



2024 GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION

WEEK #2 SESSION REPORT

January 20, 2024

Prepared for the:



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Over the past two weeks, Access Point Public Affairs has been busy reviewing legislation of potential interest to members of the Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce. As of today, there have been 2,464 bills and resolutions introduced. Of these, 27 have been passed in the House and 48 have been passed in the Senate. The deadline to submit all legislation was Friday, January 19th, at 3:00 p.m. As we continue our review of legislation of potential interest and impact, we will be updating our bill tracker. Click below for the latest updates.



We have organized the tracker to align with the Chamber's priorities as follows:

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM/WELL-TRAINED, SKILLED WORKFORCE

- The Greater Williamsburg Chamber supports significant and meaningful partnerships between the business community, K12 schools, and higher education to support improvements in the education system.

TALENT PATHWAYS FOR IN-DEMAND JOBS THAT INCLUDE WORK-BASED LEARNING AND CREDENTIALING OPPORTUNITIES

- The Greater Williamsburg Chamber supports programs that increase employability, skills development, and educational attainment for adults, such as veterans and displaced workers.
- The Chamber also supports the development of career and technical education pathways that integrate high school and post-secondary education and training to encourage work-based learning opportunities and lead to essential skills jobs in Virginia.

IMPROVE LITERACY RATES AMONG VIRGINIA STUDENTS

- The Greater Williamsburg Chamber supports initiatives and investments that address learning loss and improve literacy rates among Virginia students.
- The Chamber also supports Investing in and increasing access to quality early childhood education to set our children on a path to success.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO MEET WORKFORCE NEEDS

- The Greater Williamsburg Chamber supports initiatives and programs to promote the development and redevelopment of affordable, quality housing for all.
- The Chamber also supports streamlining and improving the local permitting processes and address other land use issues and constraints that negatively impact the construction and housing industries.

INCREASE FUNDING AND ACCESS TO BROADBAND

- The Greater Williamsburg Chamber supports initiatives and programs to increase financial support for public-private partnerships to facilitate broadband deployment in underserved and unserved areas.
- The Chamber also supports efforts to prepare workers for the advancement of broadband investments and initiatives.

The tracker also covers other categories that may be of interest, such as:

- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/RETENTION**
- **LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT**
- **BUSINESS REGULATIONS**
- **TRANSPORTATION**

PUSH TO INCREASE THE MINIMUM WAGE

HB 1 (WARD)/SB 14 (LUCAS)

Policymakers have proposed a number of bills this session to increase the minimum wage requirements.

[HB 1](#) (Ward) and [SB 14](#) (Lucas) seek to increase the minimum wage from \$12/hour to \$13.50/hour, with an effective date of January 1, 2025. This bill also will increase the minimum wage from \$13.50 to \$15/hour with an effective date of January 1, 2026.

Last week, HB 1 was passed unanimously by the House Labor and Commerce Committee and referred to the House Appropriations Committee. The Senate version of the bill, SB 1, also advanced with a Senate Commerce and Labor vote of 9 to 6. This bill was also referred to Finance and Appropriations.

BILL INTRODUCED RELATED TO STUDENT LITERACY MEASURES

HB 647 (COYNER)/SB 624 (LUCAS)

The General Assembly will consider legislation to improve literacy rates for Virginia students, a key priority of the Greater Williamsburg Chamber.

[HB 647](#) (Coyner) and [SB 624](#) (Lucas) seek to clarify several provisions of the Virginia Literacy Act, which was enacted during the 2022 General Assembly session.

This legislation also seeks to:

- Clarify that the term "evidence-based literacy instruction" does not include practices that instruct students to gain meaning from print with three-cueing, which includes semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic cues; meaning, structure, and visual cues; or (visual memory for word recognition);
- Removes the option to use a literacy screener approved by the Department of Education (DOE);
- Requires DOE to develop a list of core literacy curricula for students in kindergarten through grade five and supplemental instruction practices and programs and intervention programs for students in kindergarten through grade eight that consist of evidence-based literacy instruction aligned with science-based reading research; and
- Requires each division literacy plan to address how the local school board will align core reading and literacy curriculum for students in kindergarten through grade five and screening,

supplemental instruction, and interventions for students in kindergarten through grade eight with evidence-based literacy instruction practices aligned with science-based reading research.

As this legislation moves through the process, further updates will be provided.

RECYCLING LEGISLATION BROUGHT FORWARD

The Greater Williamsburg Chamber has joined the Coalition for Consumer Choices, a coalition that focuses on successful recycling of plastics and opposes the banning of necessary or convenient consumer products needed for our strong economy. The Coalition for Consumer Choices is supporting [HB 316](#) (Bulova) and [HB 1227](#) (Willett).

HB 316 seeks to establish the Virginia Recycling Development Center for the purposes of furthering the development of markets and processing for recycled commodities and products. This piece of legislation also creates the Virginia Recycling Development Center Advisory Committee, establishes reporting requirements, and creates the Recycling Market Development Fund to be used to fund the Center. The bill would require the Advisory Committee to make recommendations on the sources of potential funding for and detailed qualifying uses of the Fund and report its recommendations to the Secretary no later than October 1, 2024.

