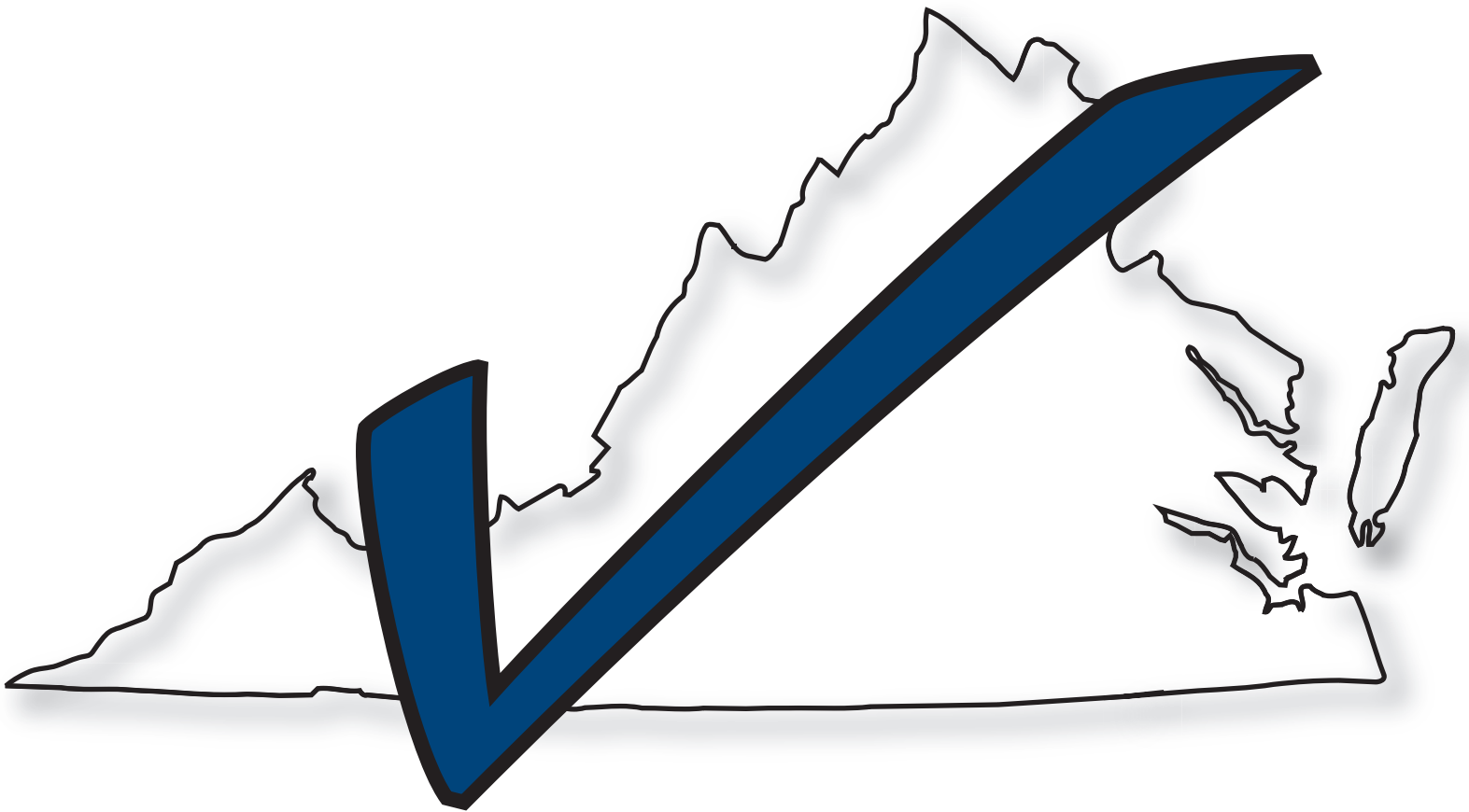


Virginia Votes

★ 1999–2002 ★

Larry J. Sabato



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UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA

Virginia Votes 1999–2002

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To those men and women whose lives were taken away on September 11, 2001. May the tragedy of their deaths remind us of the sacredness of democracy and the frailty of freedom.

