VIRGINIA ELECTIONS IN 1986: DRIFT TO DEMOCRATS CONTINUES

by Larry Sabato

The author is associate professor of government at the University of Virginia. This News Letter is drawn from a chapter in the author's forthcoming *Virginia Votes 1983-1986*, which will be published by the Institute of Government in the summer of 1987.

Virginia was one of only six states without any statewide election for governor or U.S. senator in 1986. Yet the electoral patterns in the Old Dominion reflected to some degree the national and southern drift to the Democrats. In a year that saw the Democratic party recapture the U.S. Senate, thanks in good part to crucial victories in five southern states, Virginia provided one of the five seats the national Democratic party gained in the U.S. Senate. In the United States just about every election year is the "year of the incumbent." Since World War II about 91 percent of all incumbent U.S. House members who have sought another term have in fact been reelected. But 1986 was the postwar peak for incumbency success: 98 percent of all House members who wanted reelection secured it. Virginia fit nicely into the national pattern, as nine of the ten House incumbents were returned to office. (The tenth, Republican G. William Whitehurst of the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Second District, retired after eighteen years in Congress.)

Four of the state's ten congressmen were unopposed by the other party: Democrats Norman Sisisky of the Portsmouth-Chesapeake Fourth District, Dan Daniel of the Southside Fifth, and Rick Boucher of the Southwest Ninth; and Republican D. French Slaughter of the Piedmont Seventh. (Daniel had minor opposition from an independent, and the others were completely unopposed.) Virginia's unopposed percentage of her congressional delegation was the fifth highest in the nation (after Massachusetts, Florida, Louisiana, and Kentucky).

In Virginia, as in much of the South, unopposed races are a staple of congressional

---

**VIRGINIA VOTES 1983-1986 FORTHCOMING IN 1987**

Professor Larry Sabato's series of publications analyzing Virginia's elections will continue with the release in the summer of 1987 of *Virginia Votes 1983-1986*, to be published by the Institute of Government. In addition to election analyses, this volume, the fifth in the series, will include official election results, by individual city and county, for the major statewide elections during these years.

Copies of *Virginia Votes 1983-1986* can be preordered for $10.00 each (plus $1.50 for postage and handling) from the Institute of Government, 207 Minor Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville 22903 (phone: 804/924-3396). Please make checks payable to the University of Virginia.

---

*Note: The author wishes to thank Dorothy Hutcheon of the Federal Election Commission for her help in securing campaign finance data.*
politics. In the Old Dominion only three districts—Northern Virginia's Eighth and Tenth and the far Southwest Ninth—have enough two-party competition to produce opposition regularly. But in 1986 even the Ninth suffered from a lack of competition (for the first time in 132 years). The parties' decisions not to field candidates are easy to understand, given the high reelection rate of incumbents and scarce party resources. Still, since choice is the implicit guarantee given a democratic electorate, the result is unsatisfactory and even disturbing to many voters.

Those Virginia districts fortunate enough to have a choice had some exciting races in 1986, even if the results were unsurprising. The Northern Virginia Tenth District perhaps had the state's ablest pair of candidates in Republican incumbent Frank Wolf and Democrat John Milliken, a member of the Arlington County Board of Supervisors. Milliken was able to raise an unusually large sum for a challenger (about $724,000), but to no avail. Not only did Wolf raise more money (about $1.07 million) but also he garnered far more votes (winning 60.2 percent to Milliken's 39.8 percent), turning what was perceived as a close contest into a runaway. Wolf's superior constituency services and his high-energy representation of his district on local issues have seemingly made Wolf the most secure congressman in modern times from perpetually unsettled Northern Virginia.

The Republican incumbent in Northern Virginia's other congressional district, the Eighth, ran slightly stronger than Wolf, but his showing was still considered less impressive. Stan Parris won his fifth consecutive term by his largest margin ever (61.8 percent), but against very weak opposition.

Like Wolf, two other incumbents managed victories more impressive than had been expected, thereby insulating themselves further from serious challenge in the near future. In the Republican-leaning Sixth District, which includes Roanoke and some of the Shenandoah Valley, Democratic incumbent Jim Olin, who had won only narrow victories in 1982 and 1984, fashioned a landslide win (69.9 percent to 30.1 percent) over GOP National Committeewoman Flo Traywick. Traywick tried hard to convince voters of Olin's alleged liberalism, and she ran an energetic campaign. But she wasoutspent $350,000 to $197,000, and her ideological charges did not take hold against an officeholder who is a former business executive and projects a quiet, moderate image.