HB 1227 seeks to establish the Virginia Recycling Infrastructure Improvement Fund for the purpose of supporting local government recycling programs. The bill will require the Department of Environmental Quality to administer the Fund as a grant program to encourage the establishment of physical infrastructure and equipment necessary to start or improve local government recycling operations.

Updates to come as they are available.

VIRGINIA LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS PUBLISHES LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Over the past few years, the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus (VLBC) has advocated for and enacted significant policy reforms focusing on justice, access, civil rights, and equity. As the 2024 session convened, the VLBC released its plans to safeguard and promote legislation in the following policy areas:

Civil Rights and Democracy for All

The VLBC continues to fight for a Virginia where everyone's rights are protected, and everyone has equal access to the ballot box. Since 2020, Virginia made unprecedented progress in voting rights, moving from the 49th to 11th state in ease of voting rankings. This is in large part due to work done by members of the VLBC.

Justice Reform

The VLBC has been at the forefront of justice reform work in the General Assembly for decades. Too many disparities still exist based on race, gender, and economic status. The VLBC continues to stand in support of comprehensive justice reform in order to deliver on the promise of "liberty and justice for all."

Economic Opportunity and Workers

The VLBC knows that economic security is foundational to good health and wellbeing. The members of the VLBC are committed to dismantling economic systems and policies that hurt working Virginians and their ability to provide for their families.

Housing

Housing is a fundamental human right. Too many Virginians across the Commonwealth still are struggling to pay their mortgage or purchase a home, are facing eviction or experiencing homelessness, or are in need of stable, safe, and affordable housing.

Healthcare

The Commonwealth is experiencing a health and mental health crisis. The VLBC believes that we must invest in our care-giving systems. The health of every individual is critical, especially within our vulnerable populations.

Education and Supporting Virginia's Children

The VLBC knows that education continues to be the "great equalizer" and will fight efforts to undermine our public school system. In addition, the VLBC will fight for the truth to be taught about our history. Every student deserves access to a quality education, a pathway to success, and support along their educational journey.

Environment and Climate Action

The effects of global climate change and environmental degradation are already being felt across our Commonwealth and disparately impacting Black Virginians and Virginians of Color. The VLBC is committed to fighting global climate change, protecting the environment, and addressing inequities in environmental policy.

Public Safety

The VLBC will continue to work to ensure a safe and secure Virginia for all of its residents, and will continue to work to address preventable harm, violence, and death.

Legacy Reforms

The VLBC is dedicated to preserving African American cemeteries, celebrating our community's history and achievements in Virginia, and ensuring accurate historical education.

To read the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus's full 2024 Legislative Agenda, click [here](#).

SECRETARIES AND AGENCY LEADERS PRESENT TO HOUSE COMMITTEES

At the commencement of each legislative session, the General Assembly committees often invite members of the Governor's Cabinet and key agency directors to provide an overview of pertinent topics that may be helpful to legislators as they prepare for discussions on proposed legislation that will be considered within their committees. This practice has occurred in many of the committees over the past week, through which really valuable information is made available to the public, as well as committee members. Below, you will find links that allow you to access some of the presentations provided in the corresponding committees that may be of interest.

Appropriations

- [Revenue Report and Update](#), The Honorable Stephen Cummings, Secretary of Finance
- [House Budget Briefing](#), House Appropriations Committee Staff

Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

- Matthew Lohr, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry
- Julie Langan, Director, State Historic Preservation Officer
- Mary Burrows, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, Director - Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station
- Michael S. Gutter, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Associate Dean - College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
 - To view the presentations from January 17, 2024, click [here](#).

Communications, Technology and Innovation

- Fiber Broadband Academy and Cyber Safe Initiatives, Joe Sumner, Executive Director, New College Institute.
 - To view the presentation from January 15, 2024, click [here](#).

Courts of Justice

- Virginia State Police
 - To view the presentation from January 15, 2024, click [here](#).

Education

- K-12 Funding Formula Review, Justin Brown, Senior Associate Director, Virginia Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission
- The Need to Equitably and Adequately Fund Public Schools, Ashley Kenneth, The Commonwealth Institute
- Fair Funding Matters: State funding systems that work for students, Qubilah Huddleston and Gini Pupo-Walker, Education Trust
 - To view the presentations from January 11, 2024, click [here](#).

Finance

- Virginia Department of Tax
 - To view the presentation from January 15, 2024, click [here](#).

Health and Human Services

- John Littel, Secretary of Health and Human Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia
- Dr. Danny Avula, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services
 - To view the presentations from January 11, 2024, click [here](#).

Labor and Commerce

- The Honorable Jehmal T. Hudson, State Corporation Commission
- The Honorable Robert A Rapaport, Virginia Workers Compensation Commission
- Commissioner Demetrios J. Melis, Virginia Employment Commission
- The Honorable Wesley G. Marshall, Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission
 - To view the presentations from January 11, 2024, click [here](#).

Privileges and Elections

- Commissioner Susan Beals, Department of Elections, Commonwealth of Virginia
 - To view the presentations from January 19, 2024, click [here](#).

