



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.

The General Assembly convened on April 2 for its annual one-day Reconvened Session to address the actions taken by Governor Glenn Youngkin on legislation passed by the General Assembly. Governor Youngkin completed action on all 915 bills sent to his desk. Ultimately, the Governor signed 599 bills, vetoed 157 bills, and sent amendments back on 159 bills – including 205 proposed amendments to the budget bill.

The General Assembly did not override any of the Governor's vetoes, as Democrats hold slim-majorities in the House and the Senate and do not have the $\frac{2}{3}$ vote needed to override. However, the General Assembly approved only 33 of the Governor's 205 budget amendments, and those were largely technical or related to budget provisions that were tied to bills that the Governor had already vetoed. The legislature rejected amendments proposed by the Governor to many of the 159 remaining bills.

The Governor has 30 days to sign or veto the bills that had his amendments rejected. The bills with amendments approved are now official and will be effective as of July 1 unless otherwise set forth in the legislation.

Within the 157 bills the Governor vetoed, a few are highlighted below:

- Minimum wage bills were among those vetoed by the Governor.
 - [HB1625](#) would have expanded the categories of workers under the minimum wage requirement.
 - [HB2561](#) would have offered employees more protection for violations under minimum wage laws.
 - [HB1928](#) would codify the minimum wage rate increase through 2027.
- Paid family leave was another that fell under the ax.

- [HB2531](#) would have required the VEC to establish and administer a paid family and medical leave insurance program.
- The battle continues on gun rights with the Governor vetoing:
 - [HB1602](#) and [SB880](#) in regards to assault weapons.
 - [HB2241](#) regarding possession of a gun by a person convicted of a hate crime
 - [HB2631](#) and [SB891](#) require a waiting period of at least five days before purchase to name a few.
- As expected, the Governor also vetoed [HB2485](#) creating a legal retail market for adult cannabis use and [SB917](#) regarding collective bargaining.

Later this year we will have elections for all 100 seats in the House of Delegates and the three statewide offices in the Executive branch. Currently, Democrats hold a majority at 51-49 in the House. Lieutenant Governor Winsome Earl-Sears is officially the Republican candidate for Governor, with former Senator Amanda Chase and former Delegate David LaRock not gathering the required petition signatures to be included in the June 19 primary. Former U.S. Representative Abigail Spanberger is the Democratic candidate for Governor. Regardless of who wins, this election is historic in that Virginia will elect its first female Governor. Additionally, there are seven Democrats, three Republicans and one independent vying for the Lieutenant Governorship and three candidates vying to be Virginia's Attorney General. Much more to come in the next few months as the campaign cycle heats up in Virginia.

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. The Governor approved it on March 18, and it will go into effect on July 1, 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. The Governor approved it on March 18, and it will go into effect on July 1, 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. The Governor approved it on March 24, and it will go into effect on July 1, 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. The Governor has until May 2 to act on the budget bill.

- **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. The Governor has until May 2 to act on the budget bill.

- **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. The Governor approved it on March 19, and it will go into effect on July 1, 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 Governor vetoed these bills on March 24 and the vetoes were sustained on April 2. These bills will not move forward this year.*

- **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. The Governor approved it on March 18, and it will go into effect on July 1, 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. The Governor has until May 2 to act on the budget bill.*

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:** Bill has passed the House and Senate. The Governor approved it on March 21, and it will go into effect on July 1, 2025.*
- **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.*