

VIRGINIA CONSERVATIVE LEADERS NETWORK

*Power
of the Pen*

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS | 2026

UPDATED WITH RESULTS

Welcome to the 2026 edition of Power of the Pen!

This document was submitted to the Governor's Office on March 16th 2026, the second year¹ that the **Virginia Conservative Leaders Network (VCLN)**, an umbrella organization of 13 conservative organizations² in Virginia, has produced this book of recommendations to the Governor. We thank Governor Spanberger for her consideration.

This year, the VCLN submitted recommendations to the Governor's office on **80 bills**. The criteria for selection in 2026 were tightened given the political composition in Richmond: we only submitted a recommendation on bills which a moderate Democrat (as Gov. Spanberger purports to be) could reasonably veto, or those which were so pivotal that it would be unreasonable for us not to include them irrespective of ideology.

While this year's **32.5% success rate** is not directly comparable to last year's **86.2%**, the lack of comparison is in the wrong direction: this year's results would have looked even more dire for the Governor had we not changed our criteria. In 2025 Power of the Pen was one of the most influential publications in recent Virginia politics; in 2026 Power of the Pen shines a much-needed light on a Governor who claimed to be a moderate on the campaign trail, but in office is proving to be anything but.

The success of this book is a testimony to the ability of the organizations within the Virginia Conservative Leaders Network to work together; with our team quite literally working around the clock, this entire book was written, designed, produced, printed, and hand-delivered to the Governor's office less than 72 hours after the General Assembly rose sine die. A digital version, with hyperlinks to the relevant legislation, was provided even faster. A couple of minor errors caused by this (necessary) speedy publication have been corrected in this updated version with statistics.

Across three key areas in particular, the statistics speak for themselves:

- **Second Amendment** - 0% success
- **Energy** - 0% success
- **Election Integrity** – 15.4% success (the two bills vetoed by the Governor were vetoed on technical grounds, rather than because they would have further eroded fair elections in Virginia)

The Governor has, objectively, not taken a moderate approach on any of these issues. Indeed, the amendments submitted by the Governor's office made the legislation even more extreme. Moderates do not generally sign unconstitutional legislation; we await with interest the results of the various court cases.

Nevertheless, there were some pleasant surprises:

- **Healthcare** – 100%
- **Family** – 64.7%. This figure is boosted by the Governor's action on retail marijuana markets and so-called "skill game machines". In the latter case, the Governor's language

- echoed our own.
- Economy** – 22.2%. While the headline figure is low, a key success was the veto of the completely unworkable collective bargaining legislation for public employees.

	2024	2025	2026
Number of bills	64	109	80
Veto recommended	64	83	60
Sign recommended	0	18	20
Amend recommended	0	8	4
Direct veto success rate	53.1%	67.8%	1.8%
Effective block rate	73.4%	86.6%	12.5%
Budget line recommendations	4	9	0
Overall success rate	73.4%	86.2%	32.5%

The low ‘effective block rate’ demonstrates the stark reality of the 2026 Session. While we had success on good legislation being signed, the Governor only rarely vetoed poor legislation. More ominously, the even lower ‘direct veto success rate’ (ie. those bills vetoed immediately rather than after attempting amendment) demonstrates that many vetoes were not on principled grounds, but internecine disagreements between the Democrat Governor and the Democrat-controlled General Assembly about *how* poor legislation should be introduced.

In this version of the book, our successes are clearly marked with a green stamp throughout. Across the full spectrum of policy areas, our success rates varied from a low of 0% to a high of 75%. Where the Governor did not act to protect Virginians, a red “not a moderate” stamp shows this.



1 - Up to 2024, only a Veto Recommendation Package was issued.

A note on the statistics. We have attempted consistency with 2025. Figures are, however, skewed (in Gov. Spanberger’s favor) by our collegiate approach this year. Direct policy area comparison is not possible due to overlap between policy areas. Identical (or very similar) versions of some bills were passed by both Senate and House of Delegates. Some recommendations were Amend/Veto or Amend/Sign. Amend alone is treated as a failure if not amended, whether vetoed or not; Amend/Veto is treated as a success if vetoed. Budget line items did not form part of the Power of the Pen in 2026.

2 - This publication was finalized and delivered to the Governor on March 16, 2026. On April 13, 2026, the Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy and the Yorktown Foundation for Public Policy announced their merger to form the Jefferson Forum. References throughout this publication reflect the organizational structure in place at the time of original publication.

Date: 03-16-2026
 Office of the Governor
 Honorable Abigail Spanberger
 Virginia State Capitol

Dear Governor Spanberger,

We write to you as Governor with respect for the office you hold and gratitude for your willingness to serve the people of Virginia during this important time. As you undertake the critical responsibility of reviewing the numerous bills passed by the General Assembly, we present these materials to assist in your deliberations and to highlight our shared interest in a prosperous, free, and opportunity-rich Commonwealth. Your administration has emphasized pragmatic approaches to challenges facing Virginians, including affordability for families, economic stability, and delivering results that benefit our communities.

