

## U.S. OKs reshaped districts

Action on Virginia's congressional areas allows timely primary

**BY WESLEY P. HESTER**

Richmond Times-Dispatch

The U.S. Department of Justice has signed off on Virginia's congressional redistricting plan passed just weeks ago by the General Assembly.

The approval Wednesday means that primary elections in the state can move forward as scheduled. This year, the legislature passed a law that would have delayed primaries had the plan not been cleared by April 3. The plan to reshape the state's 11 congressional districts based on 2010 census data was supposed to be handled by the legislature last year but ended in a standoff between the GOP-controlled House and the Democrat-controlled Senate.

After gaining control of the Senate following November's election, Republicans resuscitat

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ed their plan from last year and passed it despite objections and in the face of lawsuits, which were dismissed.

The plan retains a single black-majority district, the 3rd, rather than creating a second from the 4th District as Democrats had proposed. Democrats claim that by increasing the proportion of black residents in the 3rd, the plan lessens minority influence in other districts.

"We are pleased that the Department of Justice has recognized the plan conforms with federal law, and we are looking forward to elections this fall," Tucker Martin, a spokesman for Gov. Bob McDonnell, said Wednesday night.