

New District

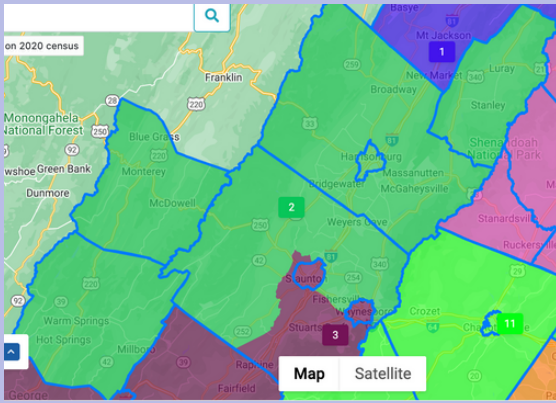


New People



New Choices

New State Senate District 2



The new Senate District 2 includes all of Page County, Rockingham County, Harrisonburg City, Bath County, Highland County, and the western part of Augusta County.

Senator Creigh Deeds, old Senate District 25, is no longer representing Bath and Highland Counties. Senator Emmett Hanger, old Senate District 24, has retired.

Senator Mark Obenshain, old Senate District 26, is running as the incumbent.

The Candidates



Mark Obenshain

Mark was elected to the Senate of Virginia in 2003. Growing up in a home in which the discussion of politics was standard fare around the dinner table each night, the son of the man often dubbed the architect of the modern Republican Party of Virginia, Mark developed a passion for politics and a zeal for public service early in life. Senator Obenshain is an attorney with the Obenshain Group in Harrisonburg. He is seeking a fifth term in the State Senate representing the new District 2.



Kathy Beery

Kathy grew up in the Salem Baptist Children’s Home from the age of 9. Seeing the child welfare system from the inside gave Kathy a heart for children and families struggling against great odds to thrive in systems made by others and for others. As a public school teacher, she became a fierce advocate for fully funding our schools. She helped found Virginia Educators United. She was the president of the Harrisonburg Education Association. Kathy has two grown children and 11 grandchildren. She enjoys ballroom dancing.



Joshua Huffman

Joshua grew up in Briery Branch and Harrisonburg. Passionate about politics, he completed an undergraduate degree in government from W&M. After running for Harrisonburg City Council in 2014 as an independent, he earned a master's in political science from WVU with a focus on elections and electoral systems. Prior to the pandemic, he worked for LSU. Joshua is single and enjoys strategy games. He lives in and works for the city of Harrisonburg.

What Do the Candidates Stand For?

Mark Obenshain has declined all invitations to debate Kathy Beery and Joshua Huffman in front of voters. To compensate for this breach of democratic norms, Kathy and Joshua have pooled resources to create this “print-based debate.” **Mr. Obenshain’s position on each issue will be represented by his twenty-year record in the State Senate.** You can find the information about Mr. Obenshain’s votes and proposed legislation at realmarkobenshain.com

Workers’ Rights and Interests

Mark Obenshain

I voted **NO** to raising the \$7.25 minimum wage (established in 2009) **TWICE.**

I voted **NO** to raising the \$3 minimum wage for disabled workers.

I always **oppose unions** and **defend “right to work” laws.**

I voted **NO** to letting you sue your employer for wage theft or sue them for calling you a “contractor” to avoid providing benefits.

I voted **NO** to requiring employers to provide sick leave.

Kathy Beery

A **living wage** is a basic right.

Unions are about more than wages. With the Harrisonburg Education Association (HEA), I advocated for respect, dignity, inclusion in planning, and improved working conditions.

We need multiple ways to empower workers. **Expedited credentialing for immigrants** will put people to work in professions. **Apprenticeship programs** through unions and businesses are a ladder to good wages. **Worker-owned cooperatives** share the benefits of business.

Abusive employers **must be stopped.**

Joshua Huffman

I **oppose a minimum wage law.** It often increases unemployment by reducing entry-level, lower-skill positions and encouraging automation or elimination of those jobs. “There is no excuse for not being aware of what a major social disaster the minimum wage law has been for the young, the poor, and especially for young and poor blacks.” (Thomas Sowell)

I **strongly support Virginia’s Right-To-Work laws.** Anyone should be free to join a labor union, but no one should be forced to join a union and pay union dues to get a job.

