



RESTORING TRUST IN OUR ELECTIONS

VIRGINIA FAIR ELECTIONS

Easy to Vote, Hard to Cheat.

THE VIRGINIA MODEL

ELECTION INTEGRITY

THE VIRGINIA MODEL

When we began the Virginia Fair Elections (VFE) coalition in 2021, we had no idea if it would be successful or not. What we did know was that Virginians were distrustful of the election process in Virginia. We knew that it was not remotely relevant whether people’s worries were grounded in truth or not. The fact of the matter was that approximately half of Virginia voters – Democrats, Republicans, and Independents – did not believe in the integrity and transparency of our election processes.

After the first summit hosted by VFE members in the Spring of 2021, we began to see local groups working in various Election Integrity areas but with little to no coordination. When we spoke to groups, they said they were the only ones doing anything. They had no idea that other organizations were working on the same issues in different locations, or on other aspects of Election Integrity. Even a few small coalitions were cropping up focused on “brainstorming organizing and planning” with none working in concert to advance the broader issue. In short, we had dozens of musicians show up to the gig but with no one conducting.

We put the VFE coalition together with one goal in mind – bring transparency to Virginia’s elections and bring back trust in our electoral processes. We knew when we launched the coalition that it would be occasionally chaotic, very messy, never perfect, and we would need to execute strategies in the midst of formulating plans because the timeframe was very short, and we would quickly be in the 45-day election season of September 17th through November 2nd.

The coalition rallied and we were able to train more than 4,500 poll watchers and election officials who were deployed and covered over 85% of the nearly 14,000 shifts necessary to have full parity in registrars’ offices and polling places. Did this make a difference in Virginia? I think that goes without saying.

We are honored to be representing the thousands of volunteers who worked long hours to bring transparency to Virginia’s elections. The VFE coalition continues growing to this day because we have much that still needs to be done in our quest to solidify an Election Integrity infrastructure that can stand the test of time.

We hope you join us – whether you are a Virginian, or not.

Lynn Taylor

President, Virginia Institute for Public Policy
Chair, Virginia Fair Elections



VFE COALITION OBJECTIVES

CATALOG

- Names and contact information for every project, group, and individual working the election integrity issue in Virginia.
- Volunteers available for short-term projects
- Resources, activities, and training
- Issue experts
- Election integrity developments in other states
- Litigation to work with lawyers and groups bringing forth election related cases in Virginia.
- Virginia's electoral boards and registrars, identifying the scale of their partisanship.
- Issue specific coalitions

COMMUNICATIONS & MESSAGING

- Establish a secure platform for members to share and find issue related information.
- Promote the necessity for understanding election law and policy, per the:
 - Code of Virginia Title 24.2 Elections
 - General Registrar and Electoral Board Handbook
- Maintain a continuous dialog with project and group leaders regarding election integrity.
- Assist in the development of messaging (i.e., countering the phony voter suppression narrative).
- Coordinate media engagement opportunities (e.g., guest columns, letters to the editor, interviews).

RESEARCH & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Identify key state legislators, specifically members of the Senate and House Privileges and Elections committees, to engage and educate regarding election integrity initiatives.
- Monitor key state and federal issue related legislation.
- Use the overview gained, via the network, to develop policy and draft model legislation.
- Survey election officials to develop election day reforms and policy recommendations.
- Monitor the work of the electronic voting machine working group and other ideas for machine related reforms.

TRAINING & ENGAGEMENT

- Identify individuals willing to serve as election staff and/or poll workers.
- Provide or assist with training for individuals willing to serve as poll watchers and challengers.
- Assist in efforts to ensure Election Officer representation IAW VA Code, place the maximum allowable poll watchers, deploy all needed poll workers.
- Provide 'Best Practices' and/or Tactics, Techniques, & Procedures

BUILDING A COALITION

We put the Virginia Fair Elections coalition together because we didn't want folks to trip over each other and waste resources.

Participants came to twice weekly meetings because this is where they could always find the experts to answer their questions. It is where others were working in their same space but a different locality. It is where they could share their problems and find out if solutions were working in other locations. It was also an opportunity to see if patterns of election abuse were evident around the state.

We use an executive committee which we call the **Cabinet**. This allows us to move like a speed boat instead of a battleship.

COALITION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Our Cabinet was chosen very strategically:

- Needed someone who could run a coalition and push for outcomes, not just outputs.
- Needed someone who understood the grassroots.
- Needed someone who understood the legislature.
- Needed someone who was an expert in Virginia elections, not just the law but the processes.
- Needed someone who was a legal expert in elections.

What we gained were strong, strategic minds. We are now six deep in leadership capabilities so that the coalition is sustained if any one or more of the Cabinet members needs to leave.

Dr. Clara Belle Wheeler
Senior Fellow, Virginia Institute



Main functions of VFE meetings: **SCIP**

Strategy

Coordination

Information sharing

Place to get expert answers
to questions



Cleta Mitchell
Election Integrity Network | CPI

EXPERTS

Pick your experts wisely – key is their knowledge base and responsiveness as we needed answers quickly.

