The principle of “one person, one vote” requires states to redraw their election districts every 10 years in order to account for changes in population. In most states, legislators can manipulate district boundaries to benefit their own political party. This manipulation, called gerrymandering, weakens voters’ ability to affect election outcomes and exercise accountability over government. Distorted election districts lead to skewed representation and legislators who are less responsive to the will of the voters.

In 2013, Virginia Democrats won all statewide elections, but Republicans won a supermajority in the Virginia House of Delegates. Gerrymandering by Virginia legislators who are not responsive to their constituents’ preferences has harmed voters in the following ways:

- **Minimum wage**: In 2016, the Republican-controlled Virginia Legislature passed a law barring local governments from increasing the minimum wage; the law was later vetoed by Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D). A 2014 poll found that two-thirds of Virginians support a higher minimum wage.

- **Medicaid expansion**: A recent poll found that 69 percent of voters support the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, but the Virginia Legislature rejected the expansion, even though the federal government would initially cover almost all of the cost.

- **Civil rights**: A similar percentage of voters polled supported a law preventing discrimination against LGBT people. However, LGBT nondiscrimination bills have failed in the past three sessions. Wide majorities of Virginians also support same-sex adoption and oppose businesses discriminating against LGBT people, yet the Legislature has passed laws allowing discrimination against same-sex couples in the name of religious freedom.

- **Education funding**: The Legislature has slashed education funding, despite 72 percent of Virginia voters opposing cuts to K-12 education.
**FIGURE 3**

**Distorted districts in Virginia**

Fifty-six percent of voters chose Republican candidates for the Virginia House of Delegates in 2015, but the GOP secured a supermajority of seats.

![Distorted districts in Virginia](image)

**Endnotes**


