

OPPOSE HB1261

State environmental boards

Bill Patron: Delegate Rob Bloxom

Reasons to Oppose HB1261:

- House Bill 1261 repeals long-standing environmental permitting authority of the State Water Control Board and the Air Pollution Control Board.
- By doing so, it minimizes government transparency and public participation in the most consequential environmental permitting decisions.
- This bill will effectively squelch opinions that differ from the recommendations of the Department of Environmental Quality.
- This bill also injects unnecessary partisan politics into the appointments of Board members.

Overview:

- The state's environmental Citizen Boards have played a key role in Virginia's balanced environmental permitting framework for well over 50 years:
 - Since 1946, the Water Pollution Control Board has been authorized to protect and restore Virginia's waters from pollution through its pollution permitting programs.
 - Since 1966, the Air Pollution Control Board has been authorized to ensure the protection of public health and welfare through its pollution permitting programs.
- These environmental Citizen Boards provide independent and robust consideration on some of the Commonwealth's most consequential pollution permits. Board process allows for additional input and comment from the public as well as transparency through quarterly public meetings.
- This bill repeals the Boards' permitting authorities, erases their long-standing roles in Virginia's permitting framework, and removes opportunities for public input.
- Members of the Citizen Boards are nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the General Assembly for four-year terms. Appointments on the Boards are staggered, so that no one Governor can replace all of the members of a given board at a particular time. This provides consistency in decision-making and helps insulate the Boards from political pressures.



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This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker. VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.