

# Maura Mazurowski

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## ***EXPERIENCE***

**News Editor** | The Commonwealth Times

**Sept. 2015 – Present**

Crafts a weekly story budget; writes enterprise and breaking news stories; manages social media presence; holds weekly news meetings; edits stories on a weekly basis to check for correct format and AP style accuracy.

**Reporter** | VCU Capital News Service

**Jan. 2017 – Present**

Provides state government coverage for 75 Virginia newspapers and other media outlets. Byline has appeared in The Washington Post, U.S. News & World Report, ABC8/WRIR, InsideNova, the Charlottesville Daily Progress, RVA News, the Miami Herald and more.

**Script Reading Intern** | Creative World Awards

**Jan. 2017 – Present**

Reads and writes feedback for 3-5 feature film and television scripts every week.

**Set Production Assistant** | “Mercy Street” (PBS)

**May 2016**

Worked with the Assistant Directors on set; ensured actors were on set when needed; addressed various needs of other crew members; overall, worked to make sure set ran smoothly.

**Set Production Assistant** | “TURN: Washington’s Spies” (AMC)

**Jan. – Feb. 2016**

Had similar responsibilities to those on “Mercy Street”.

**News Intern** | Leesburg Today

**Aug. 2014 – Jan. 2016**

Wrote news and lifestyle content for the Northern Virginia based paper.

**News Editor** | The Collegiate Times

**Feb. 2014 – May 2015**

Wrote and edited news content for Virginia Tech’s independent student newspaper.

## ***EDUCATION***

Virginia Commonwealth University, c/o 2017

**GPA:** 3.8

**Majors:** Journalism, Film

# Is It Gerrymandering - or Democratic Clustering?

 [usnews.com/news/virginia/articles/2017-02-13/is-it-gerrymandering-or-democratic-clustering](https://www.usnews.com/news/virginia/articles/2017-02-13/is-it-gerrymandering-or-democratic-clustering)



By MAURA MAZUROWSKI and MARY LEE CLARK, Capital News Service

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — David Toscano, the minority leader in the Virginia House, did the math and didn't like the results.

"All five statewide offices are held by Democrats, and the presidency has been won by Democrats in Virginia for the last three cycles," he said. "Yet 66 percent of the House of Delegates are Republicans."

The Democrats do better in the Virginia Senate, where they are outnumbered just 21-19 by Republicans. Almost as lopsided as the state House of Delegates is Virginia's delegation in the U.S. House of Representative: It has seven Republicans and four Democrats.

Toscano and other Democrats blame that imbalance on gerrymandering — the drawing of political districts to favor the party in power.

"We face a real uphill struggle, and it shows in the legislation that is getting defeated as well as the legislation that they are getting passed," Toscano said.

Last week, for example, the General Assembly marked "crossover day" — the deadline for bills to pass their chamber of origin or be declared dead for the legislative session. Of bills sponsored by Republican delegates, 59 percent have won House approval and are still alive, according to a Capital News Service analysis of data from the Legislative Information Service. Of bills sponsored by Democratic delegates, just 25 percent survived crossover.

However, many legislators dispute the notion that unfair redistricting practices have disadvantaged Democrats and ensured Republican legislative dominance.

"It has nothing to do with gerrymandering. Nothing could be further from the truth," said Jeff Ryer, communications director for the Virginia Senate Republican Caucus. He said the Republican majority in the General Assembly simply reflects where people live: Republicans tend to live in rural areas while Democrats tend to cluster in more densely populated areas, such as Tidewater and Northern Virginia.

Sen. Ryan McDougle, R-Hanover, agrees. In an op-ed this month in the Richmond-Times Dispatch, he discussed what Democrats see as evidence of manipulated districts: "A state in which Republicans have lost seven statewide races in a row has a majority Republican congressional delegation and legislature."

McDougle wrote, "That is not the result of gerrymandering, but an easy to understand consequence of Democrat voters living in communities surrounded by other Democrat voters." In other words, he explained, "Democrat voters often reside in clusters, living in localities that vote overwhelmingly for Democrat candidates."

Last fall's presidential election was a case in point, McDougle said. Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton won only 40 of Virginia's 133 localities. But by winning the most populous localities, often by "staggeringly large" margins, Clinton captured the statewide vote over Republican Donald Trump.