We appreciate the focus on these priorities and the opportunity they present for constructive dialogue. At the same time, the General Assembly has advanced a significant number of proposals that, if enacted, could impose substantial new restrictions, increase regulatory burdens, raise costs for businesses and families, challenge individual liberties and limit the parental role in education.

These measures risk undermining the principles of limited government, free enterprise, and personal freedoms that have historically driven Virginia's economic strength and quality of life. They will jeopardize affordability and economic stability.

Enclosed are various issue sections covering economic policies, regulatory overreach, education, Second Amendment rights, family values, and other critical legislative matters. Each section begins with a letter from the coalition leader in that particular subject area. Each section is endorsed by numerous organizations dedicated to preserving Virginia's principles of limited government and economic freedom (each organization is independent and endorses only those sections they align with). Within each section, we have included detailed one-pagers outlining the bills we strongly urge you to either support or veto, each illustrating the potential consequences these measures would have on businesses, communities, families, and individual rights.

Governor Spanberger, we stand ready to engage with your administration in defense of Virginia's prosperity and the freedoms that make our Commonwealth strong. We respectfully urge careful scrutiny of legislation that could hinder economic growth, impose undue regulations, threaten Second Amendment protections, encroach on parental rights in education, or undermine family values. Your thoughtful review and use of executive authority—particularly the veto power when warranted—can help protect against overreach and preserve the foundational values that continue to attract families and businesses to Virginia. Thank you for your service to the Commonwealth and for considering these perspectives. We look forward to opportunities for dialogue as we work to advance policies that support limited government, economic freedom, and the well-being of all Virginians.

Sincerely,



Lynn Taylor (on behalf of the Virginia Conservative Leaders Network)



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Throughout this package, for ease of reading our recommendations are color-coded as shown in the top-right corner of each page according to the following table:

Veto recommendation	
Amendment recommendation	
Amend & sign	
Amend & veto	
Sign recommendation	

To assist with reference, the following color-coding is used in the top-left of each page to show the broad policy area covered, according to which of the organizations comprising VCLN has taken the lead on the particular area. Note that some bills may cut across more than one policy area:

Policy Area	Lead organization	Start page	Color
Housing	Americans For Prosperity	5	
Education	Virginia Education Opportunity Alliance	13	
Healthcare	Virginia Institute	25	
Energy	Thomas Jefferson Institute	30	
Family	The Family Foundation	38	
Economy	Thomas Jefferson Institute	55	
Gun control / 2 nd Amendment	Virginia Citizens Defense League	62	
Election Integrity	Virginia Fair Elections	68	

Each of these policy areas are co-signed by other organizations within the VCLN. Not all organizations co-sign on each policy area, because some members of the VCLN only engage within their specific policy areas of expertise.

CONTACTS

If you would like more information about the bills in this document, please reach out to the organizations taking the lead on each policy area. Contact details are as follows:

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Ben Knotts	(804) 221-5879	bknotts@afphq.org
Lynn Taylor	(540) 245-1776	taylor@virginiainstitute.org

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HB1279 SB388	10	Affordable housing; religious organizations and other nonprofits
SB328	11	Housing for local employees
HB15	12	Va. Residential Landlord Act
SB531	13	Zoning, accessory dwelling units
		Education
SB105	16	STEM+C Competition Team Grant Program
HB206	17	College partnership laboratory schools; transparency
HB290	18	School enrollment; false statements concerning residency
HB355	19	Annual mental health screening (grades 6-12)
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HB425	30	Remote monitoring (pregnant)
		Energy
HB893 SB448	33	Energy storage resources
HB429 SB249	34	Electric utilities; integrated resource plans, report
HB3 SB5	35	Energy efficiency and weatherization task force
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SB443 HB891	37	Siting of battery energy storage projects; commercial solar
HB711	38	Solar facilities; local regulation

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HB1182 SB361	53	Health insurance; coverage for contraceptive devices
HB6 SB596	54	Contraception; establishes right to obtain, applicability
SB661	55	Regulation and taxation of skill game machines
		Economy (taxation and fiscal policy)
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HB569 SB518	59	Public works contracts; prevailing wage rate
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POLICY AREA:
Housing

LEAD ORGANIZATION:
Americans For Prosperity

CO-SIGNED:
Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy
Virginia Council
Virginia Institute Action
Virginia Tea Party



Dear Governor Spanberger,

Housing affordability is central to your Growing Virginia Plan, and we share that priority. Several bills on your desk advance it through deregulation and market-based reforms. Others, however, would distort markets or burden the small landlords who provide much of Virginia's affordable rental stock.

Bills we recommend you SIGN:

Manufactured Housing Zoning Reform (HB655/SB346)
Nonprofit Affordable Housing Development (HB1279/SB388)
Accessory Dwelling Units Statewide (SB531)

Bills we recommend you VETO:

Government Employee Homeownership Grants (SB328)
Extended Landlord Nonpayment Notice Period (HB15)

The bills we recommend signing share a common approach: they remove regulatory barriers that artificially constrain housing supply. HB655/SB346 ends discriminatory restrictions on manufactured homes. HB1279/SB388 lets churches and nonprofits build housing on their own land — no taxpayer cost. SB454 allows multifamily development on underused commercial property. SB531 establishes clear ADU standards that protect property rights while expanding supply. These are market-based solutions that deliver on your affordability commitments without new spending or mandates.

