

## Ten Years of Good Politics

*Gathering Virginia politicians and scholars together*

**F**ounded in 1997 by University of Virginia professor Larry Sabato, the Center for Politics began with a simple mission that remains unchanged a decade later: To improve civic education and promote the value of citizen participation in politics through comprehensive research, pragmatic analysis, and innovative educational programs.

The Center's very first conference in the summer of 1998, then called the Virginia Governor's Conference, focused on the two terms of Governor Mills E. Godwin, Jr. and brought together prominent figures in Virginia politics, past and

present, to explore important aspects of his administrations. In tandem with this conference, the Center partnered with the Community Idea Stations (Richmond and Charlottesville PBS) to produce a documentary on Godwin's life and legacy. Over the years this partnership has grown into a tradition of examining the administrations of Virginia's more recent elected officials and the annual conference has been dubbed the Virginia Political History Project. Since 1998, in conjunction with the Community Idea Stations, the Center for Politics has

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DAN ADDISON



Since 1999, the Center has grown its Youth Leadership Initiative from being a part of the civics classrooms in 14 Virginia schools to reaching millions of students across the nation and around the world.

produced documentaries on Governors Holton, Dalton, Robb, Baliles, and Wilder, and Lieutenant Governor Reynolds. In 2006, the Center celebrated women leaders in Virginia politics, and in 2007, the Center kicked off its tenth anniversary

election cycle in retrospect, but also the current campaigns, upcoming elections, and prospects for the future health of American democracy.

To address relevant issues in politics, both positive and negative, in 1999 the Center created the National Symposium Series. This annual series has involved a variety of events and partnerships with civic organizations and academic institutions from across the nation. Previous topics have included women and politics, youth civic engagement, political humor, wartime politics, presidential selection, and character in politics. In 2007 the Center turned its focus to the U.S. Constitution and how our found-

miere in September of 2008.

Since 1999, the Center has grown its Youth Leadership Initiative from a small pilot project in 14 Virginia schools to a comprehensive civics education program that reaches millions of students across the nation and around the world. YLI combines technology with civic participation and community service to assist primary and secondary school teachers in creating an engaged classroom environment. YLI created the official curriculum website for America's 400th Anniversary commemoration, which consisted of an original series of lesson plans on the Jamestown settlement. Additionally, the Center hosted the



by examining the last decade of Virginia politics and looking to what the next ten years may hold.

Broadening the lens to include national politics, for the past ten years the Center has hosted another annual event, the American Democracy Conference, which recognizes elections as seminal events in the life of our democracy. Not only do campaigns and elections set the direction of our republic, but they also shed light on the state of our nation's political health. It is altogether fitting then, that an examination of our democracy takes place alongside current campaigns and elections. In partnership with National Journal's *The Hotline*, the Center hosts this gathering to examine not only the most recent

ing document fits within today's world with modern-day issues not experienced by the Founders and Framers, such as population growth, national expansion, campaign finance, the growing influence of media and technology, and Congressional representation in an era of booming state populations. Last October 2007, the series culminated with a "National Constitutional Convention" in Washington, D.C., during which scholars, students, political analysts, appointed and elected government officials, and the general public discussed the history of the Constitution and potential reforms. A documentary on the Constitution and ideas for and against reform, again in partnership with the Community Idea Stations, is in production and will pre-

International Youth Democracy Summit, during which 300 high school student leaders from all over the world met at the University to discuss the importance of civic engagement to the founding of Jamestown, as well as to the creation and support of democracies across the globe.

Over the past decade the Center for Politics has also hosted a Virginia gubernatorial debate and a U.S. Senate debate, published and promoted various books on politics and government, provided financial awards for students and teachers to promote civic excellence and engagement, held events on careers in politics and government, and hosted some of the nation's most important political figures.

## Why is Politics Still a Good Thing?

The guiding philosophy of the Center for Politics is one that views politics as the glue that holds together the most diverse democracy on the face of the earth. Politics is the oil that lubricates the creaky machinery of bureaucracy to make it more responsive.

