Local

Wilder plan for Senate adds 10th N. Va. seat

Change prompted by huge outcry

RICHMOND (AP) — Gov. L. Douglas Wilder will create a 10th Senate seat for Northern Virginia under a redistricting proposal he will release today, his spokeswoman said Friday.

Wilder was working to meet a midnight deadline for amending the Senate redistricting plan that was approved by the General Assembly last week.

Wilder's office gave no details about how the plan would affect the rest of the state, including five black-majority districts in southeastern Virginia. Laura F. Dillard, the governor's press secretary, said Wilder was still working on the plan late Friday.

Dillard said the new Northern Virginia district will be centered in Prince William and Stafford counties. She also said the plan will reduce the population in several Northern Virginia districts.

"This is a fairer plan," she said. "Northern Virginians will have 10 Senate districts which will reflect their interests."

Sen. John H. Chichester, R-Stafford, said he had heard his district might be changed to include more of the Washington suburbs and less of the rural Northern Neck communities.

"It doesn't bother me," he said. "Prince William County is a good county for me and it has been over the years."

Wilder said last week he had pushed for the plan passed by the assembly and was unconcerned that it gave fast-growing Northern Virginia nine Senate seats instead of 10. The region now has eight.

Wilder said he backed the plan to punish Sen. Joseph V. Gartlan Jr., D-Fairfax, the Privileges and Elections Committee chairman who had been seeking more representation for Northern Virginia. Gartlan has been a frequent Wilder critic.

The governor changed his view of Gartlan last week when he was asked what he thought of the senator's role in the Senate. "If he's willing to help me," Wilder said. "I'm willing to help him."
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The governor changed his view after being deluged with complaints from northern Virginians who felt they were being shortchanged by the plan.

Several Northern Virginia senators allied with Wilder met Thursday in Richmond to work out the new proposal.

"It's not everything we wanted but it's better than what we had before," said Sen. Emilie F. Miller, D-Fairfax. She said the population in her district was cut from 162,000..."