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SENATE BILL NO. 51

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Local Government
on January 26, 2026)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Rouse)

A BILL to amend and reenact § 15.2-1400 of the Code of Virginia, relating to election of certain governing bodies; conversion to single-member districts.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 15.2-1400 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 15.2-1400. Governing bodies.**

A. The qualified voters of every locality shall elect a governing body for such locality. The date, place, number, term, and other details of the election shall be as specified by law, general or special. Qualification for office is provided in Article 4 (§ 15.2-1522 et seq.) of Chapter 15.

B. The governing body of every locality shall be composed of not fewer than three nor more than 11 members.

C. Chairmen, mayors, supervisors, and councilmen are subject to the prohibitions set forth in §§ 15.2-1534 and 15.2-1535.

D. A governing body may punish or fine a member of the governing body for disorderly behavior.

E. Notwithstanding the provisions of §§ 24.2-222 and 24.2-222.1, any city or town charter, or any other provision of law, general or special, beginning with any election held after January 1, 2022, elections for mayor, members of a local governing body, or members of an elected school board shall be held at the time of the November general election for terms to commence January 1.

F. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, general or special, in a locality that imposes district-based or ward-based residency requirements for members of the governing body, the member elected from each district or ward shall be elected by the qualified voters of that district or ward and not by the locality at large.

G. *Notwithstanding the provisions of any local government charter, the provisions of § 24.2-304.1, or any other provision of law, general or special, for municipal elections held after July 1, 2026, every locality with a population of 400,000 or greater shall elect its members of the governing body by individual single-member districts, each of which shall be substantially equally populated. A governing body's presiding officer may be elected at large. Any such governing body that does not already meet the requirements of this subsection shall establish the required districts and shall reapportion the representation in the governing body in accordance with Article 2.1 (§ 24.2-304.1 et seq.) of Chapter 3 of Title 24.2. No further reapportionment of such districts by the governing body shall be permitted until the next decennial census.*

2. That for any governing body that, prior to 2026, adopted an ordinance with a map to elect its members by individual single-member districts, such ordinance shall become effective upon the effective date of this act.