, Sean Jones and Luca Powell contributed to this report.

7th

From Page A1

Spanberger had 50.9% of the vote to 48.9% for Vega, thanks to a late surge for the Democrat in Prince William, which holds the district's largest pot of votes.

Wexton defeated Republican newcomer Hung Cao in a district dominated by Loudoun County, where both candidates live. With 93% of precincts reporting, Wexton had 52.5% of the vote to 47.3% for Cao.

The showdown between Spanberger and Vega has been one of the most closely watched elections in the country, with Republicans poised to win a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Cook Political Report most recently rated Virginia's 7th District as a tossup, with the outcome likely to signal the extent of Republican gains in a chamber now narrowly controlled by Democrats.

Wexton's race against Cao in the 10th District also was considered a bellwether. The district leans more Democratic than the 7th, but a Wexton loss there would have signaled a Republican electoral wave that would give the GOP a large majority in the House.

The political stakes also are high for Gov. Glenn Youngkin, a Republican who has become heavily involved in the battleground congressional races in the last month of the campaign, especially in the 7th. Youngkin, who has been barnstorming for Republican gubernatorial candidates around the country — and raising his own national political profile in the process — appeared with Vega at more than a half-dozen get-out-the-vote rallies across the district.

The races were shaped from the beginning by a new congressional map that the Virginia Supreme Court approved on Dec. 28 after a new independent redistricting panel failed to produce a map of its own to reflect population changes in U.S. census results, which were late because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Spanberger, 43, had



SHABAN ATHUMAN/TIMES-DISPATCH

Scarlett Lara Sanchez (left), 8, watched results on Tuesday with Fanny Yanes (center) and Esmaralda Sanchez during a party for Rep. Abigail Spanberger at the Inn at the Old Silk Mill in Fredericksburg.

twice won election in a Republican-leaning district anchored in the Richmond suburbs of western Henrico County, where she lives, and western Chesterfield County. The center of the new 7th District moved north on Interstate 95 to the Fredericksburg area and eastern Prince William.

In a new district that covers all or part of 11 localities, Prince William, Stafford and Spotsylvania counties collectively account for 72% of the votes.

They also have significant concentrations of federal employees and contractors, who Sen. Jeremy McPike, D-Prince William, predicted would support Spanberger because of her record of bipartisanship and Vega's statement that she would vote for a government shutdown to block spending by Biden.

"Those are real jobs in this district," McPike said during an election watch party for Spanberger at the Old Silk Mill in Fredericksburg.

Spanberger won both of her first two elections by less than 2 percentage points. She defeated Rep. Dave Brat, R-7th, by about 6,800 votes in a three-way race in 2018. Two years later, she edged Del. Nick Freitas, R-Culpeper, by about 8,300 votes in a race he conceded nine days after the election.

Spanberger has said that if she were to win

re-election, she would not move her family, including three school-age daughters, before ending her current term in early January.

"We're going to miss her from our area," said Zulfi Khan, a retired Henrico businessman and member of the Richmond-Area Muslim community. "We're going to miss her bad."

"She will be good for this area," Khan said of the new district. "She is an extraordinary congressperson."

Vega, 37, is serving her first term on the Prince William Board of County Supervisors, the first Hispanic elected to the board. She lives near Manassas Park, just outside of the 7th in the new 10th Congressional District. She defeated five challengers in a Republican primary in June.

Riaz Alkozai, 23, of Woodbridge, was among scores of Vega supporters who gathered for an election watch party at The Electric Palm restaurant on the bank of the Occoquan River in Woodbridge on Tuesday night.

He said he appreciates Vega's support for families — the idea that marriage should be between a man and a woman and that teachers shouldn't encourage students to choose their gender.

Values are also significant for Jo Lawson, 79 of

Stafford. To her, values includes what's taught in school, including what she called critical race theory, a term many use to describe how race is taught in schools, an issue that helped propel Youngkin into office last year.

Matthew Meyer, a 17-year-old senior at Stafford High School, said he appreciates the fact that Vega has high standards for teachers. Meyer said that while there are plenty of good teachers, for some, students are "a box to check and a check to cash."

Both candidates have law enforcement backgrounds. Spanberger served as a case officer in the CIA and as an officer of the U.S. Postal Service who investigated money laundering and narcotics trafficking. Vega worked as a police officer in Alexandria and Manassas Park, and as a sheriff's deputy in Prince William, where she remains an auxiliary deputy.

The new 7th leans Democratic, but voted for Youngkin last year by almost 5 percentage points in the contest for governor.

10th District

The 10th is more heavily Democratic and gave former Gov. Terry McAuliffe a margin of almost 2 percentage points in the governor's race last year.

