



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on November 1, 2021

Republican Challenger Jumps Ahead of Democrat Favorite in Virginia Governor's Race

Two weeks ago, former Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe was comfortably ahead of his Republican rival, Glenn Youngkin, in the state's race for the governorship. New to politics and carrying the baggage as a former head of a private-equity firm, Youngkin, [according to Real Clear Politics \(RCP\)](#), was trailing McAuliffe by as many as five percentage points.

And then McAuliffe made a gift of momentous proportions to the Youngkin campaign: He told the truth about how he thinks public schools should be run. In a gubernatorial debate, McAuliffe declared "I don't think parents should be telling schools what they should teach."



AP Images
Glenn Youngkin

The gaffe was compounded by a highly suspect fraud perpetrated by the Lincoln Project involving five individuals dressed up as "white supremacists" expressing support for Youngkin. It was so poorly done that the fraud was almost immediately exposed along with its potential links to the McAuliffe campaign.

Fox News, which had Youngkin behind by five points in its October 10-13 poll, first noted the reversal: In its October 24-27 poll it had Youngkin leading McAuliffe by eight points, 53-45. Other polls since then have confirmed Youngkin's lead.

This led the McAuliffe campaign to bring all the top Democrat big guns it could find at the last minute, giving the scent of desperation. Longtime Democrat Representative James Clyburn of South Carolina campaigned for McAuliffe over the weekend, declaring that "On Tuesday, people will be looking at [the race] as a bellwether of what is to come."

He may be closer to the truth than he knows.

A McAuliffe win could reassure Democrats heading into next year's midterm elections that they might still have a chance at maintaining their razor-thin advantage in the House, and perhaps even add a senator or two in the upper chamber as well.

On the other hand, a surprise upset would send the opposite message: Trump continues to rule the Republican Party from the sidelines.

Democrat biggies showed up in force to help McAuliffe stem the tide: Former President Obama assumed a southern accent when saying, "We ain't got time to be tired!" while Vice President Kamala Harris was on the scene declaring that "this race is tight ... we're not taking anything for granted."

In fact, so many Democrat bigwigs showed up that ABC News correspondent Jonathan Karl noted:

We've got Stacy Abrams here, two visits by the president, a visit by the former President



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Obama, a visit by the first lady, a visit by the vice president. Why all the ... why do you need all the help?

With more than a million votes already cast, the race will likely be decided by the black vote, said *USA Today*/Suffolk University pollster David Paleologos:

If the Black vote is 20% of the total vote or higher, that puts McAuliffe in the driver's seat. If the Black vote is between 16-18%, then Youngkin's poised to win.

Thanks to the "gift in kind" of the McAuliffe missteps and gaffes, the race is much closer than many expected.



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