Our experts include:

- **J. Christian Adams** | Public Interest Legal Foundation
- **Ken Cuccinelli** | Election Transparency Initiative
- **Chris Marston** | Election CFO
- **Cleta Mitchell** | Conservative Partnership Institute (CPI)
- **Hans von Spakovsky** | The Heritage Foundation

We want to thank our experts for their time, knowledge, and guidance. You kept us from making some disastrous mistakes and were a huge part of our successes.

NATIONAL ELECTION INTEGRITY COALITIONS

Being part of several Election Integrity coalitions led us to opportunities for finding volunteers and support for what many thought to be an impossible job. Every group who used their Virginia membership base to boost our appeal for volunteers to become poll watchers and election officials, left their logos at the door. They were **all** more interested in results than in promoting their own organizations and we are truly grateful for their assistance.

Some of our partners include:

- The Amistad Project of the Thomas Moore Society
- Association of Mature American Citizens (AMAC)
- Conservative Partnership Institute (CPI)
- Election Transparency Initiative
- Heritage Action for America
- The Heritage Foundation
- The Middle Resolution of Virginia
- Tea Party Patriots
- Virginia Institute for Public Policy

*Successful coalition building
requires members to check
their logo at the door.*



THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The VFE coalition developed and taught poll watcher and election official training because Virginia has a 45-day election season which means there are some 14,000 slots that should be filled by observers. By Virginia law, poll watchers and election officials must be credentialed by one of the political Parties or an independent candidate and each polling place is required to have observers in parity. If there are not enough workers from one of the Parties, the registrar can assign an independent to the other Party's position to create the appearance of parity. As you can imagine, this is not always in the best interest of transparency in elections.

At the end of our training, participants received a certificate of completion that they could take to the Party of their choice to be approved as a poll watcher or election official. The Parties then had an opportunity to deploy the trained volunteers to fill the necessary shifts. During the 2021 election season, over 4,500 trained volunteers covered more than 85% of those 14,000 slots to bring true transparency to the election process. In fact, training of poll watchers and election officials was taken over by the Parties, with our agreement and gratitude. We have never felt the need to own the training or best practices. We just want those who are training volunteers to do it right.

It was particularly gratifying that the Parties respected the nonpartisan education provided by nonprofit groups and the local task force processes built through the grassroots organizations. We never once heard that our efforts were not genuinely appreciated or that only the Parties could or should work in the election integrity space. To bring trust back to Virginia's election is a huge job and everyone is invited to participate – nonprofits, grassroots, political Parties, and individuals. The only thing we ask is that you drop your logo at the door – and **everyone** did!

WHAT CAN AND DID GO WRONG

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IS TOO LARGE

It is difficult to run strategy with a large group. We ended up pulling back to our original core group.

DOING IT FAST BUT NOT DOING IT RIGHT

We found that some folks did not want to wait for us to finalize the plans. They just wanted to take the ideas and run out ahead of the group – sometimes with success, most times without. We are fine with that, as long as they do a good job.

An example was in training poll watchers and election officials. We are fine with others using their own teaching materials, but it does not work well when their instruction is not necessarily good or even correct. What do you do? Ask them not to do this. However, if they are going to do it regardless of your opinion, you cannot stop them. What you can do is move on and do the training that needs to be done.

We wanted to do it right, even though we were on a time constraint. We were not just trying to tick off a box on our to-do list so we could go back to donors to say what we did – measuring outcomes not outputs.

SPIN OFF COALITIONS

We wanted to spin off coalitions to handle certain aspects like vulnerable voters or legislation. We thought that the folks with the most passion and knowledge would be able to take those coalitions and run, but it didn't work.

Now, we use workgroups that are a part of the larger coalition but not separate coalitions – leaders have to have passion, knowledge, **and** leadership ability.

TOO MANY PRIORITIES

If you start with too many priorities, you may get bogged down with too much planning and not enough execution.

We jettisoned some priorities because of the timing issues (e.g., legislation because the election was before the next General Assembly Session), such as:

- Where was fraud in 2020 election
- Get out the vote
- Cleaning up voter rolls
- Legislation

ELECTION INTEGRITY SUMMITS

A state-wide Summit is an excellent way to bring folks together and to increase the volunteer pool. We are not referencing a talking-heads type of seminar but actual training sessions. Our second Summit, but first training Summit, was developed with the aid of Cleta Mitchell of Conservative Partnership Institute (CPI). Not only did Cleta help us with expert speakers and guidance for the most effective and necessary trainings, CPI actually sponsored the event. Without CPI and their amazing staff, we could not have held what would become one of our greatest feats. This gathering allowed volunteers from all over Virginia to converge and finally meet each other, share experiences from their locales, and learn how to bring transparency to our elections.

