



**Legislative Update**  
**March 6, 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: Letter from the Chiefs was sent to money committee chairs and all budget conferees on Friday. Action alert will be drafted by Two Capitols to be shared with Chiefs from fiscally distressed localities who also received funds from the PPE Grant Program to submit a message to legislators.***

**Bills**

- **Monitor**
  - [SB 233 \(Head\)](#) Fire Programs Fund; work group; report.

Directs the Department of Fire Programs to establish a work group to evaluate the funding formula for the distribution of aid to localities through the Fire Programs Fund.

***STATUS: Passed House with amendments 95-Y 0-N. Will go back to Senate floor for final vote.***

- [HB 816 \(Helmer\)](#) / [SB 454 \(VanValkenburg\)](#) Zoning; by-right multifamily residential development.

***STATUS: House bill was defeated on the Senate floor on a vote of 17-Y 22-N 1-A; Senate bill was referred back to Committee, effectively killing the bill for the year.***

- [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; On the Senate floor.**

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

**STATUS: Passed Senate Chamber 21-Y 19-N; On the House floor.**

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

**STATUS: Passed House Chamber 61-Y 35-N; On the Senate floor.**

- **Support**

- [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.

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## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY UPDATE:**

### **Budget Conferees Named To Negotiate Final State Biennial Budget**

Earlier this week, leadership in the General Assembly announced budget conferees – members who will negotiate the final version of the Commonwealth’s biennial budget.

Senate conferees include:

- Senator Louise Lucas (D-Portsmouth), *Senate Finance and Appropriations Chair*
- Senator Creigh Deeds (D-Charlottesville)
- Senator Mamie Locke (D-Hampton)
- Senator Todd Pillion (R-Washington County)
- Senator Richard Stuart (R-Westmoreland County)

House conferees include:

- Delegate Luke Torian (D-Prince William County), *House Appropriations Chair*

- Delegate Betsy B. Carr (D-Richmond)
- Delegate Delores McQuinn (D-Henrico County)
- Delegate Paul Krizek (D-Fairfax County)
- Delegate Terry Austin (R-Botetourt County)
- Delegate Rob Bloxom (R-Accomack)

The House and Senate budget proposals include several policy and funding differences that will need to be reconciled in conference. 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.

Budget conferees are now working to reconcile differences between the two chambers' spending plans before a final unified budget is approved by March 14 and sent to Governor Spanberger.

### **Early Voting Begins For Virginia Redistricting Referendum**

Early voting began today for the April 21 statewide referendum on whether to amend the Virginia Constitution to allow the General Assembly to temporarily redraw the Commonwealth's congressional districts. The vote moved forward after the Supreme Court of Virginia on Wednesday [stayed](#) a lower court order issued in Tazewell County that had temporarily blocked election preparations, allowing the Virginia Department of Elections to resume providing guidance and materials to local registrars and enabling absentee and overseas ballots to be processed ahead of the start of early voting.

The proposed amendment would allow the General Assembly to adopt [new congressional districts](#) for the 2026 election cycle in response to mid-decade redistricting in other states, before returning responsibility for redistricting to the Virginia Redistricting Commission following the 2030 census. The referendum has drawn national attention and prompted organized campaigns both supporting and opposing the measure, while legal challenges to the process continue in state courts. Party primaries would take place August 4, followed by the general election on November 3. Read more from the *Virginia Mercury* [here](#) and *Richmond Times-Dispatch* [here](#).

### **Spanberger Administration Kicks Off Statewide Listening Tour On Public Education**

Governor Spanberger this week launched her administration's "Commonwealth Listening Tour," a statewide effort to gather input from educators, parents, and students on strengthening Virginia's K-12 public education system. The tour began in Hampton, where the governor visited classrooms at Bethel High School and held a roundtable with local school leaders and

community members to discuss priorities for improving student outcomes and supporting teachers.

The listening tour stems from an [executive order](#) signed by Governor Spanberger on her first day in office, directing state education leaders to engage communities across the Commonwealth on the future of public education. Additional public sessions are scheduled in Gloucester County and Cumberland County, with more events planned statewide. The effort, coordinated by the Virginia Department of Education, will include in-person meetings, virtual sessions, and a public survey open through April 10. Read the official press release on the listening tour [here](#).

### **Key Dates**

- **March 14** - Session Adjourns *Sine Die*
- **March 17** - Special election for [House District 98](#)
  - *Andrew Rice (R) v. Cheryl Smith (D)*
- **April 22** - Reconvened Session

Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.