Public Safety

- The Honorable Terrance C. Cole, Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security
- Judge (ret) Chadwick S. Dotson, Director, Virginia Department of Corrections
 - To view the presentations from January 12, 2024, click [here](#).

Transportation

- The Honorable W. Shepard Miller III, Secretary of Transportation.
 - To view the presentation from January 18, 2024, click [here](#).

GOVERNOR YOUNGKIN ANNOUNCES GENERAL FUND REVENUES IN LINE WITH FORECAST

(January 15, 2024) Governor Glenn Youngkin announced that general fund revenues for December 2023 remain in line with updated revisions to the official revenue forecast. Total general fund revenues grew by 0.2 percent for the month versus the same period last year and are up 7.1 percent year-to-date.

“Through the first half of the fiscal year, our forecast continues to correctly reflect the economic risks and uncertainty on the horizon,” said Governor Glenn Youngkin. “As we laid out in our Unleashing Opportunity budget, lowering the cost of living for all Virginians and empowering an economic environment for our companies to compete and win to drive job growth across the Commonwealth remains a top priority.”

“Revenue collections are slightly ahead of plan through the first half of the fiscal year,” said Secretary of Finance Stephen Cummings. “December fiscal year-to-date, general fund revenues are ahead of the revised forecast by \$363 million but given broad economic risks and uncertainty around refunds and non-withholding collections, a cautious outlook is warranted.”

Among the major revenue sources, payroll withholding taxes were 3.8 percent higher for the month on an unadjusted basis, compared to last year, and up 2.1 percent year-to-date through December. Sales tax collections are 1.3 percent lower year-to-date, and corporate income tax revenues are up 14.8 percent year-to-date versus last year.

In comparison to the revenue forecast assumed in the Governor’s amendments to the Fiscal Year 2024 budget and accounting for monthly variations in tax collections, year-to-date total general fund revenues are ahead of projections by \$363.2 million. Excluding non-withholding and refunds, which continue to be distorted due to the recently enacted Pass-Through Entity Tax, collections are ahead of the forecast by \$85.8 million.

To view the full December 2023 revenue report, click [here](#).

IN THE NEWS

Below, you will find several news articles that may be of interest from the past week.

Gov. Youngkin signs executive order on artificial intelligence guidelines

Source: WSLs, Date: January 18, 2024

On Thursday, Youngkin signed an executive order that implements AI Education Guidelines for the classroom and AI Policy and Information Technology Standards that safeguard the state's databases while simultaneously protecting the individual data of all Virginians. To read more, click [here](#).

Electric co-ops push back on broadband bill

Source: Cardinal News, Date: January 18, 2024

State legislation has been proposed to meet a federal deadline for broadband deployment on utility poles. But opponents say it puts an unfair onus on small power providers. To read more, click [here](#).

Chamber launches new small business health insurance plan

Source: Richmond Times Dispatch, Date: January 18, 2024

An innovative program to help small businesses buy health insurance coverage for employees took off Wednesday, with the launch of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce's new WiseChoice Healthcare Alliance. To read more, click [here](#).

IMPORTANT DATES AND MILESTONES

Upcoming dates and deadlines are listed below.

- February 13th – Crossover (otherwise known as the half-way point of the session when all bills must be acted on in their body of origin).
- February 18th – “Budget Sunday,” when the House and Senate money committees will recommend their proposed budgets.
- March 9th – Final day of session, otherwise known as Sine Die.
- April 17th – Reconvened/Veto session, where legislature returns to act on Governor's amendments and vetoes.
- July 1st – Effective date for legislation and budget unless otherwise specified.

REMINDER: RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO FOLLOW GENERAL ASSEMBLY WORK

If you're interested in following the work of the legislature over the next 60 days, there are a number of ways you can do that. Below, we've provided some resources that are available to members of the public to follow the General Assembly's important work.

Watch Committee Meetings and Floor Sessions

These streaming platforms provide the opportunity to watch live videos of the House and Senate floor and all committee meetings. In addition, users can access recordings of past floor sessions and committee meetings, conveniently organized by the date and time of each session.

- House – click [here](#).
- Senate – click [here](#).

How to Testify on a Bill

Every legislative committee and subcommittee are open to the public, and citizens are encouraged to participate. This guide provides information on how to present public testimony on a bill of interest. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Explore Bills and Resolutions Under Consideration by the General Assembly

If you wish to explore bills and resolutions, you can perform searches based on various criteria such as bill number, member, committee, subject, or day. This resource will provide detailed information including the legislator who introduced the bill (patron), title, summary, full text, and history of each bill. Click [here](#) to start searching.

Visiting the Capitol

Considering a visit to the Capitol? Explore information on scheduling meetings with your Delegate or Senator, parking specifics, addresses, and guided and self-guided tours. Learn more [here](#).

Make Sure You Know the Legislators Who Represent You

Learn who represents you in the legislature by entering your work or home address or using map-based navigation to see who was elected to represent your interests at both the state and federal level. To find out who your legislators are, click [here](#).

We hope this report is helpful. Further updates to come as the session proceeds.

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