A somewhat similar situation, with partisan labels reversed, developed in the Richmond-area Third District, as Republican incumbent Thomas Biley trounced Democrat Kenneth Powell and liberal independent Stephen Hodges. Powell had been strongly supported by Governor Gerald Baliles and his allies in the Democratic party, but Biley's winning margin of 67.0 percent (to 29.7 percent for Powell and 3.3 percent for Hodges) has clearly strengthened his hold on that House seat.

Republican incumbent Herbert Bateman of the Hampton-Newport News First District won his third successive solid victory, but he has yet to approach the margins achieved by his congressional predecessors, Republican Paul S. Trible and Democrat Thomas N. Downing. In defeating state Senator Robert C. Scott by 56.0 percent to 44.0 percent, Bateman frustrated that Democrat's bid to become the first black Virginia citizen to be elected to Congress since John Mercer Langston of Southside won during the Reconstruction era. Scott, who represents a white-majority state Senate district in Newport News, got his campaign off to a slow start and wasoutspent $822,000 to $346,000. The First District is only about 29 percent black, so even in losing, Scott was able to win the votes of many whites. The best estimate shows that Scott won between a quarter and a third of the white vote—a good showing but well below the 44 percent statewide share of the white vote won by Democratic Lieutenant Governor L. Douglas Wilder in his 1985 election.

The only party turnover of a U.S. House seat in Virginia came in the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Second District, where Democratic state Delegate Owen Pickett defeated Republican state Senator A. Joseph Canada by 49.5 percent to 44.9 percent. Both Pickett and Canada were battle-scared veterans of statewide politics. Canada had been beaten for lieutenant governor in the 1977 general election by Democrat Charles Robb; and Pickett had been forced to withdraw as the Democratic nominee-presumptive for U.S. Senate in 1982 because of threats by then-state Senator L. Douglas Wilder to run as an independent (due to Pickett's alleged conservatism and insensitivity to black concerns).

From the outset, the demographics of the district favored Pickett, since both he and Canada represented Republican-leaning Virginia Beach in the state legislature. If Pickett could use his hometown Beach connections to hold down Canada's expected lead in the resort city, he would win on the strength of a nearly guaranteed large margin in heavily Democratic Norfolk.

The theory became reality on election day, as Pickett kept Canada's Virginia Beach plurality to 4,650 votes while carrying Norfolk by 13,004 votes. Pickett won Norfolk with an overwhelming edge in black precincts, and he was assisted there not only by the powerful Second District black leader Bishop L.E. Willis but also by his one-time adversary, Lieutenant Governor L. Douglas Wilder. Wilder buried the hatchet at a well-publicized event endorsing Pickett. (Virginian-Pilot reporter Kent Jenkins began his story about the occasion: "Lieutenant Governor L. Douglas Wilder came not to bury Delegate Owen B. Pickett—he had done that once before. On Thursday, Wilder came to praise him.")

Canada's well-organized effort failed despite the strenuous support of Congressman G. William Whitehurst, the retiring Republican incumbent who was exceptionally popular and who had appeared in many of Canada's television advertisements. Whitehurst was proving on a local level what President Reagan demonstrated around the country: the transference of popularity from one candidate to another is an enormously difficult political task, even by well-liked and respected figures.

NEGATIVE TACTICS IN VIRGINIA

The Second District race had one surprising aspect. A little-known independent, Old Dominion University professor Stephen P.

*Parris was first elected in 1972 and defeated for reelection in 1974. He staged a successful comeback in 1980 and has been reelected since.

*Boares spoofed federal employees with his National Association of Professional Bureaucrats (NATAPROBU), whose motto is, "When in doubt, mumble." He lived in the neighboring Tenth District. Contrary to popular belief, the Constitution does not require a congressman to live in the district he represents, though almost all of them have maintained a residence in their districts in recent times.

*In fact, Bateman was in the bottom 15 percent of incumbent representatives nationally in 1986, using the percentage of the district vote as the standard; 85 percent of House incumbents won at least 60 percent of the vote in 1986. Bateman has yet to secure more than 60 percent—considered by many an important threshold for House incumbents.

Table 2
Voting in Selected Predominantly Black Precincts in Virginia Cities 1986 General Election for U.S. Representative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Number of Precincts</th>
<th>Total Votes Cast</th>
<th>Percent of Registered Voting</th>
<th>Percent of Votes Cast for:</th>
<th>Percent of Votes Cast for:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Republican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Precincts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9,628</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Beach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,729</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport News</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6,254</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>97.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7,225</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roanoke</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,023</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28,678</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Official election results provided by the State Board of Elections.

