

Know Before You Go: VA-02 District Primer

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In the last election, Republican Scott Taylor won this district by 71,305 votes (23%).

With your help, we're going to win this seat for the Democrats in 2018.

About the Incumbent

Introduction: Republican Scott Taylor was elected to the House of Representatives in 2016 after incumbent Republican Scott Rigell chose not to run for reelection. Taylor has a strong military background and was a small business owner and member of the Virginia House of Delegates prior to running for Congress.

Issues: In the 2016 House race, Taylor ran on a standard GOP platform, supporting the repeal of the ACHA, revision of the tax code, pro-business deregulation and modification of trade agreements. He has been a reliable GOP vote in the House despite showing a token interest in bipartisanship by co-sponsoring a bill with a Democratic colleague to prohibit housing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Committees: Taylor serves on the House Appropriations Committee and its subcommittees on Homeland Security; the Legislative Branch; and Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies.

Strengths: Taylor's biography is unquestionably impressive. Raised in a small Maryland town, he worked on a farm to help his single mother make ends meet. After high school, he joined the Navy and served eight years as a Navy SEAL, including as a sniper in Iraq where he was wounded in action. He is fluent in Spanish from his time serving in Latin America and went to Harvard on the GI bill. Before running for state government, he owned a small real estate business and worked as a security contractor in Yemen.

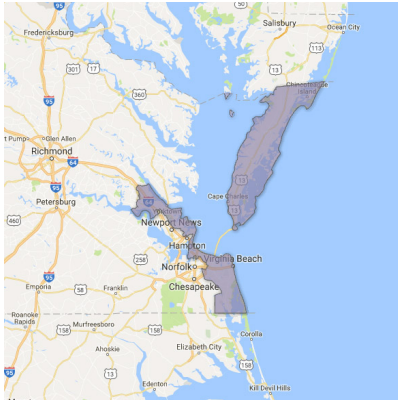
Potential Weaknesses: Taylor's vote for the American Health Care Act (Trumpcare) will be a key point of attack in the 2018 election, especially given his pledge to support health care legislation only if it provides coverage for those with pre-existing conditions.

About the Challenger

Introduction: Democrat Elaine Luria spent 20 years in the Navy as a Surface Warfare Officer, a naval commander, and a nuclear engineer. A graduate of the Naval Academy with a double-major in physics and history, she went on to command more than 400 sailors, oversee nuclear reactors, and serve as second-in-command on a guided missile cruiser. She retired last year to start her own business: the Mermaid Factory, which sells mementoes of Hampton Roads' iconic mermaid and dolphin symbols and donates a share of proceeds to support local arts and youth development.

Issues: Luria's campaign has three pillars: security, equality, and prosperity. She proposes investments in infrastructure, clean energy, and education. A pro-choice candidate, Luria supports women's rights and reproductive justice. She supports anti-discrimination and harassment protections, and legislation to expand and protect the right to vote. She's called for universal background checks, banning assault-style weapons, and allowing the CDC to study gun violence. Unlike Taylor, Luria opposes Trump's concessions to North Korea and advocates for military readiness in the Korean peninsula.

Strengths: Endorsed by EMILY's List, NARAL Pro-Choice, League of Conservation Action Fund, End Citizens United, VoteVets, 314 Action Fund (fighting for more STEM candidates in Congress), multiple labor unions, and veterans' groups, Luria has a broad appeal. She's a Navy veteran in a district that's 17% military, supports progressive causes, and runs a small business. She has a history of breaking barriers: She joined the Naval Academy only seventeen years after it began admitting women, and she was among the first women to attend the US Naval Nuclear Power School.



VA-02: Better Know a District

Geography

VA-02 encompasses all of Virginia Beach and parts of Norfolk, Newport News, and Hampton. It also covers the Williamsburg and Jamestown areas and the Eastern Shore counties of Accomack and Northampton, including the town of Chincoteague.

Demographics

The district is 68 percent White, 20 percent African American, and 5 percent Asian American. Just under 8 percent of district residents are of Hispanic or Latino heritage of any race. The population is relatively young — the median age is 35, compared with 38 for the nation as a whole. The foreign-born share of the population is 8 percent, compared to 13 percent nationally. 17 percent of civilian residents 18 or older are military veterans, more than twice the national average of 8 percent.

VA-02: Facts & Stats

Largest Cities

- Virginia Beach, 442K
- Norfolk (partial), 244K
- Newport News (partial), 181K
- Hampton (partial), 137K

2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 146K (45%)
- Trump: 157K (49%)

2016 House Results

- Brown (D): 119K (38%)
- Taylor (R): 190K (61%)

2014 House Results

- Patrick (D): 71K (41%)
- Rigell (R): 102K (59%)

Elections

VA-02 was considered a safe Republican seat in 2016, and Taylor won convincingly against Democrat Shaun Brown, 61 percent to 39 percent. The vote was closer in the presidential race, where Donald Trump narrowly carried the district against Hillary Clinton 49 percent to 45 percent. Trump underperformed Mitt Romney's 2012 share of the district's vote by 2 percentage points.

Colleges and Universities

Institutions of higher education include the College of William and Mary; Virginia Wesleyan College; Regent University (a Christian institution founded by televangelist Pat Robertson); and Eastern Shore Community College. Just outside the district are Old Dominion University in Norfolk; Hampton University, a Historically Black institution; and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

Industry

Several military installations and facilities are located in the district, and the Department of Defense is the largest single employer. Other major employers include Sentara Healthcare and municipal agencies and offices, among them the cities and school districts of Virginia Beach, Norfolk, and Hampton.

Tourism

There are several popular tourist destinations in VA-02, including Colonial Williamsburg, Busch Gardens, Jamestown and Yorktown, as well as wildlife preserves, national parklands and beach resorts, notably the Virginia Beach boardwalk and oceanfront. The district is also home to the Virginia Aquarium and Military Aviation Museum.