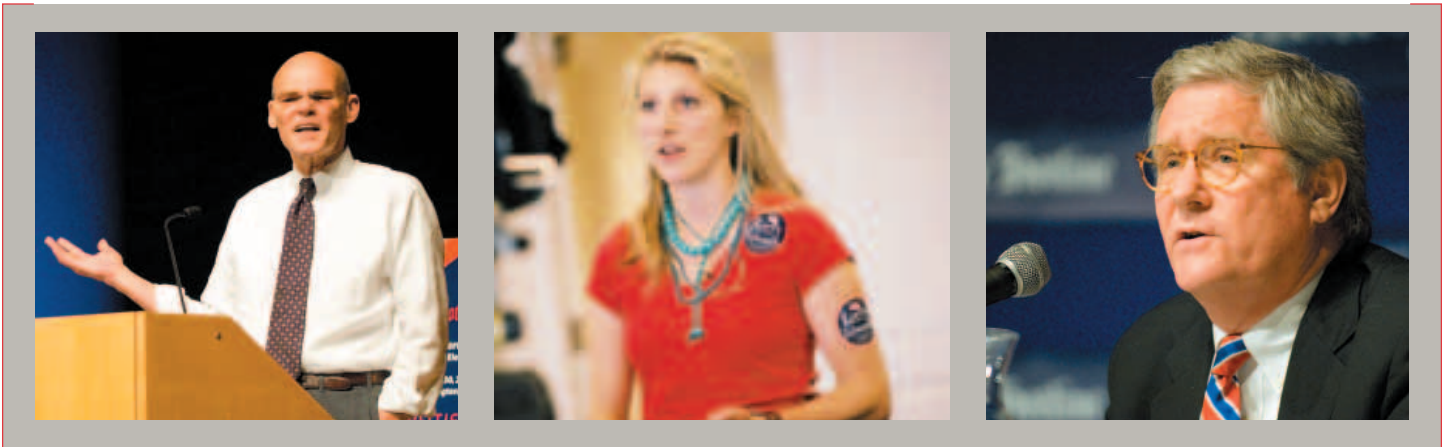
"The Center promotes the value and importance of compromise in politics, but we also refuse to accept as an excuse for apathy and disinterest that politics has become too controversial," said Chief of Staff Ken Stroue. "In a nation as large and diverse as ours, it is unrealistic to expect that our politics should be

tension among people with competing ideas and visions. That is the system that Washington, Jefferson, Madison and our other Founders designed and intended. However, this is not to suggest that one must simply endure those aspects with which one disagrees or finds distasteful.

As Center Director Larry Sabato observes in his latest book, *A More Perfect Constitution*, even the Founders expected there to be problems with politics in the development of the new nation. In his farewell address to the nation, George Washington himself warned that political parties "are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious,

American understand that the only way that lasting change occurs in American democracy is through the political process, and the way to change politics is not to sit on the sidelines, but to get in the game. We look at the present and the past not as boring lessons of history, but as sources to inspire both current and future generations to be active in the decisions and processes that shape politics and government.

The tie that binds each citizen to the other is not that we agree on every – or even any – political issue, but rather that we share an understanding of the obligation we each have as citizens to participate in the political dialogue



without controversy. But there's always room for improvement and that is our goal."

John Adams once said, "I study politics...so that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy...in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain." It would be pretentious, indeed, to suggest that we study politics at the Center solely for the benefits that such study may inure to future generations. The truth is we also actually enjoy politics, and we hope to inspire others to not only enjoy it, but get involved with it as well.

Today, with a viable two-party system, we should expect a degree of

and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion." Likewise, Thomas Jefferson concluded in 1789, in a letter to his friend James Madison, that "No society can make a perpetual constitution, or even a perpetual law. The earth belongs always to the living generation." Madison responded in agreement.

The Center for Politics exists not to glorify the flaws of politics, but to provide ordinary citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in politics...as Washington and Jefferson had hoped; to help every

of our time and thereby ensure the safe passage of democracy from one generation to the next. We hope that you will continue to join us in this endeavor and look forward to the next ten years of promoting good politics! ★

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# Crystal Ball Re-launched for 2008

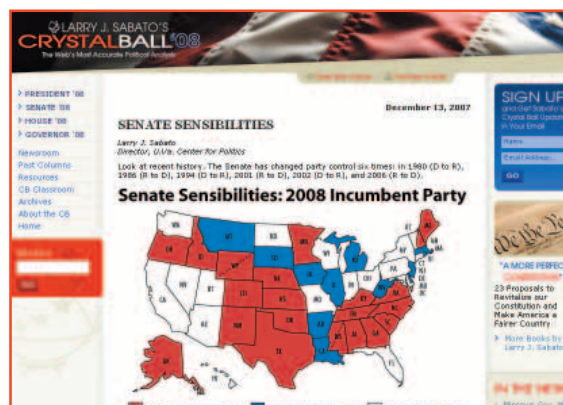
Site rated most accurate gets even better



In January 2008, the Center for Politics' political analysis and forecasting website, *Larry J. Sabato's Crystal Ball*, unveiled a new design format for the 2008 elections for the U.S. House, Senate, governorships and the already-exciting contest for president. Located at [www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball](http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball), the completely remodeled site features a fresh new look and clean, user-friendly organizational layout.