Wexton, a former state

senator and prosecutor, held off a strong challenge by Cao, a retired U.S. Navy officer and special forces veteran whose family fled Vietnam at the end of the Vietnam War. A first-time candidate, Cao won the

GOP nomination in a firehouse primary in May that featured 11 candidates.

As a two-term incumbent, Wexton raised more than \$3.6 million, but Cao raised \$2.8 million.

Outside spending by national party organizations was much heavier in the 7th, with more than \$24 million in independent expenditures on behalf of the two candidates, most of it for attack ads against their opponents, according to the Virginia Public Access Project. In comparison, outside groups spent only \$212,000 in the 10th.

Hispanic voters have been central to the campaign in the 7th, where they comprise 17.4% of the electorate, according to VPAP. Vega is the Texas-born daughter of immigrants who fled El Salvador in the early 1980s under an amnesty program established by then-President Ronald Reagan.

Spanberger, who speaks Spanish, also has courted Hispanic voters, but her campaign also has counted on support from

Black voters and multi-racial residents, who together represent almost one-third of voters in the new district, according to VPAP.

Economic issues

In the 7th and 10th, Republicans ran campaigns based on national issues, aimed at taking advantage of President Joe Biden's unpopularity. Vega and Cao focused on inflation and the economy, crime, illegal immigration and parental control of their children's education, an issue that Youngkin has tried to elevate since Labor Day.

Vega also received help from House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., who is likely to become House Speaker if the GOP takes the majority. She said during the Republican primary that she would not support him because he reportedly had said President Donald Trump should resign after a mob assault on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, to block certification of Biden's election.

Trump endorsed Vega late in the campaign, which Spanberger used to try to tie her opponent to the insurrection at the Capitol.

Spanberger has attacked Vega for allegedly supporting a national ban on abortion and for a recording in which the former police officer questioned whether rape victims could be impregnated by their attackers.

The congresswoman has defended her own record in Congress, touting her ranking as 5th most bipartisan member of Congress by the Lugar Center and Georgetown University's McGeorgetown School of Public Policy.

She also received the endorsement of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which cited her prominent role in passage of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act last year and the CHIPS + Science Act this year.

Spanberger supported both the American Rescue Plan Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, and Republicans have tried to use those votes to tie her to Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

mmartz@timesdispatch.com (804) 649-6964

ekolenich@timesdispatch.com (804) 614-6525 Twitter: @ErickKolenich

ELECTION 2022

Issue crops up for Chesterfield, Richmond precincts

BY DAVE RESS
AND LUCA POWELL

Richmond Times-Dispatch

State election officials on Tuesday reported issues with voter information at polling locations in Richmond, Suffolk and Chesterfield and Nottoway counties.

State Elections Commissioner Susan Beals said the problems were with the electronic "poll books" that list voter information on a laptop. Before casting a ballot, voters check in with an election official who consults the information for confirmation.

Beals said election officials in those areas switched to paper poll books. No voters were turned away, she said.

It was not immediately known how many people were impacted or the nature of the discrepancy. Voters who had issues could cast a provisional ballot, and the vote will count, she said.

"It might just be moving a little slower than normal," she said.

In Richmond, Nancy Nystrom Stansbery got the unsettling news that she wasn't in the poll book at precinct 104 when she came to vote, with her most recently mailed voter card and ID with her new address.

She had moved from another neighborhood in the city and updated her registration ahead of the deadline in order to vote



EVA RUSSO/TIMES-DISPATCH

Poll worker Deborah Froelich provided "I voted" stickers to Bill Howard and his daughter Annabel on Tuesday at the Brighton Green Community Association voting precinct in northern Chesterfield County.

in this year's election.

"When I showed my card to the poll workers, they said I wasn't in the poll book," she said. "They said I should vote at my old precinct." She said she worried she wouldn't be listed in that poll book either, so one poll worker called the registrar's City Hall office.

"She said I wasn't in the system," Stansbery said. "I don't understand how I could be in the system long enough to get a new

card in the mail and then not be there."

She did get to vote, but only after re-registering and casting a provisional ballot. "While I was there, two other women came up with the same issue," she said. "They'd moved recently too."

She said the election officers did not tell her anything about following up to see if her vote was counted. The state Department of Elections says voters who cast pro-

visional ballots are supposed to be given a notice with the date, time and place where the local electoral board will decide whether or not to count the ballot. Voters are entitled, but not required, to attend this meeting in order for their ballot to be counted. If your registration application is approved and there are no other issues, your ballot will be counted. The registrar is supposed to give people a written no-

tice if their ballots are not counted.

"We have heard several instances of this," said Keith Balmer.

"Those voters should have been checked into the paper poll book that was sent to that precinct. Any voter who casts a provisional ballot for this reason will have their ballot counted by the electoral board," he said.

