

How Virginia Republicans Lost Their Majority

Once upon a time. For long year after year Delegate Vance Wilkins and others worked to build a Republican majority in the General Assembly.

1993. Gerrymandered-out-of-a-district, ex-Congressman George Allen built an organization city by county across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Allen was behind in the polls by over 30 points in June. But, Allen had specific reasons to vote for him. End parole, welfare reform, education reform. Allen won and the ball was rolling.
1997. Virginia's voters knew that a vote for Attorney General Jim Gilmore meant 'No Car Tax'. Gilmore won by over 11 points.
1998. The People rejected a Constitutional amendment to create regional governments with taxing authority.
1999. The Republicans won the majority in both chambers of the General Assembly.
2000. George Bush carries Virginia comfortably.
2001. Attorney General Mark Earley ran for Governor under the 'I'm Next' platform. Earley wouldn't promise not to raise taxes. Throughout the immediate aftershock of 9-11 which overwhelmed the heart of campaign season, Earley offered nothing specific and nothing new. Liberal Democrat Mark Warner said over, over and over that he was a 'fiscal Conservative' and he wouldn't raise taxes.
2002. The Republican majority offers a gutless referendum for the voters in NoVa and Hampton Roads. In Hampton Roads the voters are told to raise their own taxes for transportation with a regressive sales tax for projects that don't fix congestion under the administration of an unaccountable, unelected Regional Government –an open invitation to corruption. Republican and Libertarian activists with the help of only four Delegates (3 Republican and 1 Democrat) defeat the Transportation Tax Scam by 2:1. Even though they were outspent by the special interests over \$2.2m to \$40k.
2003. The elected Republican majority says, "I'm sorry", to the Republican Party activists. No challengers threaten the Republicans who legislated against the Virginia Republican Creed.
2004. Revenues are rising in the Bush recovery from the Clinton/9-11 Recession. 19 Republicans in the House and Senate collude with the Democrat Governor to impose the largest tax hike in Virginia history. The taxes produce a \$1.5b surplus. Republicans spend every penny. Virginians elect President Bush by a smaller margin.
2005. Jerry Kilgore doesn't campaign against the tax increase. Kilgore offers a Regional

Government solution for transportation problems. Like Mark Warner, Liberal Democrat Tim Kaine promises to not raise taxes. Kilgore loses. Less than a week later Kaine announces his plan to raise taxes. Only 6 candidates challenge Republican incumbents. One wins.

2006. Revenue and the surplus grow. The General Assembly fails to produce a transportation plan. The Republicans in the Senate want to raise taxes more than the Democrats. Republicans in the House offer another plan for Regional Government and a hodge podge of taxes. Sen. George Allen doesn't campaign against increases taxes at the state and local level. After his 'maccaca' moment his campaign implodes and he runs behind the more Conservative congressional candidates and the Marriage Amendment.

2007. Republicans, apparently aided and abetted by Attorney General McDonnell, offer a 'compromise' plan that compromises Republican principles for limited government, lower taxes and effective, efficient government services to solve problems. In Hampton Roads the same elected Republicans who supported the '02 Transportation Tax Scam pat themselves on the back for the '07 Transportation Tax Panic. Most Republicans are scared stupid to do something, anything, to keep from losing their majority in the General Assembly. Meanwhile, His Lordship Sir John Chichester refuses to go along and kills the compromise abortion of a transportation bill to try to impose his will on the peasants.

April-June 2007. How many Conservatives challenge and beat Republican incumbents, sets the stage for Conservatives vs. Democrats or RINOs vs. Democrats in the November election. The Democrats will pick up seats either way.

If the RINOs stay in office, the Republican majority will be lost as assuredly as it was in the U.S. Congress in '06.

Republicans will lose their majority the same way the Democrats did. The majority of Virginia – even with the foreign (Yankee and alien) immigration overwhelming NoVa – is moderately Conservative. Not Republican. Not Democrat. That is why the Marriage Amendment won 57-43.

The Commonwealth, which was Democrat in its state politics, became Republican as the Democrats moved from Conservative to Liberal.

Furthermore, the arrogant abuse of the political culture by too many elected Republicans will lead to their loss of power.

Much of NoVa is focused on DC, not Richmond. Many in NoVa are temporary Virginians, so their local issues, like Transportation, have an immediacy about them. If you make noises and motion, it may be mistaken for progress.

Most of Virginia (RoVa) has the political culture of the Old Dominion which respects authority, persons in power, with a political loyalty that is the envy of politicians elsewhere. Once elected is to stay elected – unless your arrogance is egregious.

Additionally, Virginians expect officials to do their duty as they promised and not bother the voters. Virginians live life with the understanding that they should only have to decide aye or nay on election day. So, the General Assembly can do as they please because very few voters are watching. That's why there was no blow back on the '02 Transportation Scam up until the November election. Then, The People spoke.

When The People of Virginia face the choice of Democrats who will raise their taxes and Republicans who will raise their taxes – some more and some less than the Democrats, the Republicans will lose their majority. The label fatigue with National Republicans cost Kilgore and Allen votes. It will hurt more in 2008 and the gubernatorial election in 2009.

The Republican Party of Virginia may not lose its majority in the General Assembly in 2007, but if more 'compromise' bills compromise Republican's Conservative principles the way abortion compromises life, then the Republicans go the way of the Democrats soon enough. Perhaps, the way of the Whigs.

James Atticus Bowden