The government should protect both employees and employers from abusive practices

Public Education

Mark Obenshain

In 2011, While schools were still underfunded, I sponsored a bill to **eliminate all corporate income tax** in Virginia.

I have sponsored numerous bills to **establish charter schools**.

I want **charter schools written into the state constitution**.

I want to **allow the Virginia Board of Education to authorize charter schools** that local school boards would not oversee.

I **do not support collective bargaining** for public service employees, including educators.

Kathy Beery

Virginia **cut funding for schools** when big banks crashed the economy. We saw **increased property taxes and/or deteriorating schools depending on location**. Democrats held firm in 2023 budget negotiations. **Schools are being better funded**. We need **permanent full funding**.

Public schools **prepare our children for citizenship in a pluralist democracy** and are **community gathering places**, especially in rural communities.

Salaries for teachers and aides must be increased. Professional educators need to be respected and consulted on effective programming. **The SOL tests need a full review**.

Joshua Huffman

As a **graduate of the Harrisonburg City Public School system and William & Mary**, I've experienced many of the problems that many of our students face.

Virginia needs to prioritize infrastructure. Some "temporary" mobile structures around our schools have been there for 25 years or more. How can we offer quality education in inadequate buildings?

Virginia needs to **improve teacher pay** to recruit and retain the best educators.

I **support greater educational freedom and choice**. As is the case in politics, greater competition results in better outcomes.

Infrastructure

Mark Obenshain

I was elected in 2003. I **sponsored my first legislation to fix I-81 in 2018!**

I **have never sponsored legislation for rural broadband**. When voting on cooperatives developing rural broadband, I talked about problems with railroad companies. I used Rule 36 to indicate my presence but not vote where I have a conflict of interest. I have never explained my conflict of interest.

Infrastructure is not my priority because it means spending public money, which goes against reducing taxes.

Kathy Beery

A senator's job is to advocate for the responsible, wise, and just allocation of public revenues in order to support thriving communities.

Maintaining 20th-century infrastructure while developing 21st-century infrastructure, such as broadband, requires public investment.

Corporations that benefit from an educated workforce (public schools) and well-maintained modern infrastructure **must pay their share**. Many businesses recognize that **childcare** and **affordable housing** are also essential ingredients for business success.

Joshua Huffman

Many **roads** in the district, especially I-81 **have been a mess** for two decades or more.

What has Senator Obenshain done to solve the problem?

The state should make sure that all state highways are properly maintained.

We need to **work with the private sector to make sure that internet and cell phone service is accessible for everyone** throughout the state.

Privacy and Personal Liberties

Mark Obenshain

Before I was elected to the Senate, I was a JMU Board of Visitors member. I pushed to **prohibit contraceptive services on campus**.

Sample sponsored bills:

- 2009 -- require a woman to report her miscarriage to the police
- 2011 -- full rights of citizenship start at conception
- 2011 -- prohibit insurance offered through state exchange from paying for abortions
- 2012 -- 20-week ban
- 2023 -- prohibit abortion

I voted **against aligning the constitution with marriage equality**.

Kathy Beery

The government does not belong in anyone's medical visit. Every person has an **inalienable right to bodily autonomy and privacy**.

I support policies that help parents say "yes" to an unplanned pregnancy. I oppose policies that take away their choice. **Prevention:** age-appropriate, **fact-based sex education** in public schools, **access to birth control**, and **reduced cost** for the most effective long-acting contraceptives. **Support:** access to affordable housing, medical care, family leave, and childcare.

Discrimination based on sexual or gender identity should be prohibited.

Marriage equality is a right.

Joshua Huffman

The government's most important goal is protecting Virginians' lives, liberties, and property.

I **have been pro-life since 1995, and I oppose public funding of abortion**. However, Senator Obenshain's bill requiring women to report a miscarriage lacks compassion for grieving parents.

The government should never pick winners or losers in Virginia by offering preferential treatment to some and discriminating against others.

The best solution to the marriage equality controversy is to **get the government out of marriage**.