

Issue: VA Politics

Glenn Youngkin is Not a Moderate

Glenn Youngkin cultivates an image of being a moderate Republican, but his actions show that he is as extreme as most other Republicans.

Should Republicans control all levers of power in Virginia after the 2023 elections, Virginians may see the passage of legislation as radical as what is passing in other Republican-controlled states.

The Company He Keeps

The peaceful transfer of power is a hallmark of a democracy. The events of January 6, 2021 and Republican claims of a stolen election show that many Republicans are anti-democratic.

One prominent election denier has been Kari Lake, who Youngkin stumped for when she was running for governor of Arizona in 2022. In fact, Youngkin appeared at *six* events in one day with Lake.¹ The appearances with Lake were not a one-off occurrence, as Youngkin also campaigned for election denier Tudor Dixon when she was running for Michigan governor.²



Youngkin also associates with racists. He participated in a fundraiser for Paul LePage, when LePage was seeking re-election as governor of Maine. LePage is well known for abhorrent remarks such as referring to people of color as “the enemy” and saying “Black people come up the highway and they kill Mainers.”³ When asked about LePage’s racist remarks, Youngkin replied “I don’t know of [any] racially inflammatory statements and, therefore, I’m not sure that that’s accurate.”⁴

The governor has also criticized at least one of the indictments against the former president as being merely for political gain. That was before the text of the indictment had been released.⁵

Abortion Restrictions

Youngkin supports a 15-week abortion ban with the only exceptions being for rape and incest, and to save the life of the mother. Should any legislation restricting abortion reach his desk, Youngkin says he would “happily and gleefully” sign it.⁶

Privacy of Menstrual Information

In early 2023, Republicans in the House of Delegates, with Youngkin’s support, blocked a bill that would have banned police from using warrants to access women’s and girl’s menstrual data on tracking apps. There are fears that, if law enforcement can obtain this highly personal and private information, it could be used to prosecute women who receive abortions.⁷ It is estimated that nearly one third of women in the US use menstrual tracking apps.⁸

Anti-Civil Rights for the LGBTQ Community

When asked about marriage equality, Youngkin confirmed that he did not support marriage equality but saw that it was “legally acceptable.” The Dobbs decision has threatened marriage equality as its legal basis is the same as *Roe*.⁹

Youngkin has rolled back policies designed to accommodate transgender students. This includes the requirement that students use bathrooms and can only play on sports teams that match their gender assigned at birth. School personnel are now required to use the legal names of students unless explicit permission of their parents was given.¹⁰

Youngkin is Anti-Environment

One telling example of the governor’s hostility to the environment is his desire to withdraw Virginia from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).¹¹ The RGGI is a cap-and-trade program designed to create incentives for large polluters to lower their emissions and look for alternative energy sources. Virginia is one of 11 states to participate in the program. Participating states have already seen \$4.7 billion in net economic benefits.¹²

Youngkin describes his decision to withdraw from the RGGI thusly: “it is not only a regressive tax on families and businesses across the Commonwealth, but also does nothing to reduce pollution.”¹³

Youngkin is incorrect. In the first two years after joining the RGGI, Virginia’s emissions fell 13% (2021) and 5% (2022).¹⁴ The RGGI directs 45% of its proceeds, which come from generators of fossil fuel powered electricity, to the Community Flood Preparedness Fund and 50% into upgrading energy efficiency in the homes of Virginia families.¹⁵

There are costs to not addressing climate change. Climate disasters are paid for by hikes in residents’ insurance premiums, local, state, and federal income taxes, and by the individuals who have lost homes and businesses. More than every other state, Virginia is expected to have the greatest increase in the number of properties at risk of flooding by 2050.¹⁶

Soon after taking office, Glenn Youngkin nominated Andrew Wheeler for Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources. Andrew Wheeler is a former coal lobbyist who led the EPA during the Trump Administration. During Wheeler’s tenure as the director of the EPA, he sidelined scientists and rolled back numerous rules protecting the environment.¹⁷ Input from environmentalists led the Democratic-controlled Senate in Virginia to block his nomination. In an end-run around the legislature, Youngkin created a new agency with Wheeler at the helm: the Office of Regulatory Management.¹⁸

Opposition to Common-Sense Gun Safety Laws

In the first eight months of 2023, there have been 475 mass shootings in the US. A mass shooting is defined as an incident in which four or more people are killed.¹⁹ The gun deaths per capita in the US are higher—by far—than in all other developed nations.^{20, 21, 22}

Despite gun deaths across the country and including in Virginia, Youngkin has vowed not to sign any gun-control laws. Before being elected, he was asked what gun safety measures he would support if elected, he replied, “I think we need to be fully clear: none.”²³

