



Legislative Update
February 27, 2026

VFCA PRIORITY ITEMS:

Budget

- [Item 406 #1s](#) - \$20.0M (FY27)

This amendment provides a one-time appropriation of \$20.0 million GF the first year for grants to localities to support firefighting vehicular and non-vehicular equipment and directs the Department of Fire Programs to prioritize localities who are fiscally distressed, as defined by the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, and who demonstrate the need for equipment or for replacement of a fire truck that is at or near the end of its reliable service life.

STATUS: This was included in the Senate budget but not included in the House budget. Will provide instruction on additional advocacy needed in the coming days. Additional advocacy will include: a letter from the VFCA leadership to the House money committee, an action alert for the larger VFCA membership to engage key legislators, and a thank you email to Senate appropriators for including this in their version of the budget.

Bills

- [HB 951 \(Lopez\)](#) Housing and Community Development, Board of; ad hoc committees.

Requires the Board of Housing and Community Development to evaluate and vote on all proposals brought forth in an ad hoc committee convened by the Board to advise on proposed changes to statewide building and fire regulations during a regular meeting of the Board, including proposals for which the ad hoc committee did not reach a consensus.

STATUS: Passed the House Chamber 97-Y 0-N; Referred to Senate General Laws & Technology: Housing Subcommittee, waiting to be docketed.

- [SB 378 \(Surovell\)](#) Public employees; repeals existing prohibition on collective bargaining, etc.

STATUS: Passed Senate Chamber 21-Y 19-N; Referred to House Labor and Commerce committee, waiting to be docketed.

- [HB 1267 \(Tran\)](#) Public employees; repeals existing prohibition on collective bargaining, etc.

STATUS: Passed House Chamber 61-Y 35-N; Referred to Senate Commerce and Labor committee, waiting to be docketed.

- [HB 1128 \(Reid\)](#) Va. Retirement System; enhanced retirement benefits for 911 dispatchers, delayed effective date.
STATUS: This bill will not move forward this year.
- [HB 394 \(Askew\)](#) Fire Programs Fund; increases assessment.
STATUS: Laid on the table by the House Appropriations: Transportation and Public Safety Committee. This bill will not move forward for 2026.

BILL TRACKER:

As a reminder, our [Bill Tracker](#) is a live link that will automatically update as bills move through the legislative process. Please flag any bills that may affect the fire service that you would like us to engage on, collect additional information, monitor, etc. and we will continue to keep you all apprised as these items move through the process.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY UPDATE:

House and Senate Advance Competing Budget Proposals

Lawmakers in the General Assembly advanced competing versions of the state's two-year budget yesterday, with both the House and Senate approving their respective spending plans for fiscal years 2027-2028. The House passed its [budget](#) by a vote of 83-14 while the Senate passed its [budget](#) by a vote of 24-16.

The Senate proposal includes language to end the data center tax exemption in 2027 to generate new revenue for tax rebates, a higher standard deduction, 3% raises for teachers and state employees, and expanded investments in education, housing, health care and transportation. The House plan retains the data center sales and use tax exemption with environmental conditions, funds 2% raises for teachers and state employees, provides \$400 million in flexible school funding, increases special education and housing support, and allocates funds for health insurance premium relief.

While both versions aim to address affordability, health care costs, and workforce needs, they contain significant differences that will now go to a conference committee. Budget conferees will be named early next week to reconcile differences between the House and Senate versions before a final unified budget is approved by March 14 and sent to the governor.

Senate Announces Committee Assignment Changes Following Ebbin Departure

Late last week, Senate leadership announced committee assignment changes following the [departure](#) of Senator Adam Ebbin to join the Spanberger Administration as Senior Advisor at the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority.

Senator Dave Marsden (D-Fairfax) left the Finance and Appropriations Committee, and Senator Bryce Reeves (R-Spotsylvania) was removed from Commerce and Labor. Senators Lamont Bagby (D-Henrico) and Lashrecse Aird (D-Henrico) were appointed to Finance and Appropriations. Senator Aird was also named chair of the Local Government Committee.

Senator Jeremy McPike (D-Prince William) was named chair of General Laws and Technology, with Senator Stella Pekarsky (D-Fairfax) added to the committee. Senators Richard Stuart (R-Spotsylvania) and Jennifer Boysko (D-Fairfax) joined Commerce and Labor.

Newly sworn-in Senator Elizabeth Bennett-Parker (D-Alexandria) received assignments to Agriculture, Local Government, Privileges and Elections, and Transportation, and Senator Angelia Williams Graves (D-Norfolk) was appointed to Privileges and Elections. Senators Emily Jordan (R-Suffolk), Kannan Srinivasan (D-Loudoun), and Michael Jones (D-Chesterfield) were appointed to Courts of Justice.

Find the updated list of Senate committee assignments [here](#).

Spanberger Rebutts State of the Union, Citing Costs, Safety, and Accountability

Governor Abigail Spanberger delivered the Democratic rebuttal to President Donald Trump's [State of the Union address](#) on Tuesday night, focusing on rising costs, public safety, and government accountability. In her remarks, she argued that the president's policies have increased expenses for housing, health care, energy, and groceries, criticized his trade agenda and a recent reconciliation law passed by Congress, and accused Republicans of failing to provide oversight.

Drawing on her background as a former federal law enforcement officer and CIA case officer, Governor Spanberger also contended that current immigration and foreign policies have made the country less safe and weakened its global standing. She framed her response around three questions about affordability, safety, and whether the president is working on behalf of Americans, and closed by invoking the nation's founding ideals and urging civic engagement ahead of the midterm elections. Read the Governor's full remarks [here](#).

Special Election Set for March 17 in Virginia's 98th House District

Voters in [House District 98](#) will head to the polls March 17 for a special election to fill the seat of the late Republican Delegate Barry Knight, who represented the area for 17 years. Democrat **Cheryl Smith**, a retired Chesapeake educator who previously challenged Knight, faces Republican **Andrew Rice**, a Virginia Beach deputy commonwealth's attorney, in a race that quickly took shape after Knight's passing last week. The district, which covers much of southern Virginia Beach, is considered a Republican stronghold. Smith is campaigning on support for public education, affordable health care, veterans' issues, environmental protection, and

cost-of-living concerns, while Rice is emphasizing public safety, lower taxes, and protecting agricultural heritage and green space. Read more on the special election from WHRO [here](#).

KEY DATES

- **March 14** - Session Adjourns *Sine Die*
- **April 22** - Reconvened Session