Building on its success in the 2006 midterm elections, where the Crystal Ball was rated as having the web's most accurate political analysis based on correctly predicting the outcome of every race for the Senate, all but one governorship and the exact 29-seat net change in the House as of Election Day, the site expanded its coverage in 2008 to include the presidential nominating contests and the general election battles in all 50 states.

The new *Crystal Ball* site features weekly articles from Center director Larry Sabato, as well as featured columnists like Rhodes Cook, in addition to an "Election Countdown" clock, a comprehensive list of presidential primary and caucus dates, Congressional filing deadlines and resources for students, teachers, journalists and political junkies alike. ★



Visit the Crystal Ball at [www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball](http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball)



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## Documentary Series Goes Constitutional

Since its founding, the Center for Politics in partnership with the Community Idea Stations (WCVE and WCVW Richmond PBS, WHTJ Charlottesville PBS), has built a reputation for the production of quality documentaries. The inaugural documentary in the series was produced in 1998 and focused upon the life and legacy of Virginia Governor Mills Godwin Jr. Subsequent documentaries were produced on the administrations of Virginia Governors Holton, Dalton, Robb, Baliles, and Wilder, and Lieutenant Governor J. Sargeant Reynolds. "Wilder: An American First" was broadcast nationally, and the production became the recipient of a Communicator Award of Excellence and three Telly Awards in the categories of Educational Film or Video, Cultural Film or Video, and Documentary Film or Video. "Sarge Reynolds: A Documentary" won a Telly Award in the category of Documentary Film or Video and an Award of Distinction from The Videographer Awards.

As a follow-up to the Center's "National Constitutional Convention," which took place in October 2007, the Center has once again partnered with the Community Idea Stations to produce a documentary, this time with a focus on the U.S. Constitution. In addition to providing a historical review of our founding document, this documentary will explore why it is important that Americans become more educated about their Constitution, how it fits within the context of modern-day politics and issues, and whether or not there is a need for constitutional reform. Among those interviewed for this documentary are Senator Bob Dole, Ambassador Geraldine Ferraro, Senator John Warner, Governor Lowell Weicker and University of Virginia professors Larry Sabato and Julian Bond.

This newest documentary on the Constitution will debut on Virginia public television stations in September 2008, coinciding with Constitution Day. ★

# Upcoming Events



## 10th Annual American Democracy Conference

Each year, the Center for Politics, in partnership with National Journal's *The Hotline*, presents the American Democracy Conference. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Center will hold the 10th Annual American Democracy Conference in the nation's capital.

The conference will bring together leading journalists, Beltway insiders, political experts and academics to examine the recent presidential primaries and caucuses, as well as the upcoming conventions, campaigns, and Election Day 2008. Topics for discussion

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will include front-loading of primaries, primary and caucus results, past and future campaign strategies, voting trends and demographics, analysis of Election 2008 from both sides of the aisle, and many more relevant and exciting topics.

To be held in Washington, D.C. this fall, the 10th Annual American Democracy Conference will be free to the public with advance registration. Visit [www.CenterforPolitics.org](http://www.CenterforPolitics.org) for updated conference information.

## Voter Registration Continues as National Outreach Effort

In this galvanized election year, the Center for Politics and affiliated students and organizations are busy registering new voters for the 2008 election. Just as primaries and caucuses across the nation are seeing record youth turnout, students at the University are preparing their peers in record numbers to participate in this historic election.

Since 2004, the Center for Politics and the University of Virginia have been a part of the National Campaign for Civic and Political Engagement with the Harvard Institute of Politics and 20 other member schools, and the Center has developed a strategic plan for campus-based and student-led voter education, registration and get-out-the-vote drives.

While University of Virginia students lead the Charlottesville and Albemarle recruiting efforts, the Center for Politics provides guidance, training, and resources for participants. Center staff is also responsible for facilitating working relationships with local offices of voter registration.

The Coalition is coordinated by two Center for Politics interns who work with student groups and University departments. Many of these politically

active students in the coalition are volunteering with their choice of the presidential campaigns this year.