However, Bill Oglesby, an assistant professor in VCU's Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture, says gerrymandering explains why Democrats have so little power in the General Assembly.

"Even a conservative editorial page like the Richmond-Times Dispatch has said in a state that votes blue statewide

on a consistent basis, there's no justification for having two-thirds of the House be Republican," said Oglesby, who recently directed and produced a PBS documentary titled "GerryRIGGED: Turning Democracy on Its Head."

John Aughenbaugh, a political science professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, said both Democrats and Republicans have used gerrymandering, depending on which party is in the majority when political lines are redrawn every 10 years.

"In Virginia, like a majority of the states in the country, the state legislature controls the redistricting process after every census is taken," Aughenbaugh said. "It puts a heavy premium on which political party is actually in control of the General Assembly after the census results come out."

When the Democrats controlled the General Assembly, they drew the lines to benefit their party, Aughenbaugh said. He said no one is innocent, but it is a problem that must be fixed.

"Most political scientists would like to see greater competitive races, whether we are talking about state legislative seats or House of Representatives," Aughenbaugh said. "We would like to see greater competition."

The lack of competition is evident in statistics compiled by the nonpartisan Virginia Public Access Project. When the 100 seats in the Virginia House of Delegates were up for election two years ago, 61 of the races were uncontested — with just one name on the ballot.

Despite being in the minority in the House and Senate, Democratic legislators have an ace up their sleeve. They can play it when Democratic Gov. Terry McAuliffe vetoes legislation, as he has done to 71 Republican-supported bills since taking office in 2014.

Republicans need a two-thirds majority in both chambers — 67 votes in the House and 27 in the Senate — to override a veto. They've never been able to muster that. As a result, not one of McAuliffe's vetoes has been overturned.

But Democrats' ultimate goal is to change the way political districts are drawn.

At the start of the legislative session, legislators — including some Republicans — introduced 13 bills and proposed constitutional amendments intended to take the politics out of redistricting. All of the proposals originating in the House died in the House Privileges and Elections Committee.

But three redistricting proposals won approval in the Senate and have been sent to the House for consideration:

. SJ 290 is a proposed constitutional amendment that states, "No electoral district shall be drawn for the purpose of favoring or disfavoring any political party, incumbent legislator or member of Congress, or other individual or entity." It is sponsored by Sens. Jill Vogel, R-Winchester, and Janet Howell, D-Reston.

. SJ 231, another constitutional amendment, would create an independent commission to redraw legislative and congressional districts after each census. It is sponsored by a group of Republicans and Democrats.

. SB 846, sponsored by Sen. Louise Lucas, D-Portsmouth, would require Virginia to use an independent commission if a court declares a legislative or congressional district unlawful or unconstitutional.

All of those measures have been assigned to the House Privileges and Elections Committee, the House graveyard for its own bills that would have changed redistricting.

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# Rally calls for state help for brain injuries

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By Maura Mazurowski | AP February 1

RICHMOND, Va. — “Forty-two ... I think I’m 42,” Mike Drury of Leesburg, Virginia, said with a smile. A car accident in 2011 left Drury with a traumatic brain injury that affects his cognitive abilities.

But that didn’t stop him from traveling to the state Capitol for the 14th annual Brain Injury Awareness Day. After meeting with legislators, dozens of survivors, advocates and caretakers of people with brain injuries held a rally Wednesday to call for improvements in services for disabled Virginians.

Because of a budget deficit, in October the state cut \$375,000 in funds for brain injury services, the rally’s organizers said.

“There are still so many unserved areas that don’t have any brain injury services at all in Virginia,” said Krystal Thompson, executive director of Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia. “We need a lot more funding to reach the scope of the problem.”

Several lawmakers have introduced budget amendments to help people with brain injuries:

.Sen. Janet Howell of Fairfax County and Del. Brenda Pogge of James City County have proposed restoring the \$375,000 that was cut last year.

.Sen. John Edwards of Roanoke and Del. Nick Rush of Montgomery County want to provide an additional \$1 million to expand and support brain injury services in Virginia.

.Pogge and Sen. David Marsden of Fairfax County have called for improvements in collecting and analyzing data about Virginians with brain injuries and the services they need.

“There’s a lot of data of brain injury that’s sort of scattered all over the place,” said Anne McDonnell, executive director of the Brain Injury Association of Virginia. “We’d like it to be consolidated in one place so we can make some plans for the coming wave of individuals that are going to need care.”

