

TESTIMONY ON KIM TAYLOR'S HB 1134

Dear Delegates,

As the former campaign manager for Lt. Governor and Governor Doug Wilder, the leading advocate for the voting rights of the Black community in Richmond in the state's history, I want to respectfully suggest Delegate Taylor may not fully appreciate the voting rights ramification of her proposed legislation. I live in Richmond. Admittedly, it would appear none of the city's General Assembly delegation has made this voting rights point. Indeed to my knowledge, they have not been the kind of forceful advocate against legislation discriminatory to their constituents as Richmond State Senator Doug Wilder would have been. I applaud Delegate Taylor for putting her constituents first. But she proposes a zero-sum game, where for Petersburg to gain, Richmond citizens must lost their voting rights. This is not acceptable. Moreover, it isn't necessary.

Moreover, I write today as not only as someone who had the good fortune to help make history on voting rights as a campaign manager and as Chairman of the State Democratic Party of Virginia, but also from this perspective: I helped lead the opposition to the Richmond Casino Referendum last year. That's right: My strategy help defeat the Referendum.

But to me, the issue raised by HB 1134, along with SB 203 sponsored by Senator Joe Morrissey, is one of voting rights for my city's Black Community. Not Casino bragging rights.

The movement for Black voting rights in Virginia started in Richmond, in terms of modern state politics. This movement influenced reformers across the nation. What happens in Richmond, therefore, as regards voting rights of the Black citizens of Richmond, is heard not merely around Virginia but across the nation.

As I discuss in my new book *Remaking Virginia Politics*, the fight for racial equality in the political sphere has been far too long in our state. But we have made progress, great progress in certain areas. When I ran the Wilder campaign in 1989, we coined this slogan: "We have come too far to turn back now."

That is as true 33 years ago as it is here in 2022.

This applies to HB 1134: it is a step backward from voting rights.

Will a Second Casino Referendum pass in Richmond? From my analysis of voting history, there is no reason to expect a different outcome based on all that I have heard to date from Mayor Stoney and the City Council as to the differences between their new proposal and the one defeated last year.

But again: The possible outcome this coming November is not the issue. What is at stake are the voting rights of Richmond residents in the here and now.

As the actions of the City Council show, the people of Richmond have the right to hold a Second Casino Referendum right now. 80% of the city's Black voters by my analysis voted in favor of last year's Referendum. 80% of the white voters voted against the Referendum.

Proponents have criticized my and other opposition leaders of having a racial motive in our opposition. This shameful rhetoric. But to be fair, when I was the only white person willing to be Wilder's campaign manager in 1985, I got called worse. Such is the nature of our politics apparently.

Yet this is also true: such a racial polarization in a recorded vote is a factor that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 must consider if a State Legislature would vote to rescind the action of the Richmond City Council. That's the law.

In summary then, Delegate Taylor is doing her job. But as a longtime advocate for voting rights, I am doing what is expected of me as well.

Sincerely,

//Paul Goldman//

Paul Goldman

10 February 22