### **Series to Examine the Constitution in Today's Politics**

As an extension of the National Constitutional Convention held on October 19, 2007, and Professor Larry Sabato's recent publication, *A More Perfect Constitution*, the Center for Politics will host the first in a series of conferences on "Constitutional Challenges" beginning late spring of 2008.

Constitutional reform is a topic that is of increasing concern within modern public discourse. This presidential election has seen candidates from all parties discuss the need for adhering to or amending the Constitution. Almost daily we hear discussions about the Electoral College's role in presidential selection, an indication that the citizenry is beginning to more closely scrutinize the structures and protocol outlined in the Constitution. The "Constitutional Challenges" series will bring together constitutional scholars, civic organizations, students and the public to discuss how our founding document affects our lives.

All events in the series will be held in Charlottesville, Virginia. Visit [www.CenterforPolitics.org](http://www.CenterforPolitics.org) for updated information on the Constitutional Challenges series. ★

## **Senator Clinton**



### ***Democratic Presidential Candidate Visits Center, Sabato's 101 Class***

On February 11, 2008 following invitation to all the presidential candidates, the Center for Politics and U.Va. Professor Larry J. Sabato welcomed Senator Hillary Clinton to Sabato's Introduction to American Politics class. Senator Clinton, one of the candidates for the Democratic nomination for President, spoke to students, faculty, staff and guests in the auditorium of Old Cabell Hall at the University. "She was the first to say 'yes'" said Sabato. "We'll be delighted to welcome any of the other candidates at any time."

Senator Clinton spent most of her time answering questions from students, on topics ranging from the political figures who have influenced her career to her proposed policies on taxes, health care, and college tuition. Both Professor Sabato and Senator Clinton remarked favorably on how substantive and policy-focused the students' questions were, noting the content was a nice break from conversations about polling and, in the words of Senator Clinton, other "entertainment politics." Looking to the future, Clinton said it was encouraging to see so many students and young people getting involved in the political process, and hoped that instead of treating politics like a game, they would remember Sabato's mantra for the class: "Politics is a good thing!"

# Taking Charge!

*YLI Students Engage with the Constitution*

Change was in the air last fall as thousands of classrooms discussed the Constitution as a part of the Youth Leadership Initiative's National Mock Constitutional Convention. Students from schools across the nation studied the history of the Constitution,

debated proposed changes and voted as to whether those changes should be enacted.

Polls opened at the beginning of October for a two-week voting period during which over 450,000 votes were cast in the nation's largest, student only, online mock election. The secondary ballots contained as many as thirteen proposed changes to the Constitution ranging from non-partisan redistricting to mandatory national service. YLI offered supporting lesson plans on topics such as congressional redistricting, holding a Constitutional Convention, amending the Constitution and extending House terms. The elementary ballot contained five issues that teachers could discuss using resources and lesson plans from the YLI website, [www.youthleadership.net](http://www.youthleadership.net). Teachers also had the opportunity to host a reenactment of the original convention using YLI lesson plans. Students in states with gubernatorial races (Kentucky, Louisiana, and Mississippi) were also able to cast an online vote for Governor in addition to weighing in on Constitutional reform. YLI supported these races with lesson plans that compared the gubernatorial candidates for all three states.

"Last fall was one of the most exciting for the Youth Leadership Initiative," said Meg Heubeck, YLI Director of Instruction. "Imagine all of those students discussing issues from all sides, debating the pros and cons of the amendments, and using the skill of civil discourse to arrive at a decision regarding Constitutional change. I think this is the most unique and inspiring program YLI has held to date!"

YLI sent teachers stickers and posters that contained the theme of the Mock Constitutional Convention: *One Nation. Many Voices. Vote.* Both contained a scene





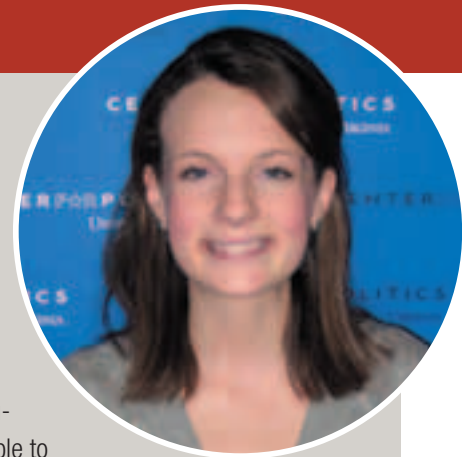
of Howard Chandler Christy's *The Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States* with mirrored images of young people in the foreground. The powerful image suggests to students that it is now their turn to take ownership of the Constitution. According to many YLI teachers, this was a great way to inspire their students. Bob Silverman, an elementary school teacher in Florida, offered this comment about his experience with the Mock Constitutional Convention:

