



City of Virginia Beach

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AT LARGE

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Dear Citizens of Virginia Beach:

I am writing this letter to bring your attention to an issue I find deeply troubling.

Unknown members of council formed a "phantom majority" to silence your voice. These members directed and instructed the city manager to oppose HB2198 and HB1890 on the grounds that it did not give the people an opportunity to voice their views/concerns.

HB2198 and HB1890 are bills that are centered around voter's rights and voting systems in the Commonwealth (*This is a very broad and simplistic overview of the bill, I advise reading it for yourself*). These bills, like every bill, deserve scrutiny. However, everyone that it impacts should participate in its scrutiny, not just a group of politicians denying you your say.

Perhaps this anonymous vote by a majority of city council members may have made sense prior to August 2020, because in August 2020 the majority of city council (*6-5 vote*) voted NOT to give the people an opportunity to voice their views on the voting system in Virginia Beach in the form of a referendum on the November 2020 ballot.

Now, this phantom majority has directed and instructed the city manager to carry out their wishes to oppose HB (*House Bills*) and SB (*Senate Bill*) on the BEHALF OF VIRGINIA BEACH CITY COUNCIL using the lame-duck excuse of "denying the people a say" without discussion from the governing body as a whole and without concerns you may or may not have with the voting system in Virginia Beach.

My major concern is the lack of transparency. This process, or lack thereof, in which this city council instructs/directs the city manager to take positions on HBs and SBs without public discussion or input from the governing body as a whole, and the ramifications of taking such stances without fully weighing and understanding the outcomes is wrong. Furthermore, such political maneuvering appears to be self-serving and partisan.

Lastly, let me be perfectly clear:

Every city council member has a right to support or oppose bills at the state or federal level. That is their right as an American citizen and as an elected-official. And as elected-officials, they can form and write a letter from their respective office stating their support or opposition for bills of their choosing.

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However, for any member or members to represent something of this magnitude as the will of the Council, when there was no formal public process during which the matter was deliberated and acted on is inappropriate and does not give an accurate depiction of the diverse viewpoints on this matter currently present on this Council.

Best Regards,

Aaron R. Rouse
Council Member At-large