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# Virginia Redistricting Commission

## Public Participation Guidelines

*Revised July 7, 2021*

<https://www.virginiaredistricting.org>

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The Virginia Redistricting Commission (the Commission) is committed to providing opportunities for the public to comment on the redistricting process and redistricting plans. The Commission will endeavor to livestream all of its meetings and public hearings to provide the widest opportunity for public comment, and members of the public are encouraged to engage the Commission using these opportunities.

### **I. Methods for Providing Public Comment**

The following methods for providing public comment are available to members of the public.

#### **A. Written Comment.**

Members of the public may provide comments to the Commission in writing at any time. Any comments submitted are a part of the written public record of the Commission. Written comments may be submitted in the following ways:

1. *Submission through email.* Comments may be emailed to the Commission at [varedist@dls.virginia.gov](mailto:varedist@dls.virginia.gov). The comments will be posted on the Commission's website at <https://www.virginiaredistricting.org>. These comments will be available to the Commission for review and consideration.
2. *Submission through regular mail.* Comments may be sent by regular mail to the following address:

Virginia Redistricting Commission  
Pocahontas Building, 8th Floor  
900 E. Main Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

#### **B. Live Comment.**

Members of the public may also provide comments to the Commission live during meetings and public hearings. These comments will be heard in real time by those in attendance and recorded.

***What's the difference between a meeting and a public hearing?***

Meetings of the Commission are held for the purpose of conducting the work of the Commission, while public hearings are the opportunity for the commissioners to hear directly from the citizens of the Commonwealth.

1. *At a meeting.* Beginning July 1, 2021, the Commission will be returning to pre-COVID meeting procedures and all meetings will be held in person. As such, members of the public are invited to attend Commission meetings in person in order to provide comments to the Commission live during the meeting. Sign-up will be available at the meeting location, beginning 30 minutes prior to the meeting's start time, but is not required in order to speak during the public comment portion of the meeting.

These meetings will continue to be livestreamed so the public is able to watch the proceedings, but only in-person comments will be received.

2. *At an in-person public hearing.* Members of the public are invited to attend the hearing in person in order to provide live, in-person comments to the Commission. Members of the public are also able to provide live comments virtually.
3. *At a virtual public hearing.* Members of the public are invited to attend the hearing virtually and to provide live comments virtually.

## **II. Public Hearings: Process and Procedures**

### **A. Facilitation of Public Hearing**

At least four members of the Commission will be present at each public hearing, including (i) one Democratic citizen commissioner, (ii) one Republican citizen commissioner, (iii) one Democratic legislator, and (iv) one Republican legislator. One of the four Commission members will be designated Presiding Commissioner. Live public comment, both for virtual and in-person attendees, will be facilitated by the Commission members designated to preside at the given public hearing.

### **B. Written Comments**

Members of the public are encouraged to submit their comments to the Commission by email or regular mail at any time, regardless of public hearing schedule or locations. The comments will be posted on the Commission's website and made available to the Commission for review and consideration.

Members of the public may also provide written comments at the in-person public hearings, and a form will be available at the hearing location for such purpose. If the Commission receives any hard-copy written comments from members of the public at in-person public hearings, those written comments will be collected, scanned in PDF format after the meeting, and posted on the Commission's website.

## C. Live Comment

The opportunity to provide live comment to the Commission will be available for both in-person and virtual attendees of public hearings.

1. **How to sign up.** There will be two methods by which a member of the public may sign up to provide live comment at a public hearing:
  - **In-person public comment.** In-person public comment will be received at in-person public hearings. Sign up will be on site, beginning one hour prior to the hearing start time and ending one hour after the commencement of the hearing.
  - **Virtual public comment.** Virtual public comment will be received at both in-person and virtual public hearings. Participants must sign up prior to the meeting using a link that will be provided in advance of the hearing on the Meetings & Public Hearings page of the Commission's website. Members of the public must register at least 24 hours before the time of the in-person or virtual public hearing to allow for the hearing link and information regarding how to participate to be provided to each participant via email. Members of the public will be emailed instructions on what to expect and how to participate.
2. **Speaking order.** Individuals will be invited to speak on a first-come, first-served basis based on their sign-in time. At in-person public hearings, persons will sign up upon arrival, and in-person speakers will precede virtual speakers.
3. **Time limit.** Individuals will be given an amount of time to provide comment not to exceed three minutes, exclusive of any clarifying questions from Commission members.

## III. Rules of Conduct for Public Hearings

To ensure productive and meaningful input during public hearings, the Commission has established rules of conduct applicable to all such public hearings. The Commission requests the cooperative participation of all individuals who engage in the public hearing process to adhere to the following rules of engagement for both in-person and virtual attendees of public hearings.

1. When called up to speak by the Presiding Commissioner, commenters will provide their name in an audible tone of voice for the record. All comments shall be directed to the Commission as a whole, not to any one individual or commissioner.
2. Commenters will be called up in the order that they have signed in, with in-person participants invited to provide their comments before virtual participants.
3. Commenters will be recognized by the Presiding Commissioner and invited to speak for a set time not to exceed three minutes.
4. Commenters are requested to respect the time allotted to each speaker. Commenters will be informed when their time has expired, and the next speaker will be invited to begin. Commenters may not yield any time to another speaker.

5. No person, other than members of the Commission and the individual making the comment, shall be permitted to enter into any discussion, either directly or through the members of the Commission. All questions to the Commission or its individual members shall be directed through the Presiding Commissioner.
6. Commissioners will practice active, effective listening and be respectful of all speakers and their feelings. With the focus on listening to public comment, Commissioners will ask questions only as needed to ensure clarity and understanding.
7. No banners, signs, bullhorns, or similar devices, items that could be used as weapons, or large bags or cases will be allowed into the room where an in-person public hearing is being held. All items may be subject to search prior to entering.
8. Any person making personal or slanderous remarks or who becomes boisterous or disruptive while addressing the Commission may be requested to stop speaking. The Presiding Commissioner may take action to address such actions or remarks, which may include a warning, a clarification, a request for the person to leave the lectern, or ruling the person out of order.
9. If any person becomes loud or unruly, the Presiding Commissioner may rule that person out of order and may forfeit that person's opportunity to provide comment. Such person shall immediately cease their remarks.
10. Any person attending a public hearing who, at the direction of the Presiding Commissioner, is escorted from the meeting room, will not be admitted for the remainder of the public hearing.

*The Division of Legislative Services will administer the public participation guidelines at the direction of the Commission.*