- a Precincts 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 17, and 42
- b Seatack precinct
- c Phenix and Pembroke precincts
- d Dunbar, Lee, Marshall, Chestnut, Jefferson, Huntington, Washington, and Newsome Park precincts
- e Precincts 301, 303, 304, 306, 602, 603, 604, 605, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 707, and 801
- f Lincoln Terrace, Melrose, and Eureka Park precincts

permits a voter who has not voted in four years to avoid the regular "purge" of non-participants and to stay on the voting registration rolls if he or she so requests in writing. The second amendment, which passed narrowly, was designed to increase Virginia’s relatively low level of voter registration by permitting some government officials—except elected ones or those appointed by elected officials—to be appointed assistant voting registrars. (Employees at the Department of Motor Vehicles, for example, could be deputized as assistant registrars.)

Both voting amendments drew the active opposition of the Republican party, which claimed the provisions might encourage voter fraud. The Democratic party endorsed the amendments, though the leadership did little in support of them. The League of Women Voters and the NAACP were more energetic on their behalf. The second, "registrar" amendment only passed by 51.5 percent to 48.5 percent, and it actually lost in a majority of both the cities (21 of 41) and the counties (61 of 95). Only strong support from Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia saved the amendment from defeat. All five Tidewater and Northern Virginia congressional districts produced large majorities for the amendment, while the other five districts were opposed to it. Opposition was especially widespread in the Richmond Third District, where the Richmond newspapers had editorialized against the amendment and only 38.3 percent voted for it.

Overall, the heaviest "no" votes to the registrar amendment were recorded in many of the most reliably Republican localities. Fully 20 of 25 counties and 7 of 10 cities that in 1985 had backed GOP gubernatorial nominee Wyatt B. Durrette in his unsuccessful bid against the registrar amendment. Supporters of the amendment were fortunate in the timing of the vote. If a statewide election had been held in 1986, the amendment might well have lost since it failed in three of the four congressional districts without a party contest; turnout would undoubtedly have been greater in these districts under competitive circumstances.

Also, because of the lack of competition in many rural areas, the rural vote was unusually depressed in 1986. Normally, rural localities provide nearly one-third of the statewide vote, but in 1986 only a bit more than a quarter of the vote could be found there. Rural areas opposed the registrar amendment by 53.3 percent to 46.7 percent, but central cities and suburbs voted in favor of it. Since the suburbs’ vote swelled to 55.9 percent of the statewide total in 1986 (a modern highwater mark), their 52.9 percent margin of support for the registrar amendment was crucial. The central cities were the most enthusiastic of all demographic regions, giving the amendment a 55.3 percent favorable vote. Even so, the central city proportion of the statewide vote was the lowest in recent years (15.1 percent), so their vote was of less consequence.

Black voters clearly provided the margin of victory to the registrar amendment (see Table
votes in Virginia since the Watergate elections of 1974. In all ten districts combined, Democrats won 52.2 percent, to the Republicans’ 44.7 percent (with 3.1 percent for others). This Democratic majority was due in part to the fact that three Democratic incumbents were unopposed, while only one Republican was given a bye.

The more significant party vote comparison is considered to be the aggregate figure that includes only House elections contested by both parties. In those six cases taken together, the Republicans maintained a substantial edge over the Democrats, 53.1 percent to 45.2 percent. The GOP lead was reduced from 1984, of course, and resembled the party split in 1982, the last congressional election year that demonstrated mildly Democratic characteristics. However, Virginia’s underlying Republican bent in federal (as opposed to state) elections is revealed when Virginia’s results are compared with both the national and regional pattern. Democrats secured about 53 percent of the vote in all party-contested districts in the country, and fully 55 percent in the South—quite a contrast with the Democrats’ 45 percent showing in Virginia.10

VOTER TURNOUT

Not unexpectedly, given the absence of any contests for statewide office and the presence of a large number of uncontested congressional races, voter turnout in Virginia was minimal in 1986. Only 42.7 percent of the registered voters and 25.4 percent of the eligible population (aged 18 and over) came to the polls on election day—a drop of 19.1 percent from the previous year, which featured the gubernatorial contest.11 By contrast, the 1982 off-year congressional elections drew 63.4 percent of the registered voters to the polls—but a U.S. Senate seat was also on the ballot in that election.