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This is the ninth volume of the *Virginia Votes* series. The first volume was an invaluable statistical reference monograph compiled by Dr. Ralph Eisenberg of the University of Virginia Institute of Government, and it assembled for the first time, in one place, all the basic Virginia election results for the years 1924 through 1968. It was my great good fortune to be Dr. Eisenberg's student during his construction of *Virginia Votes*, and for some misguided reason or another, he thought I had potential in the field. Even though I was a lowly undergraduate at the time, he assigned me some significant responsibilities in his research, and the then-director of the Institute of Government, Professor Weldon Cooper, encouraged him in this foolhardy experiment (me, not the volume). With brilliant, accomplished, and practical mentors such as Eisenberg and Cooper, and later on, Professors Clifton McCleskey, R.K. Ramazani, and Edgar F. Shannon, Jr., I had little excuse for failure. Beginning with the 1969–1974 edition, I have produced a *Virginia Votes* monograph, in the Eisenberg tradition, every four years—covering a full election cycle per volume, as required by the Old Dominion's election-every-year system.¹

Yet, as I examine them in retrospect, my early editions of *Virginia Votes* are inelegantly written, inadequately analyzed, and barely worthy of a passing grade for an undergraduate thesis. Dear Ralph Eisenberg, one of the sweetest men I ever knew, left this earth entirely too soon at the age of 43, (in 1973). We all grieved, and still do, for there was so much good work left undone by this sterling soul. Regrettably, there was no one else but this author available to continue his work—just about anyone would have been more qualified and able—so I agreed to do so, with the encouragement of Dr. Cooper. (When he first met me in 1970, in my dirty-jeans, long-haired hippie stage of life, Cooper reportedly turned to his colleague upon my departure from the room and exclaimed, “What a mess!” I will be forever grateful that he added, after a long pause, “But I think we can work with him and shape him up.”)

My hope is that, with each new volume, my team and I can come closer to being worthy of the legacy of Ralph Eisenberg and Weldon Cooper. Gradually, we have expanded the length and breadth of each election chapter, covering topics such as public opinion polling, campaign financing, and candidate strategies in as much detail as the more traditional analysis of the voting results. All of this awaits the reader in *Virginia Votes 1999–2002*.

The grand sweep of Virginia's modern political history has been fascinating.

1. Eisenberg, *Virginia Votes 1924–1968*, Sabato, *Virginia Votes 1969–1974*, Sabato, *Virginia Votes 1975–1978*, Sabato, *Virginia Votes 1979–1982*, Sabato, *Virginia Votes 1983–1986*, Sabato, *Virginia Votes 1987–1990*, Sabato, *Virginia Votes 1991–1994*, Sabato, *Virginia Votes 1995–1998*.

The state moved from one-party Democratic, its legacy from the Civil War, seemingly to one-party Republican in a mere three decades (1969–1999). But looks are partly deceiving. Yes, Virginia is a near-lock for the GOP presidential candidate every four years; Republicans hold both U.S. Senate seats and a sizeable majority (8 of 11) of the U.S. House seats; the General Assembly moved from about two-to-one Democratic in 1987 to almost two-to-one Republican just fourteen years later; and Republicans have controlled the governorship more than half the time since 1969. Yet when the conditions are right, Democrats can still win the big races, as Mark Warner and Tim Kaine proved in capturing the governorship and lieutenant governorship in 2001.

Our consistent judgment in recent volumes of *Virginia Votes* has been that Virginia is a moderate-conservative state, with the emphasis on the conservative part of that formulation, and it is a two-party competitive state, but substantially Republican leaning under most circumstances. We hold to that evaluation, even though Republican readers will find relatively little to upset them in the pages of this particular edition of *Virginia Votes*. After all, the GOP's long-building, first-ever, total takeover of the General Assembly in 1999 was followed quickly by the party's capture of the state's remaining Democratic U.S. Senate seat in 2000. In 2001 the Democrats' victories at the top of the statehouse ticket were matched by the landslide GOP margin for state attorney general and the dramatic expansion of the Republican margin in the House of Delegates from 53 seats to 65 seats. Finally, the single most watched segment of the 2002 election in Virginia was the sizeable defeat of referenda in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads to raise the sales tax (which would have been dedicated to transportation projects.) This was Governor Warner's top priority, and while some elected Republicans supported him on this, the successful opposition was driven by the GOP grassroots.

These four years of elections are reviewed in the chapters that follow, and the rich stew of data for each chapter has been served up by a terrific team of staffers at the UVa Center for Politics as well as student researchers, including especially Joshua Scott and Colin Allen, as well as Samuel Towell, Rakesh Goplan, Adam Blumenkrantz, Bruce Vlk, Matt Smyth, Molly Clancy, Allen Robinson, Dan Payne, Emily Roper, Gene Lepley, Dawn Miller, Jenny Goodlatte, Jeremy Branch, Kate Vasiloff, and Ian Gallagher. I would also like to thank the able staff of the UVa Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, including Director John Thomas, Bill Wood, and Jayne Weber. We hope you enjoy this hearty meal of politics, and rest assured, while you are digesting this repast, we are already at work on the TENTH edition of *Virginia Votes*!

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University of Virginia
March 2003



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