



Virginia Association Backs 17 REALTOR® Champions – 16 Win! —*January 2014*

Virginia politics, explains Heidi Schlicher, Director of Political Operations for the 29,000-member Virginia Association of REALTORS® [VAR,] is an unpredictable beast. "We are a state that went blue for Obama in '08, and then red for governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general the very next year. Come January, for the first time in over 40 years, all top three state executive offices will be held by a democrat..."

The way the Virginia House districts are set up, especially, notes Schlicher, means that results can be very "iffy." "You've got to get the right people out to vote for your candidate, because it could be anyone's race." This fall, with the help of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® Campaign Services Division, VAR got involved in 17 elections, including the gubernatorial race -- winning all but one.

VAR backed both Democrats and Republicans, most of them incumbents. "We base our endorsements on issues that matter to REALTORS®, not party politics," says Schlicher. She explains that as an organization, VAR is in politics for the long-term, and has an investment in elected officials it has worked with over the years. "We've 'educated' them in issues of homeownership and property rights," she says. "These are folks who have championed REALTOR® issues and carried legislation for us in the past, so we are glad to be able to turn around and support them, when they need help."

One such candidate this year was David Yancey, a delegate for Virginia's 94th district, who was in a very close race. Over the previous two years, Yancey had worked with VAR as patron of one of its top pieces of legislation, a liability immunity bill, which protects real estate professionals from legal action for false advertising based on listing information. It was passed into law last year. With VAR's backing, Yancey retained his seat in the election by 537 votes.

"The NAR team and their consultants are incredible, their resources are vast, and they make it user-friendly for state and local associations," says Schlicher. "They are experts at strategy and production. We told them which districts we wanted to 'play' in, and they showed us what could and should be done." Early in the process, NAR assisted with polling data that helped VAR determine which of their champions would need help. Once that was decided, NAR's Campaign Services division helped VAR make a plan for each campaign; most of those involved direct mail pieces, phone calls, and online advertising on heavily trafficked local websites.



Virginia's election laws allow political advocacy campaigns to be coordinated with the candidate, which makes for efficient use of resources; even so, most of the races were extremely close. Delegate Tom Rust, a senior member of the House, who is now chair of the Transportation Committee, won by 56 votes, with VAR's support. Jackson Miller, a Virginia REALTOR[®] member, himself, and a senior ranking member of the Republican House Caucus, likewise pulled off a narrow victory, with VAR firmly behind him. Democrat Terry McAuliffe's successful bid for governor also benefitted from VAR support.

"We achieved some pretty incredible results this year." Schlicher points out, "It's a very positive feeling for our members and our association, knowing that we were able to take advantage of the resources available to us from NAR and to help elect REALTOR[®] Champions who are drafting and voting on REALTOR[®] issues in legislation every day."

For more information on how Virginia REALTORS[®] helped REALTOR[®] Champions sweep the polls this election cycle, contact Heidi Schlicher, Director of Political Operations for the Virginia Association of REALTORS[®], at heidi@varealtor.com or 804.249.5718.