Nearly 168,000 Virginians are disabled as a result of a traumatic brain injury, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. With more funding, McDonnell hopes to provide care for more people with such injuries.

“It’s a rare privilege to watch a brain come back online,” McDonnell said.

Among the people at the rally was 15-year-old Maya Simbulan. In 2009, she was getting ready for a school play when she fell down a flight of stairs at home and suffered a traumatic brain injury.

Simbulan, a sophomore at Lake Braddock High School in Fairfax County, said she owes her recovery to Brain Injury Services, a nonprofit organization based in the Springfield. The group helps residents of Northern Virginia find rehabilitation resources, manage the effects of their injuries and connect with people with similar problems.

“Sky’s the limit. We want Maya to get every opportunity everyone else gets, and that’s what we’re here to do,” said Simbulan’s case manager, Brooke Annessa.

Annessa has been with Brain Injury Services since 2009. In 2011, she adopted her daughter, Addie, who had suffered anoxic brain damage, which is caused by a lack of oxygen. Wednesday was Addie’s fifth birthday.

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“So I’m either the best mom ever, or the worst mom ever,” Annessa joked.

Addie doesn’t talk yet. Shortly after her injury, Annessa brought Addie to Brain Injury Services. There, the girl was handed an iPad with Proloquo2Go, a symbol-based “augmented alternative communication” app to help her express herself.

Within the first day of using the iPad, Addie was speaking through the app. A month later, she was constructing sentences.

“That little bit of hope, that little bit of proof, is what got me more services at school for her. I was able to show she is smart, she is understanding - she just can’t explain that to you,” Annessa said.

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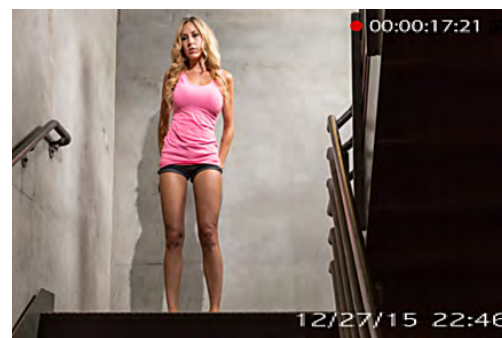
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# Senator is ‘shocked’ to think money buys influence

 villagenewsonline.com/2017/02/03/7083/

By Maura Mazurowski Capital News Service Everybody at the state Capitol saw this coming: the death of a bill to prohibit Dominion, the single...

**By Maura Mazurowski**

Capital News Service

Everybody at the state Capitol saw this coming: the death of a bill to prohibit Dominion, the single largest corporate donor in Virginia politics, from giving campaign contributions to legislators, the governor and other public officials.

Sen. Chap Petersen, D-Fairfax, filed [SB 1593](#) on Jan. 25 because, he said, state lawmakers shouldn't take money from public utilities that are regulated by the General Assembly and other state agencies.



Chap Peterson

“Monopolies like Dominion or Appalachian Power have an undue influence on the political process,” Petersen said.

Because he introduced his bill after the filing deadline, Petersen needed the unanimous consent of the Senate to proceed. After two senators objected to the legislation, Petersen officially withdrew the proposal Tuesday. He plans to reintroduce the bill next year, according to Alex Parker, Petersen's political director.

SB 1593 sought to forbid any candidate for the General Assembly or statewide office from accepting donations from “public service corporations” – such as power and telephone companies regulated by the State Corporation Commission.

In a speech on the Senate floor Monday, Petersen said those corporations use political donations to influence legislative decisions.

“I happen to believe that public policy should be decided on the merits and not based on donations,” he said.

But the bill stood little chance from the start. Attempts to alter Virginia's campaign finance system, which allows unlimited donations from people and corporations as long as politicians publicly disclose the contributions, have been unsuccessful.

The closest the state has come to ethics reform was in 2015 when the General Assembly passed legislation to put a \$100 limit on gifts and travel from lobbyists or those with business before the state.

Petersen filed SB 1593 after losing a fight over another bill ([SB 1095](#)) to increase regulation of electric utilities in Virginia.

Until 2015, the State Corporation Commission conducted biennial rate reviews of power companies. If the SCC found that a company was making excessive profits, it could order the utility to lower its rates.

