



VIRGINIA  
HOUSE DEMS



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Friends & Allies  
**FR:** Amy Friedman, House Democratic Caucus  
Matt Calderon, Senate Democratic Caucus  
Sam Signori, The Majority Project  
**RE** How We Stop MAGA Extremists from Taking Total Control, 8 Weeks To GO  
**DT:** September 9, 2023

With two-months until election day 2023, the picture couldn't be clearer. The extreme wing (known as MAGA) of the Republican Party is trying to take total control of state government – re-electing their majority in the House of Representatives and flipping control of the Senate of Virginia. They're power-hungry and they're extreme and if they get control, they'll take away our rights and freedoms and put the middle class at risk. The consequences couldn't be more alarming.

Internal and public data has demonstrated that the more people find out what's at stake in this election, the better our position becomes. *Below you'll find how we can win the messaging war and the numbers needed to stop a MAGA takeover this November.*

- **Battlefield Analysis:** What's at play in the Virginia House and Senate
- **What's on The Ballot:** abortion, gun laws, education, extremism, the budget

The [Wall Street Journal](#) recently called these “the most important elections of 2023.”

### BATTLEFIELD ANALYSIS

The battlefield of key races continues to take shape and it reveals the opportunity for Democrats to stop this Republican takeover.

**Republicans' path to win the state Senate can be stopped.** They start the cycle with only 13 incumbents running for re-election. In fact, Joe Biden won 24 of the 40 seats during his 2020 campaign. Even at their highwater mark in 2021, Governor Youngkin only won 20 of the 40 seats. To try and take control of the state Senate, they need to elect extremists like Juan Pablo Segura (SD-31) and Danny Diggs (SD-24) who support a ban on abortion. If voters know what is at stake and how extreme these candidates are, there are not enough right-wing districts in the senate of Virginia for them to take power.

**Control of the House of Delegates is at play.** The data makes clear that Speaker Gilbert's MAGA Republican majority in the House can be defeated. In fact, control of the House has changed in both of the last two elections, 2019 and 2021. To stop them from having control, Democrats only need to gain three seats in the House of Delegates. Of the 100 seats in the state House, Joe Biden won 60 of the districts during his 2020 campaign. Even at their high water mark in 2021, Governor Youngkin only won 52 of them.

**The ground game is in full swing.** While Republican operatives will hold promotional parties and events, we have people knocking on doors in every swing district – warning people about this extreme, MAGA takeover of state government. We have launched an unprecedented coordinated effort, utilizing every available medium to drive absentee and early voting for the 2023 state legislative elections. In addition, we have over 100 staff members already in the field, a seven-figure early and absentee vote effort, including a robust field program with a combination of collaborative door-to-door and phone-to-phone efforts designed to get Democrats to the polls in record numbers this November. Organizers expect to knock on over one million doors by election day.

## FIVE STRATEGIC REALITIES

As the contours of these races become clear, there are five strategic realities that dominate.

**#1: Abortion is on the ballot.** Earlier this year, Republicans in the Virginia General Assembly nearly passed an abortion ban but were stopped by one vote in the state Senate. The MAGA extremists have already shown us they want to change Virginia’s current laws and ban abortion if they get complete control this November.

[WLSL](#): "Three bills proposing a ban on abortions in the Commonwealth have been rejected..."

[VPM](#): "Democrats in Virginia’s Senate struck down three GOP bills Thursday that would have restricted abortion..."

Virginia is currently the only southern state remaining where abortion rights haven’t been taken away since the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, but that would change if they take power.

*People are starting to notice.*

[AXIOS](#): “Democrats are mobilizing for what they widely view as the next major referendum on abortion rights: this fall's Virginia state legislature elections. Why it matters: Virginia is the lone southern state that hasn't banned or restricted abortion since the Supreme Court struck down federal protection of the procedure and provides another off-year test of its potency as a campaign issue following Ohio's special election this month.”

[DAILY BEAST](#): "Virginia is the only Southern state that has not passed a ban or heavy restrictions on abortion in the aftermath of the Supreme Court overturning Roe. It has not been for lack of trying. In the last legislative session early this year, Republicans held committee hearings on three anti-abortion bills, including a 15-week ban backed by Youngkin with exceptions for rape and incest, and for the mother’s life. All were blocked by the Democratic-controlled Senate. That dynamic would change in an instant if Youngkin and his party are successful."

