



Virginia Fire Chiefs Association 2025 End of Session Report

The 2025 Virginia General Assembly session officially adjourned *sine die* on Saturday, February 22, 2025. A short session of only 45 days and a delayed start due to water issues in Richmond contributed to a challenging 2025 session. Legislators vetted 2,360 bills, with only 822 being sent to Governor Youngkin for his action. This session saw times of contention as hot topics were debated and times of camaraderie as they worked together toward common goals.

In response to the ongoing concerns over federal cuts in funding to the state and impacts on the federal workforce in the Commonwealth, Speaker of the House Don Scott created a House Emergency Committee on Impacts of Federal Workforce and Funding Reductions to review the potential impact on Virginia's budget. The legislature also indicated they will amend the operating resolution of the 2024 Special Session, which is still ongoing, to be able to address any issues that arise in the next few months. That is likely to occur on April 2 when the General Assembly returns for the Reconvened Session.

Virginia is constitutionally required to have a balanced budget. The Senate and House of Delegates passed the [HB1600](#) Joint Committee Conference Report, and some key components are:

- \$1.1 billion in tax relief, mainly in the form of a tax rebate of \$200 for individual filers and \$400 for joint filers. This is in place of the Governor's proposed car tax break for certain income levels.
- A temporary increase in the standard deduction of \$8,750 for individuals and \$17,500 for joint filers through 2026.
- Removes the cap for schools on how many support staff the state funds and raises per pupil spending with an additional \$222.9 million for K12 education.
- A one time \$1000 bonus to teachers and a 1.5% bonus for state employees were included.
- \$50 million is included for help in regions damaged by Hurricane Helene with another \$50 million earmarked for the Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund.

There is an expectation that we will have a record number of vetoes by the Governor again this year on some of the high profile bills that were passed by the Democratic

majorities in both the Senate and House of Delegates. Some of those expected to be vetoed or amended include the following:

- Several firearms bills passed in both chambers including [HB1876](#), [HB1977](#), [HB2631](#), [SB1110](#), [SB1134](#), [SB1182](#).
- [HB348](#) a bill requiring one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked.
- [HB1625](#) a bill to eliminate farm workers and temporary foreign workers from being exempt from minimum wage requirements. As well, [HB1928](#), which increases the state minimum wage incrementally.

Governor Youngkin now has 30 days to review and then sign, amend, or veto the approximately 800 pieces of legislation that have passed both chambers.. Reconvened Session will occur on Wednesday, April 2 where the legislators will address any actions taken by the Governor.

Campaign season has officially kicked off in Virginia, with the three statewide offices (Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Attorney General) as well as all 100 seats in the House of Delegates on the ballot this November. Voters will also decide three constitutional amendments on that same ballot, including reproductive freedom, restoration of voting rights, and marriage between two consenting adults.

Budget Items Relevant to Fire Service:

There are several items related to fire and EMS service in the budget conference report being sent to the Governor. We'll be going through the conference report a few more times with fresh eyes to be sure we didn't miss anything and will follow up if we find anything additional but wanted to get you this list asap.

- Item 406 #1c - [\\$5M \(FY25\) - Firefighter Equipment Grants](#) - This amendment moves from the second year to the first year \$5.0 million from the general fund included in the introduced budget for firefighter non-vehicular equipment. This money will have to be spent before July 1, 2025.
- Item 406 #2c - [\\$200k \(FY26\) - Good Friday Cancer Screening](#) - This amendment provides \$200,000 from the general fund the second year for an additional grant to Virginia Beach. This language is vague, but we believe it was intended to support recent efforts on Good Friday crash responders.
- Item 4-14 #6c - [PTSD Coverage Workers' Compensation Benefits \(language only\)](#) - This amendment amends the Code of Virginia to increase from 52 weeks to 104 weeks the maximum duration after the date of diagnosis that workers' compensation benefits are payable for anxiety disorder, depressive disorder,

and post-traumatic stress disorder incurred by law-enforcement officers and firefighters acting in the line of duty.