*This was a particularly revealing experiment for the kids. First, they have had almost no experience voting and virtually no touch with an idea of an "issue." The fifth item about service after high school brought out some ideas and feelings even in young kids of age ten. It sparked much discussion – makes one wonder if we shouldn't approach these things with the kids earlier. Also, the process itself was important if for no other reason than manifesting the idea of one's connection to society through some type of empowerment. The kids felt something special though with the awareness that they were voting with other kids across the country. I just wanted to indicate that my kids enjoyed the experiment!*

The Youth Leadership Initiative is more committed than ever to promoting civic engagement within America's young population. As YLI moves towards the 2008 Mock Election, it is currently developing even more exciting strategies to teach students about their future roles in American democracy. Please visit the YLI website to see all of the great new resources being developed throughout the spring of 2008.

## Intern Corner

Sarah Harvey



This spring will mark the end of one year that I have been interning at the Center for Politics. Working under Mr. Michael Baudinet, the Executive Assistant to Professor Larry Sabato, I have been exposed to many different opportunities at the Center. I have been able to assist in a variety of assignments, including conducting background research for Professor Sabato's projects and managing scheduling and correspondence. This past fall was a particularly exciting time for the Center with the launch of Professor Sabato's latest work, *A More Perfect Constitution*. I helped manage several of Professor Sabato's blogs concerning the book. The project entailed book mailings for increased marketing and exposure as well as managing reader feedback. I also assisted with planning The National Constitutional Convention in Washington, D.C., an event held this past October. The day featured animated discussion about possible changes to the United States Constitution and a lively debate from distinguished panelists. This was the highlight of my fall semester! It was exciting to see everything come together and to have the opportunity to meet speakers such as Associate Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito and former Senator Bob Dole.

In addition to working with Mr. Baudinet at the Center, I am also participating at the Center for the Study of the Presidency Fellowship Program. I was honored to be nominated for the program by the Center for Politics and I am currently serving as the University's representative. I have been working on an extensive research project on the George W. Bush presidency, which I will be presenting at a conference in Washington, D.C. later this spring.

After graduation this May I hope to return to The Atlantic in Washington, D.C., the organization with which I interned this past summer. This wonderful opportunity allowed me to utilize the lessons learned while interning at the Center. The invaluable experience gained at the U.Va. Center for Politics will continue to shape my future in a positive light.

# Corporate Connection

**AS A SPONSOR** of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, you will be making a difference in civic education. Corporate sponsors become involved in the education of the nation's youth through the Center's annual projects. The American Democracy Conference, National Symposium Series and the Virginia Political History Project are all events that focus on understanding our government and the future of civic education and our democracy. At each of our conferences, we bring together many distinguished public leaders, political professionals, media figures and scholars. Sponsorship of the Center for Politics, and our signature program — the national Youth Leadership Initiative, showcases a corporation's belief in the importance of education and participation in the American system of government. To make sure others are aware of your commitment to these important goals, your corporation's name will be included on the Center's website and in the Bulletin Honor Roll. In recognition of your support, you will receive invitations to the Center's conferences as well as the opportunity to reserve premium seating at our various programs and events. For any questions regarding corporate sponsorship please contact Vanessa Freeman at (434) 243-3535 or via email at [vfreeman@virginia.edu](mailto:vfreeman@virginia.edu).

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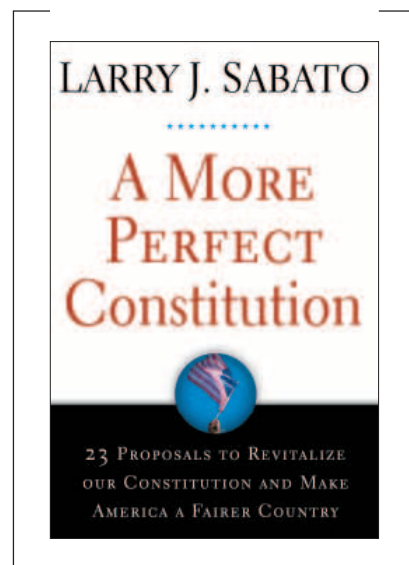
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## In Bookstores Now

*A More Perfect Constitution: 23 Proposals to Revitalize Our Constitution and Make America a Fairer Country*  
 Larry J. Sabato

In *A More Perfect Constitution*, Larry Sabato argues that, while much of the Constitution should remain sacred, some crucial revisions are essential to restore equity for ordinary citizens, suggesting that until some of its outmoded provisions are reformed, the U.S. will continue to have more of the same political stagnation. This proposed inspiration for



these reforms comes from the original framers—Jefferson, Madison, Mason, Washington, and others—who fully expected the Constitution would, and should, be regularly revised each generation to reflect the country's changing needs. Yet, apart from the ten amendments in the Bill of Rights, it has only been amended seventeen times in 220 years, and many of those amendments were inconsequential.

