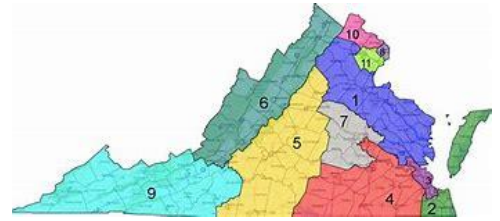


# THE INFORMANT

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER  
PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY ALUMNAE CHAPTER  
DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY INCORPORATED

Volume 3, Issue No. 4



## Georgia on your mind?



### It probably should - Georgia Needs You!

There are several phone bank opportunities available to encourage voters to GOTV for upcoming Georgia run-off elections.

Are you in search of a way to help? Check the following phone bank opportunities with these non-partisan organizations. Help GA voters get to the polls and fill the last two Senate seats.

- ❖ [Virtual Phone Bank for Georgia Runoff Race for U.S. Senate! · Flip the West \(mobilize.us\)](#)
- ❖ <https://fairfight.com> (Stacey Abrams)
- ❖ [Phonebank Central - Reclaim Our Vote \(votinginformation.org\)](#)

## 2020 General Assembly Special Session

The General Assembly officially adjourned its Special Session on November 9 after over 12 weeks of work. Most of the time was spent on revising the budget that was passed in March, which was significantly impacted by COVID-19, and criminal justice reform. The reduced revenues and economic hardships created challenging circumstances for many citizens, and legislation was passed to mitigate some of the hardships. In addition, the budget included protections for renters and ratepayers in response to the pandemic. These protections limit utility shut offs and evictions by continuing both moratoriums and providing funding to pay down consumer utility debt, establish repayment plans, and provide additional rent and mortgage assistance. The revised budget addressed needs in the areas of K-12 education and higher education.

### Education Budget Highlights:

- Restoring funding to expand early childhood education and educator retention incentives.
- Supporting childhood nutrition and school meal programs.
- Restoring \$35.2 million in expanded At-Risk Add-On funding to support low-income students' educational needs in Virginia.
- Providing \$95.2 million in relief to local school divisions, eliminating the impact of the sales tax reforecast on K-12 allocations.
- Including provisions to higher education during these challenging financial times and allocates \$94 million to maintain affordable access to higher education.

The budget also allocated funding to implement long overdue criminal justice reform legislation approved by the General Assembly during the Special Session.

### Criminal Justice Reform Highlights:

- Allowing local governments to create **civilian review boards** empowered with a subpoena and disciplinary authority. (*HB5055, Herring, effective July 1, 2021*)
- Banning **no-knock search warrants**. (*HB5099, Aird, effective March 1, 2021*)
- Downgrading some minor traffic violations to secondary offenses, thus limiting officers' use of **pretextual traffic stops** (e.g., pulling over a driver for having tinted windows or an object hanging from their rearview mirror – technically traffic violations – to catch the driver potentially committing other crimes). (*HB5058, Hope, effective March 1, 2021*)
- **Eliminating the "jury penalty:"** where defendants who exercise their constitutional right to trial by jury must also face the risk of much harsher jury sentencing if found guilty. Now, defendants will be able to choose trial by jury while judges retain sentencing power, ideally leading to fairer plea bargains. (*SB5007, Morrissey, effective July 1, 2021*)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS



Merry Christmas and  
Happy New Year!

- Δ January 13-Social Action Committee Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Δ January 20-NoVA Chapters 2021 Virtual Inauguration Party, 7-9 p.m.
- Δ January 21- NoVA Chapters Virtual Workshop, 7-9 p.m.
- Δ Delta Days General Assembly-TBD
- Δ Delta Days Nation's Capital-Virtual-April 24-25

## Congratulations!

Soror Christie Blackmon, winner of the November *Informant*, "not so shabby prize" readership contest!

### Social Action Committee

Chair, Bonita Sherman

### Social Action Newsletter Team:

Deborah Campbell, Daphine Jackson, Clarice Torian

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## Virginia's Redistricting Commission:

The Redistricting Commission Amendment was passed by Virginians on November 3 with 65.69 percent of the vote.

With the aim of eliminating gerrymandering, the new redistricting commission will have 16 members: eight legislators and eight citizens. These 16 members will be evenly divided between democrats and republicans.

Leaders in both parties have announced the legislators picked to serve on the commission. The eight citizens will be chosen later by retired judges from a list prepared by the majority and minority leadership of the VA Senate and House of Delegates. Those selected must represent the racial, ethnic, geographic and gender diversity of Virginia.

The chosen eight lawmakers will review the citizen applications and submit nominees to the panel of retired circuit court judges, who were chosen by members of the General Assembly from a list supplied by Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons of the Supreme Court of VA.