He said voters who cast provisional ballots because they did not show

election officers an ID, as state law requires, will need to show up at the electoral board with that ID for their votes to be counted. Voters who cast provisional ballots for any other reason do not need to show up, he said. As for the cause of the issue, Balmer said the state Department of Elections is aware of the problem and is researching it.

In Chesterfield County, there also was confusion over six new polling places added since the 2020 election.

Some voters came to the precinct at North Courthouse Road Library, only to find that their polling site was several miles away. In the span of a half hour, at least four voters made that mistake.

Others, such as a polling site at Reams Road Elementary School, had been closed in prior years due to construction.

Chesterfield Registrar Missy Vera said every voter in the county received information by mail about their new polling sites.

"That's been on news bulletins, it's been out there in the media, social media," said Vera. "We've been trying to get it out there that people need to find out where their precinct is before they show up to vote."

dress@timesdispatch.com
(804) 649-6948
Twitter: @daveress1

lpowell@timesdispatch.com
(804) 649-6103
Twitter: @luca_a_powell

Congress

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this year appeared to be too conservative in these states, handing Democrats easy victories in midterm elections that could otherwise prove difficult for the party.

Massachusetts and Maryland also saw historic firsts: Democrat Maura Healey became the first woman elected as Massachusetts governor, as well as the first openly lesbian governor of any state, and Wes Moore became the first Black governor of Maryland.

In Florida, a one-time battleground that has become increasingly Republican, Gov. Ron DeSantis won a second term, defeating Democratic challenger Charlie Crist, a former congressman. DeSantis won Miami-Dade County, once a Democratic stronghold, in a victory that continues his rise as a national Republican star as he eyes a possible 2024 White House run. Florida Sen. Marco Rubio also won reelection, fending off a challenge from Democrat Val Demings, illustrating the state's rightward shift.

The outcome of races for House and Senate will determine the future of Biden's agenda and serve as a referendum on his administration as the nation reels from record-high inflation and concerns over the direction of the country. Republican control of the House would likely trigger a round of investigations into Biden and his family, while a GOP Senate takeover would hobble Biden's ability to make judicial appointments.

Democrats were facing historic headwinds. The party in power almost always suffers losses in the president's first midterm elections, but Democrats had been hoping that anger from the Supreme Court's decision to gut abortion rights might energize their voters to buck historical trends.

Even Biden, who planned to watch the evening's election returns at the White House, said late Monday night that he thought his party would keep the Senate but "the



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Democrat Wes Moore, with his wife Dawn and their children, celebrated in Baltimore after Moore was declared the winner of the Maryland gubernatorial race.

House is tougher." Asked how that would make governing, his assessment was stark: "More difficult."

In Georgia, Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock and Republican challenger Herschel Walker were vying for a seat that could determine control of the Senate. In Virginia, Democratic Reps. Abigail Spanberger and Elaine Luria were fending off spirited Republican opponents in what could serve as early signals of where the House majority is heading.

Republicans are betting that messaging focused on the economy, gas prices and crime will resonate with voters at a time of soaring inflation and rising violence.

AP VoteCast, a broad survey of the national electorate, showed that high inflation and concerns about the fragility of democracy were heavily influencing voters.

Half of voters said inflation factored significantly, with groceries, gasoline, housing, food and other costs that have shot up in the past year. Slightly fewer — 44% — said the future of democracy was their primary consideration.

There were no widespread problems with ballots or voter intimidation reported around the country, though there were hiccups typical of most Election Days. Some tabulators were not working in a New Jersey county. In Philadelphia, where Democrats are counting on strong turnout, people complained about being turned away as they showed up in per-

son to try to fix problems with their previously cast mail-in ballots.

In Maricopa County, Arizona, which encompasses Phoenix and is the state's largest county, officials reported problems with vote tabulation machines in about 20% of voting places. That fueled anger and skepticism about voting that has been growing among some Republicans since the state went narrowly for Biden in 2020.

Voters also were deciding high-profile races for Senate or governor in places such as Pennsylvania, Nevada, Wisconsin, Arizona and Michigan. Contests also were on the ballot for secretaries of state, roles that typically generate little attention but have come under scrutiny as GOP contenders who refused to accept the results of the 2020 campaign were running to control the management of future elections.

In the first national election since the Jan. 6 insurrection, the country's democratic future is in question. Some who participated in or were in the vicinity of the attack are poised to win elected office Tuesday, including several running for House seats. Concerns about political violence are also on the rise less than two weeks after a suspect under the spell of conspiracy theories targeted House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's San Francisco home and brutally beat her 82-year-old husband.

