

DC FOR DEMOCRAC ENDORSEMENTS

NOVEMBER 3, 2009, VIRGINIA GENERAL ELECTION

Voted on August 12, 2009



GOVERNOR - Creigh Deeds (D)

This is an open seat, since Virginia allows only a single four-year term for the governorship. The major party candidates are Democrat Creigh Deeds, who won his primary by a surprisingly large margin over Terry McAuliffe and Brian Moran, and Republican Bob McDonnell, who was unopposed in his primary. Deeds was perceived as more moderate than his opponents, having served in the legislature from a rural part of the state for a number of terms. Deeds and McDonnell faced each other in the race for attorney general in 2006, and McDonnell won after a recount by only 360 votes. McDonnell ran as an avowed conservative, consistent with his prior stands, but portrayed a more moderate and pragmatic image in the primary this year in an obvious attempt to attract the support of independents and moderate Democrats in the general election.

It may not be accurate to characterize Deeds as a progressive, but compared to McDonnell he is clearly less likely to promote or support conservative, anti-progressive policies. In addition, this race is vitally important because redistricting will occur during the term, and the party in control of the governorship will have the opportunity to influence how district lines are drawn, in state as well as congressional districts. McDonnell's election would hurt chances to continue to move Virginia toward being a "blue" state.



LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR - Jody Wagner (D)

The lieutenant governor's position is not limited to a single term. The incumbent, Bill Bolling, a Republican, is running for reelection. Although the post is often seen as a stepping stone to the governorship, Bolling agreed to step aside in favor of the Republican attorney general, McDonnell. Although Bolling is a conservative, his influence appears to have been limited, with few accomplishments during his first term, perhaps because he and the governor are of different parties. The Democratic challenger is Jody Wagner, a lawyer from the Norfolk area who served first as state treasurer and was appointed by Governor Kaine to be his secretary of finance. While relatively low profile, she gets high marks for her performance. She won her primary race over two opponents by substantial margins and is viewed as a moderate somewhere in the range between Warner and Kaine.



ATTORNEY GENERAL- Steve Shannon (D)

The choice in this race is clearcut. Ken Cuccinelli is among the most conservative members of the State Senate, and one of the rapidly vanishing Republican legislators from Northern Virginia. Steve Shannon, who represents House District 35 (see below) is a moderate Democrat. He is a former Fairfax County prosecutor, worked closely with Governor Warner to win passage of the historic 2004 state budget, and was a leader in the passage of the 2008 Higher Education Bond Package, resulting in the largest capital investment in Virginia's university and college infrastructure in recent history. He and his wife Abby co-founded the AMBER Alert system in Northern Virginia to help rescue abducted children. Compared with Cuccinelli's conservative policies and rhetoric and comparatively meager public accomplishments, Shannon is the clear choice.



HOUSE OF DELEGATES, DISTRICT 35 (Vienna), open seat) - Mark Keam (D)

Of the four races we are considering, this one is clearly the most accessible for DCFD canvassing. We would spend less time in transit to and from the site, and we are less likely to need to rely on cars and drivers. Less travel time means more doors knocked!

This race between Republican Jim Hyland and Democrat Mark Keam is for the seat vacated by Steve Shannon (see above). Although the district is considered slightly Democratic, Keam will have a very hard race on his hands. Hyland is a lifelong resident with great name recognition (due, in part, to having run in several prior elections, albeit unsuccessfully). Keam was born in Korea and lived as a child in Vietnam and Australia before his family immigrated to the United States. Both have extensive federal government experience (Hyland for John Warner and Kay Bailey Hutchison; Keam with the Federal Communications Commission, Small Business Administration, and Senate Democratic leadership), though neither has a legislative record to point to. Keam was endorsed in the primary by many netroots activists, NARAL, and the Sierra Club, as well as Congressman Gerry Connolly. He was attacked by civil libertarians, however, for having lobbied for Verizon to obtain retroactive immunity for the release of records to national security agencies.

Keam has an advantage on the merits in our opinion, and his support by local progressives is reassuring. Considering that control of the House of Delegates hangs in the balance, we think it is important to protect this previously Democratic seat.



HOUSE OF DELEGATES, DISTRICT 86 (Herndon) - Stevens Miller (D)

Less accessible for DCFD canvassers than District 35, District 86 is nevertheless the second-easiest district for us to get to. As indicated above, this is a factor to be weighed seriously in deciding which races to select.

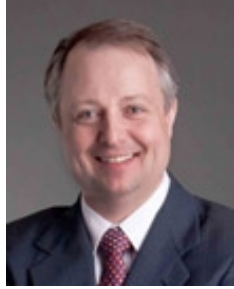
This is a close contest pitting a long-term Republican incumbent, Tom Rust, against an experienced Democratic challenger, Stevens Miller. Rust has been in the House of Delegates for eight years, prior to which he served eight years as mayor of Herndon. Miller is a member of the Loudon County Board of Supervisors and has been active throughout the region as a member of the Council of Governments and other bodies. Both have long and impressive lists of memberships in community organizations and recognition for their service. Both are businessmen, Rust being an engineer and Miller an entrepreneur in forensic technology. Searching Rust's website reveals no legislative accomplishments for which he takes credit, despite apparently earnest commitment to pursuing alternative energy. Given the thinness of Rust's record after eight years, perhaps it is time to give the challenger a chance. Furthermore, with control of the House of Delegates so important this year, progressive voters should support the Democratic challenger to attempt to pick up a critical and winnable seat.



HOUSE OF DELEGATES DISTRICT 67 (Loudoun, west of Herndon) - Chuck Caputo (D)

Chuck Caputo, the Democratic incumbent, is being challenged by Republican Jim LeMunyon. Caputo is a retired federal government Senior Executive Service employee and staunch advocate for public education. Despite only two terms in the House of Delegates he has sponsored or co-sponsored an impressive array of initiatives in the areas of job creation, education, transportation, and energy/environment. LeMunyon, on the other hand, is an untested conservative. He was a deputy assistant secretary of commerce in the Bush administration and has been a technology entrepreneur. His political philosophy in his own words: “limited government, low taxes, individual liberty, and a culture of life for the aging, infirm, and unborn, are sound political principles.”

While this district is third farthest from DC, the Caputo campaign is offering their help with transportation.



HOUSE OF DELEGATES DISTRICT 13 (near Manassas) - John Bell (D)

This district is the greatest distance from DC and presenting the greatest accessibility problem.

The incumbent is conservative Republican Bob Marshall. His challenger is John Bell. Marshall has been a member of the House of Delegates since 1991 and is perhaps its most prominent conservative leader. He ran for the Republican nomination for the seat being vacated by Senator John Warner and lost to former governor Gilmore by a narrow margin. He is ardently pro-life, opposing abortion under all circumstances, and authored the Marshall-Newman Amendment that resulted in the passage by referendum of the most anti-gay marriage amendment of any state in the country. His Democratic challenger is retired Air Force major John Bell, the recipient of numerous commendations for his work in the area of finance. Bell was active in the Obama campaign and describes himself as a “moderate Democrat”, but has revealed little of his positions on controversial issues. He may be the strongest opponent Marshall has ever faced, but still rates as the underdog.