- Item 272 #1c - [Guidance for Modifying Number of EMS Councils \(language only\)](#) - This amendment preserves the regional emergency medical services council regions, and directs the Board of Health to consult with relevant stakeholders before modifying the number of regional emergency medical services councils.
- Item Item 272 #2c - [NOVA Firefighter Cancer Screening Pilot \(language only\)](#) - This amendment provides authority to carryover funding from the base budget for the Northern Virginia Firefighter Occupational Cancer Screening Pilot Program from fiscal year 2025 to fiscal year 2026 in the event the funds are not expended in the first year.
- Item 407 #1c - [Adjust Funding for Fire Marshal Positions](#) - This amendment reduces by \$458,860 from the general fund and 4.0 positions the second year the amount proposed in the introduced budget for additional fire inspection positions, maintaining an increase of \$229,430 and 2.0 positions. This is in addition to \$217,000 from the general fund each year provided in the 2024 adopted budget for the same purpose. Language directs the Virginia Fire Services Board and the Board of Housing and Community Development to submit joint recommendations on which fees, if any, are recommended for increase based on market costs, by October 17, 2025.

Summary of Key Bills by Topic:

Funding

- **Virginia Public Safety Communications Infrastructure Fund; established, report - [HB1820](#) (Delegate Reid)**
Directs the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security to evaluate the need for public safety communications infrastructure updates and hardware replacements, and the cost of meeting such need. The Secretary shall report any findings and recommendations to the Chairs of the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations no later than December 1, 2025.
STATUS: *Bill has passed the House and Senate. It is waiting to be communicated to the Governor for his action by March 24, 2025.*
- **Fire Programs Fund; aid to localities, requirement for emergency incidents reporting - [HB2065](#) (Delegate Thomas)**
Requires that, in order to remain eligible for funding from the Fire Programs Fund, a locality must report all emergency incidents through the National

Emergency Response Information System while sharing such emergency incident data with the Department of Fire Programs. The bill has a delayed effective date of July 1, 2026.

STATUS: Bill has passed the House and Senate. It is waiting to be communicated to the Governor for his action by March 24, 2025.

- **Virginia Public-Private Safety Communications Infrastructure Fund; established - [SB1296](#) (Senator Obenshain)**

Establishes the Virginia Public-Private Safety Communications Infrastructure Fund (the Fund), to be managed by the Virginia Resources Authority, for the purpose of making loans and awarding grants to local governments for the purpose of assisting with improvement projects relating to public safety radio and communications infrastructure.

STATUS: Left in the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee and will not move forward this year.

- **Emergency Vehicles & Housing for Emergency Services Volunteers Grant Programs; established, reports - [HB2504](#) (Delegate Runion)**

Establishes the Emergency Vehicles Grant Program (the EV Program) and the Housing for Emergency Services Volunteers Grant Program (the ESV Program).

The EV Program authorizes the Department of Fire Programs to provide grants to assist eligible localities in acquiring emergency vehicles to be used in the performance of volunteer emergency services, subject to appropriation by the General Assembly in amounts of up to \$10,000 per eligible locality, on a first-come, first-served basis.

The ESV Program authorizes the Department to provide grants to assist eligible localities in providing emergency services volunteers who are currently enrolled in an eligible educational institution with living quarters at no charge to such volunteers, subject to appropriation by the General Assembly.

Grant recipients of the EV Program and the ESV Program are required to submit a report to the Department no later than October 1 of any year in which the recipient receives available funds. The Department is directed to submit a summarized report of the information received from grant recipients to the House Committee on General Laws, the Senate Committee on General Laws and Technology, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations.

STATUS: Left in the House Appropriations Committee and will not move forward this year.

