

District 05

CONGRESSIONAL REPORT



INCUMBENT
Virgil Goode (R)

CHALLENGER
Tom Periello (D)

Tobacco and the Civil War remain important cultural touchstones for the fifth congressional district that sweeps across the heart of Southside Virginia. The district includes the city of Danville, where the tobacco auction originated in 1858, and the hamlet of Appomattox Courthouse, where Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant. Voters here exhibit strong independence, and a populist streak fueled by the exodus of traditional industries such as textiles, furniture manufacturing and farming. The district also extends along the Blue Ridge



and takes in the liberal-leaning city of Charlottesville, home of the University of Virginia. The geographic and political diversity of the region makes for a complicated electoral formula that leans decidedly Republican but also gives winning margins to Democrats such as Mark Warner (52% in 2001) and Tim Kaine (50% in 2005). President Bush received 56% of the vote here in 2004.

Incumbent U.S. Rep. Virgil Goode, Jr. appears a perfect fit for the politics of the district. He has been elected here as a Democrat and a Republican. Goode comes from a political family in Franklin County where the courthouse annex is named for his late father, a Democrat who was a longtime prosecutor and populist. Young Virgil was something of a child prodigy, winning a seat in the Virginia Senate at 27, five months after his graduation from the University of Virginia law school in 1973.

Although his tenure was long in the Senate, Goode gained a reputation more for unleashing a stem-winder for the “little man” than for getting things done. His populism and quirky frugality did not endear him to the collegial Senate and, in 1994, he broke with the party establishment, challenging incumbent U.S. Sen. Charles Robb in a Democratic primary. Many considered Goode’s statewide bid more than quixotic; they thought it political suicide. But the 1994 race showed an independent streak that Goode would soon put to his full advantage. A year later, Goode broke with Senate Democrats and forced them to accept a power-sharing agreement with Republicans. In 1996, Goode offered himself as the heir to the fifth congressional district held by fellow Democrat L.F. Payne, who was retiring.



Virgil Goode Jr.

Once in Washington, Goode continued to infuriate Democrats. His vote for impeachment of President Clinton prompted his chief of staff to resign in protest. Goode’s partisan transition became official in 2002 when he ran successfully as the Republican nominee. In 2006, Goode survived his toughest re-election battle, winning with 57% over a well-funded challenge from Democrat Al Weed. Goode serves on the House Appropriations Committee and the Subcommittee on Interior and Environment and the Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development.

Tom Perriello, a lawyer, is a formidable challenger. He secured the Democratic nomination when David Shreve of Charlottesville withdrew from the race early this year, and he quickly outpaced Goode in fundraising, reporting more than \$900,000 in June. And he established a campaign organization early in the year, opening offices in Franklin County, Charlottesville and Danville.



Tom Perriello

Perriello, 33, is an Albemarle County native and the son of a prominent local pediatrician. He is a leader in the progressive religious movement with two degrees from Yale. He has worked in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and the Sudan, and lived in New York for several years, where he worked in international law and started nonprofit, faith-based organizations.

After receiving his law degree from Yale University, Perriello accepted an assignment working to end atrocities in the West African countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone, which had suffered long civil wars fueled by blood diamonds. He worked with child soldiers, amputees, and local pro-democracy groups in Sierra Leone to help secure the peace and reconciliation process that helped to restore order after twelve years of violence in that country. He went on to serve as Special Advisor and spokesperson for the International Prosecutor during the showdown that forced Liberian dictator Charles Taylor from power. He also has worked inside Darfur and Afghanistan and helped found two progressive faith-based organizations here in the U.S., FaithfulAmerica.org and Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good.