

Letters to the Editor for Feb. 27, 2022

Feb 26, 2022

Fund voter education

Editor, Times-Dispatch:

The recent important news article about a budget proposal to slash funding from the Virginia Department of Elections for voter education should be pause for concern about defunding essential election activities.

The General Assembly makes changes to the voting process each year and these changes can be confusing to the voting public. Misinformation abounds on voting topics as diverse as deadlines for registration to handling ballots. Documented regulations and standards exist for the handling of elections, but these are not well known by the public.

Virginia's government agency overseeing election management should be a source of clear and accurate information. They need adequate funding to continue to do so.

We have seen the public no longer trusts on faith alone. The public needs to know more about the process and voter education is the solution. Voter knowledge and confidence in our election processes are key to our continued democracy.

Jane Newell.

Richmond.League of Women Voters Richmond Metro Area.

Voting rights upheld

Editor, Times-Dispatch:

I applaud members of the Virginia Senate who have upheld voting rights this legislative session, as doing so is an integral part of a functioning and healthy democracy.

A couple years back, state lawmakers passed necessary reforms to voting laws to make it easier for Virginians to participate in the democratic process. The reforms eliminated hurdles to voting that previously have stifled participation. The Senate Privileges and Elections Committee recently rejected a number of bills sent over by the House of Delegates aimed at rolling back this important progress.

Defeated legislation would have reinstated burdensome photo ID requirements. It also would have limited the window for early voting, complicate absentee ballot voting, ended same-day voter registration and eliminated a permanent absentee voter list.

These attacks on voter rights have been pitched as ways to help prevent voter fraud in Virginia, of which there is no evidence. In reality, this legislation would have further disenfranchise Virginians, making it harder for us to participate in our democracy. Our state has a shameful history when it comes to voter disenfranchisement and discrimination.

It's unfortunate we still have to fight to prevent attacks on equal and unobstructed access to the ballot box.

Avohom B. Carpenter.

Chesterfield.

Ranked choice voting

Editor, Times-Dispatch:

Solution-oriented citizens in Richmond are urging elected officials to explore adopting ranked choice voting for City Council elections.

Some problems are crowded elections and primaries at the city, state and federal levels. We are experiencing a divisive political climate that is simultaneously motivating a more engaged electorate to run for office, while causing many others to disengage and become underrepresented. The result is election winners are finishing without majority support when there are multiple candidates running.

Imagine the scenario where there are four candidates running for an elected office. The winner gets 26% of the vote. Are they really the winner, if 74% of the voters voted for someone else?

RCV is better for engaged voters, underrepresented voters, candidates and political strategists. Voters get the freedom to fully express their preferences without having to strategically vote. Places that use RCV have seen increased voter turnout. With RCV you can stop voting against the candidate you like the least and start voting for the candidates you prefer. You can rank one candidate or many. You are free to have back-up choices, if your first choice doesn't win.

Candidates are rewarded with majority support and voter confidence. Campaign strategists get so much more data to help them understand what issues matter to voters and which candidates resonate with them.

Arlington and Fredericksburg are exploring adopting ranked choice voting for County Board and City Council elections, respectively.

Elizabeth Melson.

President of FairVote Virginia. Flint Hill.