A better comparison can be made between 1986 and 1974, since in both years only House (and no statewide) elections were held.12 In 1974, 45.2 percent of registered voters and about 28 percent of the eligible population voted—a marginally better showing than in 1986. In this respect, Virginia reflected the national trend of lower turnout in 1986; the nation’s 37.3 percent rate of participation by the eligible population was the lowest since 1942. Note, though, that Virginia’s 25.4 percent turnout was well under the national participation rate; again, this can be attributed to U.S. Senate and gubernatorial contests being held almost everywhere except in the Old Dominion. Virginia’s turnout rate normally lags only a percentage point or two behind the nationwide average. In 1984, for example, 52.9 percent of the eligible population voted in the U.S., compared to 51.9 percent in Virginia.

Virginia’s 1986 turnout was understandably the lowest in those four districts uncontested by one party: the Fourth (32.1 percent of the registered went to the polls), the Fifth (39.6 percent), the Seventh (31.2 percent), and the Ninth (32.7 percent). Oddly, though, the heated three-way contest in Richmond’s Third District produced only a 39.1 percent turnout, and turnout in Northern Virginia’s Eighth District was also quite low—just 41.0 percent of registered voters. Only three districts drew more than half their registered voters to the polls: the First (56.2 percent), the Second (52.1 percent), and the Sixth (54.1 percent). The Tenth District attracted nearly half (49.3 percent).

BLACK AND SUBURBAN VOTE

With one notable exception, the black vote remained heavily Democratic. By the best estimate, Democrat Owen Pickett’s entire winning margin in the Second District was provided by black voters; he secured a massive 93.4 percent of the vote in Norfolk’s predominantly black precincts listed in Table 2.13 Similarly, First District black Democrat Robert Scott received overwhelming backing (95.3 percent) in black precincts such as the Hampton and Newport News precincts listed in Table 2. And Democrat James Olin in the Sixth District once again benefited from strong black support; for example, 95.8 percent of blacks in the Roanoke precincts shown in Table 2 voted for Olin.

A second, technical amendment that permitted the Virginia Supreme Court to answer questions posed by federal or other state supreme courts gained overwhelming passage, too, with 77.9 percent of the vote. It won in every locality in the state.

Suburban areas across Virginia were not uniformly Republican or Democratic, generally voting for the incumbent of either party, though GOP suburban majorities were usually larger than Democratic ones. Conversely, in the central cities, support for Democratic incumbents was normally far more substantial than Republican pluralities in those cases where GOP incumbents swept to victory. Such is the modern pattern, of course: suburbs are disproportionately Republican and central cities, disproportionately Democratic. In the one open district, the central-city vote of Norfolk was more faithful to the Democratic nominee than the suburban vote of Virginia Beach was to the Republican standard-bearer, thus producing the Democratic pickup of the House seat.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

The only statewide election in Virginia in 1986 was for approval of four amendments to the state constitution. Two involved criminal justice issues and passed easily. The first of those, giving the state the right to appeal certain preliminary rulings by judges in felony cases, was the most discussed of all the ballot issues, with highly visible support provided by Governor Gerald Baliles and law enforcement officials around the Commonwealth. (Other than some prominent defense attorneys, the NAACP was the primary opponent.) The amendment won in all cities and all but two small counties (Brunswick and Greensville), and it secured 74.9 percent of the vote statewide. Despite the NAACP’s opposition, black voters contributed to the amendment’s landslide; in the selected black precincts of Table 2, 72.4 percent of the voters backed the amendment—just a shade below the statewide approval average.

The most controversial measures were the two amendments that concerned voter registration. The first, which garnered a landslide 66.5 percent of the vote and carried all localities except nine counties and five cities,
Shao, received an unusually large 8.6 percent of the vote, even though he spent less than $5,000. (Independent candidates in two-party races rarely manage to secure even 5 percent of the total.)

Many observers attributed Shao's showing to disenchantment with the "negative" tone of the campaign. Pickett aimed harsh barbs at Canada's financial dealings with Landbank Equity Corporation, a Virginia Beach-based second mortgage company under federal investigation, and with Clyde B. Pitchford, Jr., a former Richmond stockbroker convicted of embezzlement and bank fraud. Pickett also capitalized on the year's premiere national issue, drug abuse, by challenging Canada to take a drug urine test and, when Canada initially hesitated, suggesting Canada had something to hide. (Canada did take and pass the test.) For his part, Canada responded by charging that Pickett also had Landbank ties, and that he was guilty of conflict-of-interest in sponsoring a bill designed to help one of his law firm's clients.