- **Insurance; additional purposes for Fire Programs Fund Aid to Localities Grant Program established - [HB2069](#)** (Delegate Garrett)

Increases the assessment on certain insurance companies from one percent to 1.5 percent. The bill provides that the portion of the Fire Programs Fund allocated to localities may be used for the additional purposes of (i) constructing, improving, or expanding fire station facilities; (ii) providing mental health resources for fire personnel; or (iii) hiring additional fire personnel and funding recruitment and retention programs. The bill also prohibits such funds from being used, except as provided, for the purposes of investments, operating expenses, debt repayment, taxes, or fees.

The bill also establishes the Aid to Localities Grant Program, to be funded by 0.25 percent of the assessments on insurance companies, for the purposes of providing assistance to local fire departments that are at risk of closing or facing major violations due to the lack of funds needed to be in compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

STATUS: *Left in the House Appropriations Committee and will not move forward this year.*

LODA / Workers Comp

- **Workers' compensation; presumption as to death or disability from throat cancer - [SB920](#)** (Senator Salim)

Provides that for the purposes of the workers' compensation presumption as to death or disability from certain types of cancer, throat cancer includes cancer that forms in the tissues of the pharynx, larynx, adenoid, tonsil, esophagus, trachea, nasopharynx, oropharynx, or hypopharynx.

STATUS: *Bill has passed the House and Senate. It has been communicated to the Governor for his action by March 24, 2025.*

- **Workers' compensation benefits; post-traumatic stress disorder incurred by firefighters, etc - [HB2060](#)** (Delegate Krizek)

Increases from 52 weeks to 104 weeks the maximum duration after the date of diagnosis that workers' compensation benefits are payable for post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorder, or depressive disorder incurred by law-enforcement officers and firefighters acting in the line of duty.

STATUS: *Bill was passed by indefinitely in Senate Finance and Appropriations (11-Y 3-N) and will not move forward this year. However, there is language in the budget ([Item 4-14 #6c](#)) to effectively codify an increase in the benefit from 52 weeks of coverage to 104 weeks.*

- **Workers' compensation benefits; post-traumatic stress disorder incurred by firefighters, etc - [SB1301](#)** (Senator McPike)

Increases from 52 weeks to 104 weeks the maximum duration after the date of diagnosis that workers' compensation benefits are payable for anxiety disorder or depressive disorder incurred by law-enforcement officers and firefighters acting in the line of duty. The bill also increases from 52 weeks to 500 weeks the maximum duration after the date of diagnosis that workers' compensation benefits are payable for post-traumatic stress disorder incurred by law-enforcement officers and firefighters acting in the line of duty.

STATUS: *Bill was left in Senate Finance and Appropriations and will not move forward this year. However, there is language in the budget ([Item 4-14 #6c](#)) to effectively codify an increase in the benefit from 52 weeks of coverage to 104 weeks.*

- **Line of Duty Act & Va. Law Officers' Retirement Sys.; enhanced benefits for certain fire personnel - [HB2447](#)** (Delegate O'Quinn)

Adds the State Fire Marshal and personnel of the Virginia Department of Fire Programs who, as a regular component of their official duties, are exposed to hazards or threats to their life and health to the lists of those eligible for benefits under the Line of Duty Act and for membership in the Virginia Law Officers' Retirement System.

STATUS: *Left in the House Appropriations Committee and will not move forward this year.*

- **Line of Duty Act; payments to beneficiaries - [HB2204](#)** (Delegate McQuinn)

Provides that if a deceased person, as that term is defined in the Line of Duty Act, died as a result of certain cancers within 10 years from his date of retirement, his beneficiary shall be entitled to the payment of certain benefits. Under current law, such beneficiary shall be entitled to such payment if the deceased person's death (i) arose out of and in the course of his employment or (ii) was within five years from his date of retirement.

STATUS: *Left in the House Appropriations Committee and will not move forward this year.*

Miscellaneous

- **Students with disabilities; individualized accommodations and supports during emergency - [HB1806](#)** (Delegate Cohen)

Requires each individualized education program (IEP) implemented for a public school student with a disability, with the exception of such students who have been placed in private day or residential school settings, to contain a section addressing individualized accommodations and supports for the student during emergency evacuations and situations as appropriate and identified by the IEP

team at its next convened meeting at which the parent is present and consents to implementation of the IEP.