But in 2015, the General Assembly passed legislation to suspend the rate reviews for Dominion and Appalachian Power for five years because the companies said they were facing uncertain costs of complying with the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan, which ordered states to cut carbon emissions.



Because of a lawsuit, the Clean Power Plan was never implemented, and the Trump administration intends to dismantle it.

SB 1095 sought to roll back the 2015 legislation and let the State Corporation Commission resume conducting rate reviews of Dominion and Appalachian Power.

“I think rate review will show that utilities have made a financial windfall off the legislation we passed in 2015,” Petersen said.

His rate review bill died on Jan. 16 on a 12-2 vote in the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee.

The bill’s defeat prompted Petersen to file his measure to prohibit legislators from taking campaign donations from regulated monopolies – and to deliver a “personal privilege” speech on the Senate floor.

“Now I know, and in one of those ‘gambling at Rick’s’ moments, I decided, or some people mentioned to me, that maybe donations made within this body or any body, does have some impact on public policy,” Petersen told his colleagues.

“Now I know, I’m shocked myself to hear that, but I thought it was worth putting forward legislation that would limit, if not prohibit, donations made by public service corporations, which are the very same monopolies that were subject to the jurisdiction of the State Corporation Commission in setting their prices, that would limit and prohibit those donations, to not only members of this body, but also to the third floor, and public officials that sit in judgment of those bodies.”

The “third floor” was a reference to the governor’s office.

Dominion has given [more than \\$1.3 million](#) to Virginia political campaigns since 2015 and [about \\$14.4 million](#) since the late 1990s, according to the nonpartisan Virginia Public Access Project.

Supporters of the 2015 legislation suspending the rate reviews say it was a good deal for consumers. Under that law, Dominion agreed to freeze its base rates, which make up over half of customers’ electric bills, for five years.

Dominion officials have criticized Petersen’s proposal to ban the company from making political donations, saying it would violate free speech rights. They also have criticized Petersen’s stand on other energy-related issues.

“Not only has Sen. Petersen introduced legislation to roll back advancements in solar energy and payment assistance for low-income families, but now he’s against the First Amendment,” said Dominion spokesman David Botkins.

“Our 16,200 employees – 9,000 of whom work in Virginia – are proud of the role we play in helping the commonwealth grow and improve. We believe our democracy works best when all participate, not when government chooses who can speak and who cannot.”

According to [VPAP data](#), the 12 members of the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee who voted to kill the bill to resume reviewing Dominion’s rates received a total of more than \$729,000 in donations from the company.

The two committee members who voted against killing the bill also received contributions from Dominion, totaling about \$30,000.

Petersen himself has [accepted \\$22,519](#) in campaign donations from Dominion since 2001, according to VPAP.

“If Dominion makes a written demand – in writing – I’ll write a check and give back the money,” Petersen said.

### **Dominion donations to the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee**

Here are the 12 senators who voted to kill SB 1095, which sought to resume reviewing Dominion's electric rates.

<b>Senator</b>	<b>Total donations from Dominion</b>	<b>Since</b>
Sen. Ben Chafin, R-Russell County	\$10,500	2013
Sen. John Cosgrove, R-Chesapeake	\$23,150	2001
Sen. Rosalyn R. Dance, D-Petersburg	\$25,692	2001
Sen. Louise Lucas, D-Portsmouth	\$34,450	1998
Sen. Ryan McDougale, R-Hanover	\$47,250	2001
Sen. Thomas Norment, R-Williamsburg	\$107,740	1998
Sen. Mark Obenshain, R-Harrisonburg	\$51,000	2003
Sen. Richard Saslaw, D-Fairfax	\$298,008	1998
Sen. William Stanley, R-Franklin County	\$19,500	2011
Sen. Richard Stuart, R-Westmoreland	\$20,750	2009
Sen. Glen Sturtevant, R-Midlothian	\$4,000	2016
Sen. Frank Wagner, R-Virginia Beach	\$86,985	1997
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$729,025</b>	

The two senators who voted against killing the bill are:

<b>Senator</b>	<b>Total donations from Dominion</b>	<b>Since</b>
Sen. Richard Black, R-Loudoun	\$9,750	1999
Sen. Stephen Newman, R-Bedford	\$20,500	1999