The maps developed by the panel will be sent to the General Assembly for an up-or-down vote with no opportunity to amend them. If the maps are rejected, the Supreme Court of Virginia will draw the maps.



## Redistricting Commission Application Process:

Applications have opened for citizens to serve and must be received by **December 28, 2020**. To be eligible, applicants must have been a Virginia resident and a registered voter for at least the past three years, and they must have voted in at least two of the past three elections. Anyone who has held or run for political office; been employed by a campaign or office holder; or who has been a registered lobbyist within the past five years **will not** be eligible to participate, nor will any of their close relatives. The application form will include questions about education and work history, although there are no minimum requirements for eligibility.

Applicants must follow **all** instructions for completing the application form, as incomplete applications **cannot** be processed. All sections of the application form must be answered legibly, completely, and truthfully for a determination regarding eligibility for service on the VA Redistricting Commission. Apply at: <https://redistricting.dls.virginia.gov/Default.aspx>.

Applications may be returned by email to, [varedist@dls.virginia.gov](mailto:varedist@dls.virginia.gov), faxed to (804) 698-1899, or mailed directly to the Division of Legislative Services, Attn: Selection Committee, 900 E. Main Street, Richmond, VA 23219.

**NOTE: Applications must be received by December 28, 2020**

## Election Day Results

If you are interested in knowing the official 2020 Election Results in the State of Virginia visit the links below at the Virginia Department of Elections website. You will find the turnout statistics for the President, Congress, General Assembly, Referendums and results by locality [here](#).

## General Assembly (continued)

- **Mandating racial bias, de-escalation, and crisis intervention training** for police. The statewide standardized curriculum for this training will be created by a committee made up of diverse, qualified members. (*HB5109, Hope, effective March 1, 2021; HB5108, Guzman, effective March 1, 2021*)
- Creating a "**Marcus Alert**" system that will deploy mental health crisis response teams to mental health emergencies along with police. (*HB5043, Bourne, effective July 1, 2021*)
- Limiting police use of **chokeholds** and requiring intervention in instances of excessive use of force. (*HB5069, Carroll Foy, effective March 1, 2021; HB5029, McQuinn, effective March 1, 2021*)
- Allowing some incarcerated individuals to be released earlier through **earned sentence credits** or compassionate release. (*HB5148, Scott, effective July 1, 2021; SB5018, Bell, effective March 1, 2021*)
- Making false, **bias-motivated 911 calls** a hate crime. (*HB5098, Askeew, effective March 1, 2021*)
- Authorizing the state to inspect **ICE detention facilities**. (*SB5017, Boysko, effective March 1, 2021*)

This link provides a comprehensive overview of the criminal justice reform bills that were passed.

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2020/11/11/every-criminal-justice-reform-that-passed-in-virginia-after-george-floyds-death/>

The final day of the Special Session was spent on the adoption of language establishing the bipartisan commission on redistricting. This action was in response to Virginia voters' approval of the Constitutional Amendment 1 on Election Day. The language defined guidelines on the selection, composition and operation of the commission.

Read [this article](#) for further details and see the VA Redistricting Commission article in this newsletter.

In total, the General Assembly passed approximately 50+ bills during Special Session that reformed Virginia's criminal justice system, accounted for the overall impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and advanced racial justice. Click on these links for more information.

<https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/2020-virginia-special-session-report-79981/>

<https://wamu.org/story/20/11/10/virginia-lawmakers-address-redistricting-vmi-investigation-as-special-session-wraps/>

### Mortgage and Rent Relief

The deadline to apply for Rent and Mortgage Relief program through the Northern Virginia Family Services ended on November 30, 2020. Beginning this month, the application process will be centralized through a Statewide call center. If your income has been affected by the coronavirus and you have not already started the application process, please call (703) 962-1884 or 211 (which is 211 Virginia) for more information. A support center portal will be set up soon.

As a recap, the Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP) was designed to support and ensure housing stability across the commonwealth during the coronavirus pandemic. Depending on availability of funds and household need, the RMRP may provide financial assistance for rent or mortgage payments for eligible households. This includes financial assistance for rent or mortgage payments past due beginning April 1, 2020 and onward. Financial assistance is a one-time payment with opportunity for renewal based on availability of funding and the household's need for additional assistance and continued eligibility.

RMRP may be able to provide rent and mortgage relief for households who have experienced a loss of income due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Check out [this site](#) for eligibility requirements.

Other Important Resources: [COVID-19 economic impact | can't pay rent or mortgage | Stay Home Virginia](#)  
[COVID-19 Housing Protections | Stay Home Virginia](#)