Negative tactics did not deprive Pickett of victory, even if Shao's vote was swelled as a consequence. (In fact, since Canada probably carried the white vote and Shao's support was overwhelmingly white, one could argue that Shao's showing actually helped Pickett by drawing white votes disproportionately from Canada.) But in two other Virginia races, "muddling"—as some characterized it—did appear to harm a candidate's chances. In the Roanoke Sixth District, some of Republican Flo Traywick's supporters took out a newspaper advertisement linking Congressman Jim Olin's wife to a "peace" organization with allegedly Communist ties. And in the Northern Virginia Tenth, Democrat John Milliken aired a television advertisement that implied Congressman Frank Wolf had supported "government-written" school prayers when in fact he had not. Both Olin and Wolf claimed, with some plausibility, that their larger-than-expected margins were due partly to their opponents' negative tactics.

**PARTY VOTING IN 1986**

Overall, as Table 1 indicates, Democrats secured their first majority of U.S. House

---

**Table 1**

*Vote by Parties in Virginia General Elections for U.S. Representative, 1966-1986*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>All House Elections</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others a</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Party-Contested House Elections Only** |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |                 |
| Democratic  | 43.9 | 47.4 | 47.2 | 40.7 | 44.8 | 47.0 | 41.0 | 40.5 | 46.3 | 44.1 | 45.2 | 44.4            |
| Republican  | 56.1 | 49.7 | 49.7 | 54.3 | 48.8 | 50.0 | 58.5 | 55.7 | 52.4 | 55.1 | 53.1 | 53.1            |
| Others a    | 0.0  | 2.9  | 3.1  | 5.0  | 6.4  | 3.0  | 0.5  | 3.8  | 1.3  | 0.8  | 1.7  | 2.5             |
| **Totals**  | 100.0| 100.0| 100.0| 100.0| 100.0| 100.0| 100.0| 100.0| 100.0| 100.0| 100.0| 100.0           |

| **Number of Democratic House Seats b** |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |                 |
| 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 |

| **Number of Republican House Seats b** |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |                 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 |

**SOURCE:** Compiled from official election results provided by the State Board of Elections.

a includes write-ins and independent candidates.

b Total number = 10
2), with fully 68.4 percent of black voters in selected precincts voting for it. Even though a small majority of white voters opposed the amendment, the large black margin was enough to secure a narrow win statewide.\textsuperscript{14}

CONCLUSION

The 1986 midterm election was not a particularly memorable one, nationally or in Virginia. The results were not clearcut, with the Democratic net takeover of eight U.S. Senate seats nationwide balanced to some degree by a Republican gain of eight governorships and a minimal Democratic advance of five in the U.S. House. Despite President Reagan's attempt to nationalize the election as a referendum on his popularity, voters decided the contests primarily on state and local issues and personalities. This lack of national focus added to the election's formlessness. Relatively low turnout also deters an analyst from reaching sweeping conclusions or detecting major trends affecting future elections.

Nevertheless, two results of the 1986 congressional elections in Virginia have clear political implications. As one of only twelve states that still have both U.S. Senate seats in GOP hands, Virginia will now have less congressional clout—much less, certainly, than if the Republicans had retained Senate control and John Warner had become chairman of the Armed Services Committee.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14}Assuming that blacks comprised even as little as 9 percent of the statewide electorate, at least 57,250 blacks voted in favor of the amendment; it passed by only 28,741 votes.

\textsuperscript{15}Warner was not certain to have obtained the post in 1987; Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina might have asserted his seniority and taken the chairmanship.

Secondly, Democrats in the Old Dominion can take considerable solace in the course of political events during the Reagan presidency. In 1980 Democrats feared the worst and braced themselves for the Reagan revolution that had already delivered nine of Virginia's ten U.S. House seats to the GOP. But Ronald Reagan will complete his presidency with Democrats holding half the Virginia delegation and having managed two successive sweeps of statewide offices.

If there has been a party realignment in favor of the Republicans during the Reagan era, it has not shown up in Virginia. Given the state's conservative political culture and pro-Reagan bent, Virginia could have been expected to lead the way down the road to realignment. The fact that nothing of the sort has happened suggests that a shift in party ties toward the GOP is still speculative at best in Virginia, and maybe beyond her borders as well.

To get on the mailing list to receive the News Letter each month, just write to News Letter, 207 Minor Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903. Please print or type the complete mailing address, including the Zip Code.