*A More Perfect Constitution* presents twenty-three creative and dynamic proposals to reinvigorate American governance. Combining idealism and pragmatism, Larry Sabato's thought-provoking ideas range from the structure of Congress and length of the president's term to the number and terms of Supreme Court justices, the vagaries of the Electoral College, and a compelling call for universal national service—all laced through with the history behind each issue and their potential impact on the lives of ordinary people.

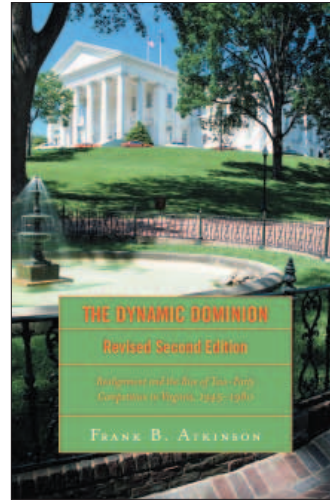
In presenting his proposals, Sabato provides an important civics lesson, peeling back the roof covering the workings of our political system, allowing all to see the gears and levers meshing together; to see what parts need full-scale repair and why. The reader comes to appreciate over and over, what the founders of our system expected, as expressed in their own words—that the Constitution would be revised generation by generation, updated to fulfill the needs of a growing nation.

*The Dynamic Dominion: Realignment and the Rise of Two-Party Competition in Virginia, 1945-1980*

Frank B. Atkinson

**T**he *Dynamic Dominion* tells the dramatic story of Virginia's political transformation from the Second World War to the Reagan Revolution. The cradle of American democracy – and thus of the democratic movement that is sweeping the globe today – the venerable Old Dominion has emerged again in the second half of the 20th century as a dynamic political pace setter for the nation.

As told in *The Dynamic Dominion*, the Virginia story contains all the excitement, drama, conflict, and intrigue of a fast-paced thriller. It is a story of triumph and tragedy, celebrities and statesmen, heroes and scoundrels – of shifting party loyalties and makeshift coalitions, hard-fought campaigns and razor-close elections – of ambition and cynicism alongside sacrifice and idealism. Best of all, the tale is true. It is the fascinating story of contemporary democracy flourishing in Virginia...the place where it was born.

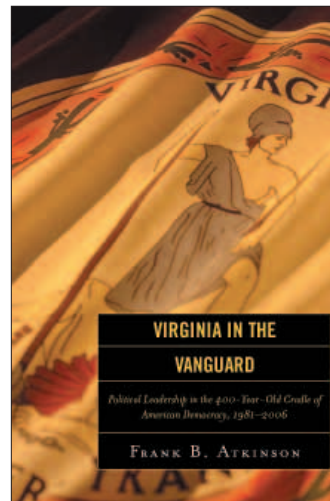


*Virginia in the Vanguard: Political Leadership in the 400-Year-Old Cradle of American Democracy, 1981-2006*

Frank B. Atkinson

**V**irginia in the Vanguard continues the story, begun in *The Dynamic Dominion* (see above), of Virginia's reemergence as a competitive, trend-setting state. In the 1980s, with Reagan's revolution underway in Washington, Democrats led by Chuck Robb and Doug Wilder – the nation's first African American elected governor – reclaimed the governor's mansion and focused attention on a centrist formula as a prescription for Democratic renewal nationally.

In the 1990s, hard-charging Republican George Allen reversed the party's fortunes and propelled the GOP toward control of the state's legislature and both U.S. Senate seats. *Virginia in the Vanguard* describes these and other dramatic events that have placed the 400 year-old cradle of democracy back in the forefront of American politics and produced two dynamic leaders – Republican Senator George Allen and former Democratic Governor Mark Warner.



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• **Resources:** ■ Youth Leadership Initiative  
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■ Virginia Political History Project  
■ Sabato's Crystal Ball  
■ Debates and Panel Discussions  
■ Publications  
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