

# Know Before You Go: VA-10 District Primer

July 2018 • Researched, summarized, and edited by Swing Left's all-volunteer research team!

**In the last election, Republican Barbara Comstock won this district by only 23,000 votes (6%).**

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

## About the Incumbent

**Introduction:** Republican Barbara Comstock has served as the 10th district's representative since 2014. During her political career she led the RNC research team against the Clinton Administration and the 2000 Gore campaign, and she also served as public affairs director at the Justice Department. In 2010, she became a member of the Virginia House of Delegates. She is being discussed as a possible challenger for Tim Kaine's Senate seat in 2018.

**Issues:** Comstock supports a repeal and replacement of the ACA, opposes the federal hiring freeze, opposed the travel ban, and supports school choice. She has voted against equal pay for women, voted to defund Planned Parenthood, and would like to see Roe v. Wade overturned.

**Committees:** Comstock sits on several committees, including the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, the Science, Space & Technology Committee, the Subcommittee on Research & Technology (she's the chair), and the Joint Economic Committee.

**Recent Elections:** In 2016, Comstock defeated LuAnn Bennett 53% to 47%. In 2014, she defeated John Foust 57% to 40% to succeed longtime Rep. Frank Wolf.

**Strengths:** Comstock is very good at fundraising, opposition research, and ground game. She positions herself as a moderate who doesn't simply vote along party lines. She was endorsed by The Washington Post in 2016. She's been effective at courting minority votes, and she's a regular at minority-hosted events. She has strong support in her home area of McLean/Fairfax.

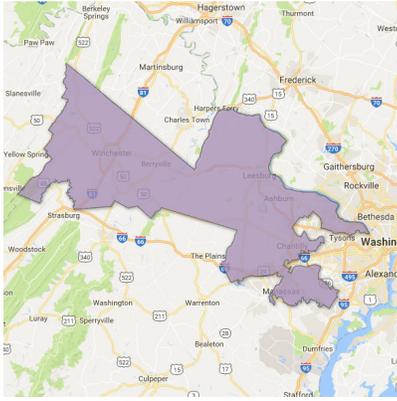
**Potential Weaknesses:** Comstock has a 98% Trump score from FiveThirtyEight. When pressed on ACA, she falls back on vague promises without concrete proposals. She has earned negative press for failing to attend a town hall or hold office hours. During the 2014-16 term, she had no bills become law.

## About the Challenger

**Introduction:** Democrat Jennifer Wexton has served as a Virginia state senator since 2014. Before, she was a prosecutor for Loudon County, a court-appointed attorney and Special Justice for mental health commitment hearings in the county, and she served as a Judge in District Court. A *Washington Post* endorsement during the primary notes that as a legislator, Wexton has been very successful in "conceiving and enacting substantive bills," and, that she has earned bipartisan respect in the legislature.

**Issues:** As a former prosecutor, Wexton has a keen interest in criminal justice reform. Making the system more equitable and ending mass incarceration are priorities for her. Wexton supports the reform of mandatory minimums, ending the use of for-profit prisons, expanding community policing and re-entry programs, and restoring voting rights. Wexton believes that access to affordable healthcare is a right for all Americans. She has consistently fought for a woman's right to make her own healthcare decisions and she has fought to improve the mental health system and to combat opioid and heroin addiction in Virginia. Additionally, Wexton has a strong record on environmental issues receiving a 100% rating from several environmental groups including the Virginia Sierra Club and League of Conservation Voters.

**Strengths:** Wexton has a proven track record of getting legislation passed. Since 2014, she's worked in a bipartisan fashion to shepherd more than 40 bills through the legislature and enacted into law. According to the *Washington Post's* endorsement: "if voters want a candidate who has proved she can win a tough election and then rack up genuine accomplishments while remaining true to progressive values, they have only one choice." Wexton has been endorsed by several members of state and local government as well as The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, Moms Demand Action Gun Sense, and several local unions including SEIU, UFCW and ATU.



## VA-10: Better Know the District

### VA-10: Facts & Stats

#### Population Centers

- McLean (partial), 48,426
- Ashburn, 46,097
- Leesburg, 44,612
- Manassas, 39,317
- Sterling, 27,013
- Winchester, 26,587

#### 2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 211K (52%)
- Trump: 171K (42%)

#### 2016 House Results

- Bennett (D): 188K (47%)
- Comstock (R): 211K (53%)
- Other: 2K (0%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 144K
- Eligible, not registered: 97K

#### 2014 House Results

- Foust (D): 90K (40%)
- Comstock (R): 126K (57%)
- Other: 3K (3%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 274K

#### Geography

The 10th district is a sprawling congressional district in Northern Virginia. It is suburban in the northeast, closer to D.C., and becomes increasingly rural as it moves west toward the mountains. The district includes all of Clarke, Frederick, and Loudoun Counties as well as portions of Fairfax and Prince William Counties. It also includes the independent cities of Manassas, Manassas Park, and Winchester.

#### Citizenry

The district is 74% white, with a growing non-white population in the northeast. It is affluent, with a median income of around \$110,000. The northeast portion of the district is suburban, affluent, and tends to vote blue. The northeast is rapidly growing, driven by expanding defense and intelligence spending, and related growth of technology and services. The remainder of the district is more rural, less ethnically diverse, and traditionally conservative.

#### Economics

District 10, especially its eastern portions, has become significantly more affluent over the last few decades. The areas closest to D.C. have seen property values and average incomes skyrocket, while the western end of the district has seen large increases in population density and average income.

#### Industries

Unemployment in the district is low, at 3.1% (compared with 3.8% in Virginia and 4.5% in the United States). The CIA headquarters and Dulles Airport are located within the district. A large portion of constituents work for local school departments and for the federal government or government contractors. Agriculture is still a large employer in rural Clarke and Frederick counties.

#### Recent Elections

In 2016, Comstock won the district 53% to Bennett's 47%. In the 2016 presidential election, the vote varied widely by county: Eastern counties went 65% for Clinton; western counties went for Trump by significant margins. Clinton beat Trump in Fairfax County by 64.4% to 28.8%; Loudoun County by 55.1% to 38.2%, and Prince William County by 57.6% to 36.5%. Trump beat Clinton in Clarke County by 56.8% to 37.1% and in Frederick County by 64.5% to 29.5%. Anecdotal evidence indicates that voters were not necessarily voting *for* Hillary Clinton as much as they were voting *against* Donald Trump. Tying Comstock to Trump could be an effective strategy.