

Transgender Death Metal Singer Defeats Highly Conservative Delegate

Who Wrote Virginia's Anti-Trans Bill

13-term Republican incumbent Delegate Robert G. Marshall from Virginia was recently ousted from office by Democrat Danica Roem, the first openly transgender person to be elected to Virginia's state legislature, during the elections on Tuesday, November 7. The election was especially shocking and noteworthy considering Marshall's reputation as the state of Virginia's most socially conservative lawmaker.

In 1991, Marshall ran for the House of Delegates 13th District seat. He defeated his Democratic opponent 58%-42%. He has been re-elected in every election since then, until 2017. He is well-known for being extremely socially conservative, calling himself Virginia's "chief homophobe," and proposing a bill to restrict bathroom and changing facility use by transgender people in January of this year. The bill would have forced people to use the restroom which corresponds to the gender that they were assigned at birth. Marshall has projected a conservative voice on the basis of many other social issues such as gun control, usage and availability of birth control, abortion, immigration, and others. Marshall received his education from Montgomery College, Belmont Abbey College, and California State University, Northridge. Prior to his election to the Virginia House of Delegates, Marshall worked as a staffer for the American Life League, an organization which opposes all forms of abortion and birth control.

Roem received her degree in journalism from St. Bonaventure University and worked for nearly a decade as the lead reporter for both the *Gainesville Times* and *Prince William Times*. She won several awards from the Virginia Press Association. Roem came out as transgender in 2013 after having begun her physical gender transition the previous year in 2012. She legally

changed her name from “Dan” to “Danica” in 2015. In addition to her endeavors as a journalist and a politician, Roem is the lead singer and co-founder of a death metal band by the name of Cab Ride Home, named after a memorable night spent inside a Springfield club with fellow band members. Roem declared her candidacy for the election for the 13th District of the Virginia House of Delegates in January 2017. On her campaign trail, Roem promised to be a voice of inclusion and bring more and better-paying jobs to her district. Her primary policy goal, however, is to reduce traffic congestion on Route 28, which has beset the area surrounding it for decades.

After the election, Marshall said, “For 26 years I’ve been proud to fight for you, and fight for our future, I’m committed to continue the fight for you, but in a different role going forward.” About the election, Ms. Roem said, “Discrimination is a disqualifier, you can serve if you have good public policy ideas, you’re well qualified and you have a commitment to do the work of the people you’re running to represent.” With other big wins for the Democratic Party in Virginia such as Governor-elect Ralph Northam’s win, Democrats have hope that this recent election will buoy their chances for success in the 2018 midterms.