Republicans entered the final stretch of the campaign in a strong position to retake control of at least one chamber

of Congress, giving them power to thwart Biden's agenda for the remaining two years of his term. The GOP needed a net gain of just one seat to win the U.S. Senate and five to regain the U.S. House.

All House seats were up for grabs, as were 34 Senate seats — with cliffhangers especially likely in Pennsylvania, Georgia and Arizona. Thirty-six states are electing governors, with many of those races also poised to come down to the slimmest of margins.

The dynamic was more complicated in state capitals. The GOP faced unexpected headwinds in flipping the governor's office in conservative Kansas. Democrats, meanwhile, were nervous about their prospects in the governor's race in Oregon, typically a liberal bastion.

In other governors' races, Healey bested Geoff Diehl in Massachusetts and Moore beat Dan Cox in Maryland, while Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker defeated state Sen. Darren Bailey. Cox and Bailey were among the far-right Republicans that Democrats spent tens of millions of dollars to bolster during the primaries, betting they would be easier to beat in general elections than their more moderate rivals.

If the GOP has an especially strong election, winning Democrat-held congressional seats in places like New Hampshire or Washington state, pressure could build for Biden to opt against a reelection run in 2024. Trump, meanwhile, may try to capitalize on GOP gains by formally launching another bid for the White House during a "very big announcement" in Florida next week.

The former president endorsed more than 300 candidates in the midterm cycle and is hoping to use Republican victories as a springboard for a 2024 presidential campaign.

"Well, I think if they win, I should get all the credit. And if they lose, I should not be blamed at all. But it will probably be just the opposite," Trump said in an interview with NewsNation.

2nd

From Page A1

more than 54,000 early votes still to be counted. Luria would need to win roughly 70% of these to be reelected. Mailed ballots postmarked by Election Day in a district where several thousand active-duty military are deployed are also still to be counted.

The race came down to a test of how suburbs that usually vote Republican reacted to the overturning of Roe v. Wade-guaranteed abortion rights, as well as the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol that followed a rally where Trump repeated his false claims that the 2020 election was stolen.

Luria, a member of the Select Committee investigating Jan. 6, stressed both issues hard.

Kiggans said the real issue was inflation and Luria's support of the agendas of President Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

"I see a country that has become injured under the policies of Joe Biden, Nancy Pelosi and Elaine Luria, who has voted with their policies 99% of the time," Kiggans told an audience of Hampton Roads business leaders.

"I'm not your candidate if you think that you know what's best for women better than allowing them to make a choice," Luria said.

"I'm not your candidate if you think the 2020 election was stolen; I'm not your candidate if you think \$70 million of state taxpayer money needs to go for an audit of the 2020 election," Luria repeated back, referring to Kiggans' vote in February for such a measure.

The race was also a test of Virginia's 2021 redistricting.

The 2nd has long tended to lean Republican, but it hasn't been a lock. Of seven members of Congress who represented the district since 2000, four were Republicans and three, including Luria, were Democrats.

Redistricting made the 2nd even more Republican. It now stretches from the eastern end of rural Southampton County to

include all of Isle of Wight County, the city of Suffolk, most of Chesapeake, all of Virginia Beach and the Eastern Shore.

Redistricting after the 2020 election, which Luria won with 51.6% of votes cast, lopped off Democratic-leaning precincts in Norfolk and Williamsburg, which gave her about 9,600 more votes than GOP challenger Scott Taylor.

But redistricting also took away Republican strongholds in York County and Poquoson.

Luria also lost parts of Hampton and James City County, the same kind of suburban neighborhoods that often lean Republican but, like Virginia Beach in 2020, swung Democratic.

In 2020, Biden won Virginia Beach with a 117,393 margin of roughly 12,300; Luria won fewer votes in the city but racked up an even bigger margin of 13,800.

Meanwhile, Republican-leaning parts of Chesapeake, as well as Isle of Wight and part of Southampton, were added to the 2nd, as were Democratic-leaning Suffolk and Franklin.

In 2021, the district went decisively Republican, giving Gov. Glenn Youngkin 55% of votes cast, or a 32,600-vote margin over former Gov. Terry McAuliffe, with a large swing in Virginia Beach, where Youngkin won 86,844 votes for a 13,100-vote margin over his opponent.

This year, with 102 of 111 precincts reporting and some 54,000 early votes still to be counted, Kiggans had 55,005 city votes for a margin of 11,111 over Luria.

Both candidates are Navy veterans and believe the 2nd District race may be the first that pits two female former sailors against each other. Kiggans, a nurse practitioner, was a helicopter pilot and was elected to the state Senate in 2019; Luria, elected to Congress in 2018, was one of the first women in the Navy's nuclear power program and served on combatant ships.

dress@timesdispatch.com
(804) 649-6948
Twitter: @daveress1