

Virginia: Goode v Perriello: Vote Recount?

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There is still hope that Virginia's Fifth District can be rid of Virgil Goode, but the final count [has him in the lead](#). A recount is possible, and if there is any basis for it, I hope that Democratic candidate Tom Perriello will request it. Even if he loses a recount, Perriello would earn our respect as someone who stands up to see that every vote is counted, rather than someone who runs in fear of being called names like "sore loser."

The many complaints of polling place problems recorded yesterday by [Election Protection in Virginia](#) do not appear to be concentrated in the Fifth District. But there are serious complaints there, which if verified would throw the election in a very bad light. I've pasted some of the reports below.

It's important to remember, however, that even if every election machine worked perfectly, there is absolutely no way to recount the votes made on them. I voted early and on paper, so my vote can be recounted. Most people voted on DRE machines, which arguably violate the Virginia Constitution's requirement of public vote counting. These machines count votes inside a black box. It cannot be made public. It cannot be verified. We simply have to hope that the machines got it right, which — of course — such machines quite often do not. Sometimes, as documented below, their failures are even visible to voters.

While Virginia has cut off funding for these machines, it has not yet banned their use. Paper ballots can be counted with optical scan machines. Those machines are just as unreliable as DREs, but leave a paper trail that can be recounted. Most reliable of all, and least expensive, would be paper ballots placed in a locked transparent box, publicly opened and counted at each polling place with witnesses from all interested parties, and the results publicly posted at each polling place. Registration issues would be solved by instituting universal registration. Regardless of the outcome of this particular election, it should point us toward such necessary reforms. Here are some of the reported (not verified) problems from counties that are in part or in whole within Virginia's Fifth District:

This is from Campbell County:

"Voting machine is jamming. Asking voter to hit "McCain" to clear the machine, instead of using override to clear and to let the voters properly register the vote. Local NAACP has been called about the problem."

>From Charlottesville:

"Voter from Charlottesville, VA requested an absentee ballot which only arrived on Election Day."

"Student voters were not able to cast a regular ballot because they registered with student groups that did not turn in the forms on time."

"Unsubstantiated rumor from Clark that machines broke down at Tonsler. As a result paper ballots were being used. Some were not being counted due to boxes not being completely filled in (they were checked instead). However, instruction wasn't being provided to completely fill-in ballots."

>From Bedford:

"concerned whether the machine properly recorded her vote. the machine jammed when the voter in front of her tried to vote."

"machine stalled on voter before this voter - would not go forward or backward - voter had to vote on machine after they got it going again and is concerned about whether her vote counted because there was no papertrail"

>From Fluvanna:

"Tried to vote. The candidate for senator came up, voted, but the candidates for president never came up on the voting screen. Also happened to the person that came before her."

>From Cumberland:

"Family members have same name. One member of family committed felony. Other member denied ability to vote."

>From Greene:

"Poll worker pressed wrong button on voting machine (hit countrywide and not enter) as a result voter was not able to vote in statewide races. Thinks that this may be happening to other voters as a result of poll worker error. Left polls crying. Poll worker said would file an incident report but was told by superiors that this "could not happen" with the electronic machines. Voters thinks that it may signify other problems with machines."

>From Appomattox:

"Touch screen voting machine did not allow the voter the opportunity to vote for the Presidential candidates. Talked to voter registration people for their county and they said there was nothing they could do after the ballot was submitted. Voter registration officials told the voter that there had been similar problems in Appamattox, VA."

>From Prince Edward:

"Caller learned that others had entered a nursing home and filled out patients' ballots without them knowing who they were voting for."

>From Franklin:

"Voter mailed registration form in, is listed as registered in our database, but was told he was not registered when he went to his polling place."

"Voter selected Obama and McCain showed as indicated. Voter corrected her ballot and

machine then recorded her selected choice after voter talked w/election official”

>From Henry:

“saw a man with republican campaign buttons approach 4 elderly african american voters and he told them to vote the bible; voter’s husband reported this to the supervisor in the elections office in Henry County”

“Went vote early. They told him that because he works for a campaign, he cannot vote early except for presiden. He did not vote at all as a consequence. Went to vote at the Henry County Administration Building, 3300 Kings Mountain Road, Collinsville. Approximately at 1:15 pm on October 31, 2008.”

“attempted to register son on line. Not in Va. database”

>From Mecklenburg:

“Caller was turned away from proper polling place because told he was not on the registration list. Caller has a registration card and voted in the primaries, so it is surprising that voter does not appear in any of the registration databases. Voter has not moved since the primary election this year.”

“Voter was told she is not registered, although she is showing up on our database as registered.”

“She is 53 and voted a lot fo different ways and today they looked at IDs. She is used to electronic way and the woman handed her a paper ballot and she said that the machine is broken. She didn’t tell and didn’t say anything. Explained it to the person previously and never tells her where to put it. Folded ballot and put in the box. She called the voting registrar but he said that the machine had been fixed at 6:30. Worried that her ballot would not be counted. No one was watching the box. Thinks that these voted won’t be counted. Thinks that the machines are fixed but doesn’t know.”

“Touch screens difficult to register answer. He got help from poll worker, but is concerned that others are not able to make their selections properly because it is difficult to press. Mecklenburg County. Precinct 701”

“Daughter and son in law moved to Georgia in early October and faxed absentee ballot to Virginia. Daughter called local board; said not received.”

>From Brunswick:

“She asked to help her. The poll worker got an attitude with her. They got into an argument and the poll worker would not allow her to vote and asked her to leave.”

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