Summit II was wildly successful with a sold-out crowd where we trained over 300 volunteers (hotel capacity during COVID) with the following workshops:

- Overview of the Ever-changing Election Process and Why Citizens Must Engage
- Documenting and Dealing with Potential Illegal Registrations
- Election Integrity Training for Poll Watchers and Election Officials
- Preparing for Post-Election, War Rooms, and Recounts
- Protecting Vulnerable Voters
- Recruiting, Scheduling, and Deploying Poll Observers
- Researching How Your Local Election Office Conducts YOUR Elections

Other than the Overview addressed by Cleta Michell of CPI and our luncheon speaker, Scott Walter of Capital Research Center, who presented “How Zuckbucks and the Left Used Charitable Dollars to Influence the 2020 Election,” each session was offered twice so attendees could participate in multiple workshops.

VFE and the Virginia Institute for Public Policy want to give a special thank you to CPI and Cleta for helping make Summit II such a success. We are now in the planning stages for Summit III which we expect to be held Spring 2022.



POST-ELECTION

The VFE coalition is growing since our amazing success in 2021. We are leveraging this growth and have established nine working groups so our folks can take their experiences from 2021 and use them to Virginia's advantage in 2022.

VFE Working Groups:

- Electoral Boards & General Registrars
- Legislation Development
- Lobby & Grassroots Engagement
- Local Election Integrity Task Forces
- Poll Watchers & Election Officials
- Technology
- Voter Registration
- Voter Rolls Maintenance
- Vulnerable Voters

The successes of the VFE coalition are impacting other issue areas in Virginia. Interested members from this coalition have joined with others to form the Virginia Education Opportunity Alliance (VEOA) which is led by The Middle Resolution, a member of our Cabinet. The VEOA is working to bring education choice options to Virginia.

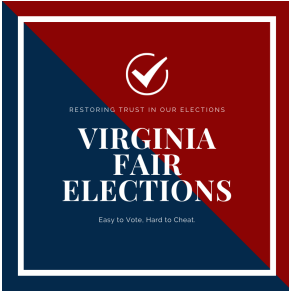
Recently, members of the VFE and VEOA banded together in an effort to defeat horrible legislation on campaign finance reform that was stealthily making its way through the General Assembly. This legislation would have required our advocacy groups to disclose their donors and would keep them from speaking to referendums before the Virginia citizenry. Members of these coalitions were able to quickly educate legislators of the harmful impacts of the bill, effectively killing the legislation moments before the vote was scheduled to occur.

We are building an infrastructure to ensure Election Security that can be used for years to come. We are going forward. If you come with us – great! If not – ok. But we are going forward! You can get bogged down in the weeds, personalities, and petty squabbles or everyone can push forward and that is the responsibility of the leader.

TIPS FOR COALITION BUILDING

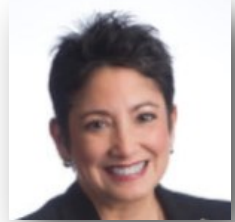
- Don't let planning be the enemy of execution. Sometimes you just need to stop cutting bait and fish.
- Invite those who can play well in the sandbox together. No coalition is completely harmonious, but you do need to limit your problem children to a manageable number.
- Be respectful of others' time and try not to allow the meeting to go over an hour. If necessary, schedule it twice a week so you don't give your participants Zoom fatigue.
- Make the meetings at the same time each week and the Zoom (or whatever video conferencing you are using) links the same each week in case someone misses the calendar alert.
- Each coalition member wants to be heard and feel that they are valued – basic for how to put teams together.
- You need to have the ability to call people out who are not parking their logos at the door or doing what they said they would do. Actually, we talk about that so much that folks are afraid to show their colors and that's ok. They can all forward their missions and agendas through VFE, and they can show their colors on what they do outside of the coalition. There is a great deal of trust required in a coalition for it to be successful and it starts at the top.
- We take notes on every meeting which are then shared with all coalition members. These notes are key to keeping up with tasks/responsibilities and allow new members the means to catch up without taking time from the coalition to bring them up to speed.
- Our coalition is not run by just one person. It takes at least two on each call – one to run the meeting and one to take the notes and run Zoom. We have multiple people in our organization who are capable of these tasks which makes it seamless to the participants. One of our crew is the “manager” of the coalition. When a group needs information or wants to share with everyone else, the info goes to the manager, and he disseminates that material. He also makes sure that the info or links are included in the notes. This methodology keeps everyone informed and we know that the notes and information are always accessible.

The VFE Cabinet



MELODY CLARKE

Senior Regional Coordinator
Heritage Action for America

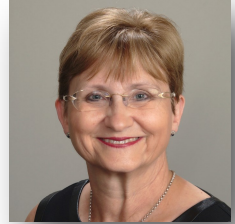


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We want to express our thanks and the gratitude of all our coalition members for the work of the amazing Cabinet above. Their time, tenacity, and talent have made this coalition successful – and all because they love our Commonwealth.

Virginia Institute

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The Virginia Fair Elections Coalition (VFE) consists of grassroots organizations, groups, and individuals whose goal is to support free and fair elections in Virginia.