First Amendment Rights

Most book bans occur at the local level, generally by school boards. However, Youngkin expressed support for a bill that would have given parents more control of books their children checked out from school libraries. This bill was blocked by Senate Democrats.^{24, 25}

The Critical Race Theory and Youngkin's Snitch Line

On his first day in office, Youngkin signed an executive order to end the teaching of “divisive concepts” such as Critical Race Theory (CRT) in public schools.²⁶

CRT is not taught at the K-12 level in any public school. It is taught in universities, and examines the impact that slavery and racist institutions have had, and continue to have, on blacks. A basic question raised by CRT is whether it is reasonable to assume that American institutions, customs, and practices changed overnight with the legal changes in the Civil Rights Movement to view and treat black citizens the same as white citizens.²⁷

Youngkin also instituted a tip line—critics called it a snitch line—for parents to report teachers who are ostensibly teaching “divisive” topics. The snitch line has since been shut down.²⁸

Conclusion

Glenn Youngkin demonstrates that he is anything but a moderate, in spite of his performative moderatism. “Many conservatives see his campaign as providing a template for how to delicately embrace Trumpism in blue states.”²⁹

Local Majority has 2023 reports that expand on most of the topics discussed above. A paper about Critical Race Theory was written in 2021. Scroll down here <https://www.localmajority.org/research-reports-va/> to see the reports.

¹ <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2022/10/glenn-youngkin-kari-lake-arizona-big-lie/>

² <https://www.mlive.com/public-interest/2022/08/virginia-gov-youngkin-to-campaign-with-tudor-dixon-give-michigan-gop-keynote.html>

³ <https://www.vpm.org/news/2022-09-07/youngkin-campaigns-for-maine-republican-lepage-who-has-history-of-making-racist>

⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/09/04/youngkin-lepage-racial-comments/>

⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/03/31/youngkin-trump-virginia-indictment-reaction/>

⁶ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/12/16/youngkin-abortion-ban-budget-proposal/>

⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/02/14/youngkin-menstrual-data-abortion-virginia/>

⁸ [https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/la-west/la-times-today/2022/08/04/how-secure-is-data-from-period-tracking-apps--](https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/la-west/la-times-today/2022/08/04/how-secure-is-data-from-period-tracking-apps--#:~:text=According%20to%20a%20survey%20from,apps%20have%20major%20privacy%20concerns)

⁹ <https://legalaidatwork.org/what-the-supreme-courts-dobbs-decision-means-for-lgbtq-rights/>

¹⁰ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/07/23/virginia-transgender-model-policies-faq/>

¹¹ <https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2022-02-09/glenn-youngkin-takes-hard-right-turn-as-virginia-governor>

¹² <https://www.c2es.org/content/regional-greenhouse-gas-initiative-rggi/>

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- ¹³ <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/news-releases/2023/june/name-1005558-en.html>
- ¹⁴ <https://wydaily.com/latest-news/2023/05/12/virginia-may-scrap-program-that-earned-almost-600-million-and-reduced-carbon-emissions/>
- ¹⁵ <https://www.cbf.org/news-media/newsroom/2023/virginia/air-board-votes-to-withdraw-virginia-from-regional-greenhouse-gas-initiative.html>
- ¹⁶ <https://www.primalsurvivor.net/natural-disasters-virginia>
- ¹⁷ <https://blog.ucsusa.org/elliott-negin/andrew-wheeler-decimated-epa/>
- ¹⁸ <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/26072023/virginia-youngkin-wheeler-rggi/>
- ¹⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41488081>
- ²⁰ <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/2023/apr/health-costs-gun-violence-how-us-compares-other-countries>
- ²¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/26/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>
- ²² <https://www.healthdata.org/news-events/insights-blog/acting-data/gun-violence-united-states-outlier#:~:text=The%20US%20ranks%20first%20for,with%20populations%20over%2010%20million.&text=Originally%20published%20March%2025%2C%202021,high%20levels%20of%20gun%20violence.>
- ²³ <https://newrepublic.com/post/169124/glenn-youngkin-supports-no-gun-control-heartbroken-walmart-shooting>
- ²⁴ <https://www.virginiamercury.com/2023/01/27/bill-increasing-parental-oversight-of-school-library-materials-clears-house-but-faces-tough-senate/>
- ²⁵ <https://vademocrats.org/news/town-hall-youngkin-favors-banning-books-steals-credit-for-northams-accomplishments-and-more/>
- ²⁶ <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/news-releases/2022/january/name-918519-en.html>
- ²⁷ VA.Critical_Race_Theory.20210814.DMR.jxr.rf.docx
- ²⁸ <https://www.npr.org/2022/11/05/1134514204/a-tip-line-championed-by-virginia-gov-youngkin-last-year-has-been-quietly-shut-d>
- ²⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/29/us/politics/glenn-youngkin-virginia-governors-race.html>