[THE NEW REPUBLIC](#): “Should Republicans hang onto their majority in the state House and flip the state Senate, odds are good that Youngkin would be emboldened to enact a more conservative agenda, potentially including new restrictions on abortion in one of the last bastions for access to reproductive care in the South. “The Senate blue brick wall was the only thing that stopped us [in] the last two years

from banning abortion in Virginia,” said Susan Swecker, the chair of the Virginia Democratic Party. “We cannot turn the whole state government over to the MAGA party.”

[POLITICO](#): “But Democrats in the ‘next abortion battleground’ think this year will be a different story. [...] With a split legislature, Youngkin has faced roadblocks in passing some of his top priorities — including a proposed 15-week abortion ban. Democrats in the state Senate stymied that effort earlier this year, and continue to warn of a repeat attempt from Republicans. (Democrats hold a slim majority in the state Senate, and the GOP has narrow control of the state House.)”

[19TH NEWS](#): “Voters in Virginia will decide control of the state’s legislature this fall, choosing to cement the state’s Democratic “brick wall” against abortion restrictions or clear a path for Republicans to enact a 15-week ban... “Abortion access in Virginia since the end of federal abortion rights has hung on Democrats’ slim majority in the state Senate — or what Democrats called a “brick wall” against abortion restrictions and other conservative proposals coming from Youngkin and the GOP-controlled House.”

Democratic candidates are making the case like [Russet Perry in SD-31](#) and [Michael Feggans in HD-97](#).

**#2: They’ll weaken gun laws and increase costs for working people.** As [former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords recently wrote](#), “Guns are now the number one cause of death for children and minors. We cannot accept this as our new normal. That’s why this year’s election is so important in Virginia. If radical Republicans take control, much of the progress we’ve made over the past 10 years will be lost. Not only will they not fix the problem, they’ll also go backward, weakening gun laws and making the problem worse.”

The [facts](#) are clear that if extreme MAGA Republicans get total control of state government in this election, they will weaken gun laws, making communities less safe and schools less secure. In addition, as a recent report from [Freedom Virginia revealed](#), these same Republicans opposed lowering prescription drug prices while the drug companies were making record profits.

**#3: Their education narrative is falling apart.** Republicans were hoping to weaponize education as part of their plan to take control of the state government. But, people are finding out that they’re for defunding public education and instilling extreme culture wars in the classrooms, making it harder for students to learn what they need to succeed. In fact, the latest [national](#) polling shows Democrats with an 8-point advantage on “improving the quality of schools” and a 7-point advantage on “looking out for children.” While 58% of people identify children learning as a top priority, a large share also identify teacher pay (37%) and lack of funding (31%).

**#4: Their candidates and leadership are too extreme.** Each day that goes by reveals another example of how extreme the GOP candidates really are. Just recently, the [Washington Post](#) uncovered a top GOP candidate (John Stirrup, HD-21) with a plan for a “100% ban” and a “total ban” on abortion. The Richmond Times-Dispatch found that top GOP candidates [backed](#) radical crisis centers designed to take away women’s rights to an abortion. Other GOP candidates like Tara Durant (SD-28) would jail doctors for performing abortions or Carrie Coyner (HD75) who supported forced ultrasounds and Emily Brewer (SD-17) who called planned parenthood a terrorist organization.

**#5: The budget debate backfired on them.** Throughout the budget debate, two things became clear: (A) Republicans were unable to fulfill their fiscal responsibility and pass a state budget on time; (B) The only priority

they had in this debate was to give more tax breaks to the very rich and the biggest corporations. Democrats stopped them from giving outrageous, unfair new tax breaks to big corporations. The GOP tried to give more than \$1 billion in new tax breaks to big corporations and the very wealthy, but Democrats stopped them. These big companies already don't pay what they owe but Youngkin and the GOP tried to give them all more record-breaking tax breaks at the expense of working people.

An overwhelming 75% of people oppose tax cuts for corporations (WAPO Post-Schar School, 3/26/23).

## **THE BOTTOM LINE**

In just about two months, Virginians will vote in one of the most consequential elections of their lifetimes. We've launched an unprecedented effort utilizing every tool-in-the-toolbox to ensure these Republicans don't take total control of the Virginia State Legislature this November. The potential consequences for our rights are alarming. Abortion, gun safety, education, and affordability are all on the ballot.