STATUS: *Bill has passed the House and Senate. It is waiting to be communicated to the Governor for his action by March 24, 2025.*

- **Emergency Management; Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security et al., to evaluate needs - [HB1992](#)** (Delegate Askew)

Directs the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security to establish a work group to study existing emergency management needs and analyze sustainability of current funding, among other things, and to report the work group's findings and recommendations to the Chairmen of the House Committee on General Laws and the Senate Committee on General Laws and Technology on or before October 1, 2025.

STATUS: *This bill was passed by indefinitely in the Senate Finance And Appropriations Committee. It will not move forward this year.*

- **Statewide Fire Prevention Code; consumer fireworks, penalties - [HB2067](#)** (Delegate Garrett)

Authorizes the use of consumer fireworks in the Commonwealth and distinguishes by definition consumer fireworks from display fireworks and permissible fireworks. The bill provides that the storage and transportation of consumer fireworks are to be considered the same hazard class as the storage and transportation of 1.4G explosives under the Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC) and Uniform Statewide Building Code. The bill requires any locality authorizing the sale of consumer fireworks to require annual permits for any business offering consumer fireworks for retail sale and provides that the State Fire Marshal or other issuing authority may charge a fee for the retail sale of fireworks on a permanent basis or on a temporary basis in localities that do not employ a local fire marshal.

STATUS: *Bill was left in Senate Finance and Appropriations and will not move forward this year.*

- **Collective bargaining by public employees; exclusive bargaining representatives - [HB2764](#)** (Delegate Tran) / **[SB917](#)** (Senator Surovell)

Repeals the existing prohibition on collective bargaining by public employees. The bill creates the Public Employee Relations Board, which shall determine appropriate bargaining units and provide for certification and decertification elections for exclusive bargaining representatives of state employees and local government employees. The bill requires public employers and employee organizations that are exclusive bargaining representatives to meet at reasonable times to negotiate in good faith with respect to wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment. The bill repeals a provision that

declares that, in any procedure providing for the designation, selection, or authorization of a labor organization to represent employees, the right of an individual employee to vote by secret ballot is a fundamental right that shall be guaranteed from infringement.

***STATUS:** HB2764 and SB917 went to a conference committee over a discrepancy in how to address law enforcement officers in the bill. The conference committee report was adopted on party line votes in the House and Senate with language that puts guardrails around how the bill applies to law enforcement officers. The bill is waiting to be communicated to the Governor for his action by March 24, 2025.*

- **Regional emergency medical services councils; funds distributed to VDH from motor vehicle reg. fees - [SB1294](#) (Senator Diggs)**

Provides that 55 percent of certain funds distributed to the Department of Health from motor vehicle registration fees shall be distributed to the designated regional emergency medical services councils for their operational support. The bill also specifies that there shall be 11 designated regional emergency medical services councils. Under current law, there is no specified number.

***STATUS:** Left in the House Appropriations Committee and will not move forward this year.*

- **Fire Programs Fund; aid to localities, requirement for emergency incidents reporting - [SB1282](#) (Senator Durant)**

Requires localities receiving funds from the Fire Programs Fund to report all emergency incidents through the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) while sharing data with the Department of Fire Programs in its capacity as state manager of NERIS. The bill has a delayed effective date of July 1, 2026.

***STATUS:** Bill has passed the House and Senate. It is waiting to be communicated to the Governor for his action by March 24, 2025.*

- **Emergency Response Exposure Grant Fund and Program - [SB972](#) (Senator Rouse)**

Creates the Emergency Response Exposure Grant Fund and Program to award grants to localities to support certain emergency responders who were exposed to a qualifying emergency, defined in the bill. The bill requires funding to be used for annual cancer screenings and health care expenses incurred by eligible emergency responders, defined in the bill, in the event such emergency responders are diagnosed with cancer from toxic material exposure. The bill permits funding to be used for out-of-pocket medical expenses not otherwise covered by insurance, workers' compensation, or other available funding. The Department of Fire Programs shall administer the Fund and Program.

