

Fairfax NAACP to Host Candidates Forum – May 27th

There is no doubt about it: Virginia will be one of the very first places to have major political impact in 2017. This summer, registered voters of the commonwealth will determine who becomes the next Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Attorney General. Likewise, all positions for the Virginia House of Delegates (the state's equivalent to the U.S. House of Representatives) are up for (re)election. The decisions voters make could shape Virginia for the next several years, helping to determine the commonwealth's identity in a new era of American politics.

There is a total of five individuals running for Virginia Governor: Ralph Northam (D), Tom Perriello (D), Ed Gillespie (R), Cory Stewart (R), and Frank Wagner (R). For Lieutenant Governor, seven candidates have entered the primary race: Glenn Davis (R), Bryce Reeves (R), Jill Vogel (R), Justin Fairfax (D), Susan Platt (D), Gene Rossi (D), and Bobby Junes (I). On June 13th, both parties will hold their primaries to select the individual who will run on their respective party's ticket for Governor and Lieutenant Governor.

The Governor serves a 4-year term as head of the state's executive branch, is tasked with ensuring the lawful and fair enactment of state laws. The Governor is also tasked with preparing the state's budget, appointing officials, fostering economic development, vetoing legislation and dealing with emergencies and disasters that affect the commonwealth.

The Lieutenant Governor (also elected for a 4-year term) is the executive branch's second-in-command. Unlike the national government, the Lieutenant Governor is elected independently of the Governor; this means that the Lt. Governor and Governor can hail from different political parties. Much like the Vice President of the United States presiding over the U.S. Senate, the Lt. Gov. can only cast a tie-breaking vote on bills that are split in the Virginia State Senate. If the Governor is unable to serve out his term (due to death, impeachment, or resignation), it is the Lieutenant Governor that assumes power of the executive branch.

The final major head of the executive branch is the Attorney General. The Attorney General provides legal counsel in the form of opinions to members of the Virginia General Assembly. Likewise, the Attorney General is tasked with defending the constitutionality of state laws. Current Attorney General Mark Herring will be seeking a second term while Chuck Smith (R) and John Adams (R) will be squaring off to be the GOP nominee.

The primaries scheduled for June 13th are every bit as important as the general election - perhaps even more so. The primaries will determine which two candidates will have the opportunity to run for governor and lieutenant governor. Most people unfortunately do not participate in the primaries, only to complain later that they dislike the remaining candidates. The people who vote in the primaries will directly narrow down the choices, minimize the options, and force the hand of the Virginians into voting for one of two viable options. The candidates who win the primaries will be the faces of the parties for what will undoubtedly go down as one of the commonwealth's most critical elections.

To help you make your decision, on May 27th 2017, prior to the Statewide Primaries happening on June 13th, The Fairfax County NAACP will be hosting a Candidate Forum as an opportunity for you to ask questions to the candidates, and hear their platforms. So don't squander this amazing opportunity! We

are asking members to send in questions to be asked at the event to the candidates. The questions should be succinct and preferably address one following issues: Criminal Justice, Education, Economic Development and the Minimum Wage, Affordable Housing, Transportation, Women's rights, Veterans Affairs, Gerrymandering, Immigration, or Environment Issues. As you can see, the list of topics to be discussed at the candidate forum will be extensive! Even better than sending in your questions, we hope that you can attend, and are prepared to ask a couple issue-specific questions. We ask that the content of the questions and the manner in which you address the candidates reflect a tone of civility and respect).

Due to time constraints, candidates for the House of Delegates attending the event won't be brought onto the main stage, but will instead be provided an opportunity to meet and greet individuals that attend the event.

For those who cannot attend the event in person, we are planning to host the forum live on Social Media (Facebook and Twitter)

To find out more about the voter registration process and the candidate forum, please go to:

<http://www.fairfaxnaacp.org/upcoming-events/> or contact us at politicalaction@fairfaxnaacp.org