

*2025 Virginia House of Delegates Election
Projections Methodology Document*

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Note/Disclaimer:

This document should be viewed alongside the “VAHoD 2025 Data Project” Excel sheet, “2025 VA HoD Projections Summary” document, and the “2025 Virginia HoD Project Bibliography” document. I used my judgment to fill unavoidable data gaps where necessary. In using such judgement, I have attempted to work with an unbiased, objective thought process. There are some projections in the “2025 VA HoD Projections Summary” document and the Excel sheet that I do not necessarily agree with, which goes both ways for both parties. However, given that it wouldn’t be logical to tweak the final margins by quantifying “gut feeling” or “vibes”, I am choosing to stand by what the data on the spreadsheet says. When any of the documents have “x seat will flip” or “y candidate will lose re-election” written down, it is purely noting what the Excel model that I built has as the result.

Calculation of HoD district margins:

Top-ballot gubernatorial election:

One major factor that went into calculating the House of Delegate margins for each seat was the projected margin for the top-ballot gubernatorial election. For this, I used the results from AtlasIntel's final poll of this election season. This pollster nearly nailed the 2024 election results in Virginia, giving Kamala Harris a 5.4% lead above Donald Trump (the final results were Harris winning by 5.78% [36]) [1]. In their final poll for this election, they gave Abigail Spanberger an 8.7% lead over Winsome Earle-Sears [2]. However, they decided to weight this poll by the electorate of the 2024 election, which in my opinion was a more right-leaning, redder electorate than what this year's electorate will be. The last off-year gubernatorial election we had in Virginia under a Republican incumbent president was the 2017 Governor's race, also with Donald Trump in the White House, between then-Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam and former RNC Chair Ed Gillespie[33]. The electorate that year was favorable to Democrats by roughly 11 points, according to exit polls from NBC News [3]. If we were to match Abigail Spanberger's numbers, along with that of Winsome Earle-Sears, with Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, to the model of the 2017 electorate in Virginia, you would find a whopping 16.04% margin of victory for Abigail Spanberger over Winsome Earle-Sears (58.018% to 41.982%). As impressive as this result is, based on the fact that this result hasn't been found by many pollsters in their polling recently [4], my judgement tells me that I should hedge and find a more Republican-friendly electorate to compare to. That's when I decided to use the same methodology, but instead with Virginia's 2020 electorate for the presidential election [5]. Doing this, I found that if AtlasIntel's demographic polling is completely correct and if the 2025 electorate matched the 2020 exit poll in Virginia, then Abigail Spanberger would win against Winsome Earle-Sears by a margin of almost 8.5% (54.25% - 45.75%). Since a presidential year electorate is bound to be more Republican-leaning than an off-year election under a Republican president, my judgement was that turnout dynamics in off-year elections are more similar to each other than to presidential elections. Therefore, I concluded that I shouldn't base my forecast entirely on the 2020 presidential electorate data either. In order to reach a conclusion about a projected 2025 environment, **I averaged the results between the 2017 and 2020 electorates, and that gave me a 12.27% margin of victory for Abigail Spanberger over Winsome Earle-Sears (56.13% to 43.87%),** which seemed feasible for me given that both polling and the most recent, better Democratic performances supported this range of victory [4][6]. However, there are a few risks when using this type of methodology. Exit polls aren't always accurate indicators of what the electorate really looks like, the only reason I used them for this model is because they were the only reputable, legitimate source with somewhat accurate data collection that I had access to and was aware of.

Swinging from 2021 to 2025:

The next part of calculating the projected HoD margin can be split into two parts. The first part is calculating a uniform swing to swing each seat. The margin of victory in the 2021 gubernatorial election was 1.94% in favor of Republican Governor Glenn Youngkin [7]. For this year's election, I'm projecting a 12.27% margin of victory for Democratic candidate Abigail Spanberger. From 2021 to 2025, this would symbolise a 14.21% swing to the left across the state. For every single seat that I took note of, I applied this 14.21% swing to the 2021 top ballot results [8]. Now, for the second part, I attempted to measure a "comparative swing" metric for each one of these seats. This metric measures how much each district trended from election to election, up against the statewide/nationwide environmental shift as a whole. For example, if House Seat XYZ moved 5 points in net margin to the left from Election 1 to Election 2, while the state as a whole shifted 1 point to the left, that's a comparative swing of 4 points to the left for Seat XYZ. In the "*HOD Swing Calculator '21*" tab in the "*VAHoD 2025 Data Project Model*" Excel sheet, I attempted to individually create a comparative swing for each of the 22 districts that I took note of. The formulas for each of these districts' comparative swings may vary. Some swings, in my judgement, were unsustainable. These included unique factors, such as one-time swings that aren't likely to be replicated multiple times. So, in conclusion, by taking the 2021 top ballot result for each of the HoD seats, adding the 14.21% statewide swing, and then adding the individual comparative swings for each of these seats, I arrived at the projected 2025 top-ballot margin for each of these seats.

Incumbency/downballot lag calculations:

The final factor taken into account for calculating the final projection margin for each of the HoD seats was an incumbency value, or in open seats a "downballot lag" value. In the "*HoD Incumbency Calculator*" page in the "*VAHoD 2025 Data Project Model*" Excel sheet, variables such as how the seat voted in the 2024 election, whether the 2023 margin for the seat was better or worse than anticipated (using a universal swing metric yet again), fundraising, and more were taken into account [9]. Each of these variables were given a positive (favorable for Republicans) or negative (favorable for Democrats) value, and after all these factors were added up, an incumbency value for each seat was reached. The only unique feature here would be for HD-86, where I added a whole new variable just to account for incumbent Republican Delegate A.C. Cordoza's scandals that were being used against him in attack ads [10]. So, finally, in the end, after adding this incumbency/downballot lag calculation to the projected 2025 top ballot margin, I finally reached the projected 2025 House of Delegates margin for each of the 22 seats in the Excel file.

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