STATUS: Bill was left in Senate Finance and Appropriations and will not move forward this year. However, there is \$200K included in the budget (Item 406 #2c) toward supporting the fire service in Virginia Beach, which we think is meant for this purpose.

911 Dispatchers

- **Virginia Retirement System; disability benefits for certain emergency dispatchers - [HB1705](#)** (Delegate Bulova)

Requires that, beginning July 1, 2026, emergency dispatchers who are not members of the hybrid retirement program become participants in the disability program for hybrid retirement plan members. The employers of such dispatchers shall provide the costs required for funding participation in such program.

STATUS: Passed the House and Senate unanimously. Waiting to be communicated to the Governor for his action.

- **Va. Retirement System; enhanced retirement benefits for 911 dispatchers, delayed effective date - [SB1088](#)** (Senator Jordan)

Allows local governments to provide enhanced retirement benefits for hazardous duty service to full-time salaried 911 dispatchers. The bill provides that such enhanced retirement benefits apply only to service earned as a full-time salaried 911 dispatcher on or after July 1, 2026, but allows an employer, as that term is defined in relevant law, to provide such enhanced retirement benefits for service earned as a full-time salaried 911 dispatcher before July 1, 2026, in addition to service earned on or after that date.

STATUS: Incorporated into [SB1083](#), then left in the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee.

- **Va. Retirement System; enhanced retirement benefits for 911 dispatchers, delayed effective date - [SB1156](#)** (Senator Obenshain)

Allows local governments to provide enhanced retirement benefits for hazardous duty service to full-time salaried 911 dispatchers. The bill provides that such enhanced retirement benefits apply only to service earned as a full-time salaried 911 dispatcher on or after July 1, 2026, but allows an employer, as that term is defined in relevant law, to provide such enhanced retirement benefits for service earned as a full-time salaried 911 dispatcher before July 1, 2026, in addition to service earned on or after that date.

STATUS: Incorporated into [SB1083](#), then left in the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee.

- **Va. Retirement System; enhanced retirement benefits for 911 dispatchers, delayed effective date - [SB1083](#)** (Senator Perry)

Allows local governments to provide enhanced retirement benefits for hazardous duty service to full-time salaried 911 dispatchers. The bill provides that such enhanced retirement benefits apply only to service earned as a full-time salaried 911 dispatcher on or after July 1, 2026, but allows an employer, as that term is defined in relevant law, to provide such enhanced retirement benefits for service earned as a full-time salaried 911 dispatcher before July 1, 2026, in addition to service earned on or after that date.

STATUS: *Left in the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee and will not move forward this year.*

- **Virginia Retirement System; enhanced retirement benefits for 911 dispatchers - [HB1564](#)** (Delegate Cherry)

Allows local governments to provide enhanced retirement benefits for hazardous duty service to full-time salaried 911 dispatchers. The bill provides that such enhanced retirement benefits apply only to service earned as a full-time salaried 911 dispatcher on or after July 1, 2026, but allows an employer, as that term is defined in relevant law, to provide such enhanced retirement benefits for service earned as a full-time salaried 911 dispatcher before July 1, 2026, in addition to service earned on or after that date.

STATUS: *Left in the House Appropriations Committee and will not move forward this year.*

- **Va. Retirement System; enhanced retirement benefits for 911 dispatchers, delayed effective date - [HB1619](#)** (Delegate Clark)

Allows local governments to provide enhanced retirement benefits for hazardous duty service to full-time salaried 911 dispatchers. The bill provides that such enhanced retirement benefits apply only to service earned as a full-time salaried 911 dispatcher on or after July 1, 2026, but allows an employer, as that term is defined in relevant law, to provide such enhanced retirement benefits for service earned as a full-time salaried 911 dispatcher before July 1, 2026, in addition to service earned on or after that date.

STATUS: *Left in the House Appropriations Committee and will not move forward this year.*