The two vetoes protect those same goals. SB328 subsidizes government employees at the expense of private-sector workers competing for the same homes — inflating prices rather than expanding supply. HB15 nearly triples the nonpayment notice period, increasing risk for small landlords who will respond by raising rents or exiting the market entirely.

If you have any questions, please contact me at bknotts@afphq.org or on 804-221-5879.

Sincerely,

Ben Knotts (Government Affairs Director, Americans for Prosperity - Virginia)

Co-signed by: 



Bill Analysis
HB655/SB346

Patrons: *Maldonado/Van Valkenburg*
Recommendation: *SIGN*

Zoning; manufactured housing

What does the bill do?

HB655/SB346 prohibits localities from treating manufactured housing differently than traditional site-built housing in zoning ordinances. The bill requires that manufactured homes meeting HUD construction standards be permitted in any residential zone where site-built homes of similar size and use are allowed.

Rationale for support:

Advances housing affordability goals: This bill directly supports your commitment to increase the supply of and access to affordable housing. Manufactured housing costs 35-50% less than traditional construction, providing a critical pathway to homeownership for working families.

Bipartisan support for regulatory modernization: The bill passed with broad support from both parties and addresses outdated zoning restrictions that have no basis in modern construction standards. HUD-certified manufactured homes meet the same safety and quality standards as site-built homes.

Removes barriers without mandates: Rather than imposing new requirements, this bill simply removes discriminatory restrictions that artificially constrain housing supply. Localities retain full authority over density, setbacks, and other legitimate zoning concerns—they just can't categorically exclude an entire class of quality housing.

Supports workforce housing in growing regions: Virginia's metro areas face acute housing shortages that price out essential workers. Manufactured housing provides quality, affordable options for teachers, nurses, and first responders who serve our communities but struggle to live in them.

SUCCESS

SUMMARY: Please sign HB655/SB346. This bill advances your housing affordability commitments by removing discriminatory barriers to manufactured housing, expanding options for working families without imposing new mandates on localities.

Bill Analysis
HB1279/SB388

Patrons:
Cole/McPike

Recommendation:
SIGN

Affordable housing; religious organizations and other nonprofit tax-exempt properties

What does the bill do?

HB1279/SB388 allows religious organizations and other tax-exempt nonprofit entities to develop affordable housing on their property. The bill removes regulatory barriers that currently prevent churches, synagogues, and charitable organizations from using their land to address housing shortages in their communities.

Rationale for support:

Increases housing supply without taxpayer cost: Virginia faces a critical housing shortage that drives up costs for working families. This bill leverages existing private assets—land already owned by non-profits—to create more housing units without new government spending or mandates on private developers.

Advances the Governor’s housing affordability commitment: This legislation directly supports your campaign promise to increase the supply of and access to affordable housing. By removing regulatory barriers, it enables community institutions to contribute solutions using their own resources.

Strengthens economic competitiveness: Housing availability is now a major factor in business location decisions. Communities without adequate housing stock lose employers and skilled workers to competitor states. Enabling nonprofits to build addresses this competitive disadvantage while respecting property rights and local institutions.

Empowers local communities, not bureaucracies: Religious organizations and nonprofits are deeply embedded in their neighborhoods and understand local needs. This bill trusts these institutions to develop appropriate housing solutions rather than imposing one-size-fits-all government programs.

SUCCESS

SUMMARY: Please sign HB1279/SB388. Removing barriers for nonprofits to develop housing increases supply, lowers costs for families, and makes Virginia more competitive—all without government spending or new mandates.

*Bill Analysis***SB328***Patron:**Perry**Recommendation:***VETO****Housing for local employees; grants for homeownership****What does the bill do?**

SB328 authorizes localities to provide homeownership grants of up to \$25,000 to local government employees, school board employees, and constitutional officers' staff to purchase primary residences within the locality. The bill also allows localities to partner with school divisions to offer similar housing assistance grants and enter public-private partnerships to provide workforce housing for school personnel.

Rationale for opposition:

Creates unfair subsidies and market distortions: This bill allows local governments to use taxpayer funds to give certain employees a \$25,000 advantage over private-sector workers competing for the same housing. Such preferential treatment distorts real estate markets, artificially inflates home prices (in contradiction to your Affordability agenda), and disadvantages teachers, nurses, and small business employees who don't work for local government.

Conflicts with genuine housing affordability solutions: While you have committed to increasing housing supply and streamlining permitting, this bill does nothing to address the actual problem: insufficient housing stock. Instead of removing regulatory barriers that restrict new construction, it throws taxpayer money at symptoms while making the underlying crisis worse by increasing demand without expanding supply.

Expands government beyond core functions: Local governments exist to provide essential services, not to act as real estate subsidy agencies. This bill invites administrative complexity, potential abuse, and mission creep as localities hire staff to manage grant programs, verify compliance, and monitor recapture provisions. The 'public-private partnership' language in subsection B is particularly vague and could enable costly ventures with unclear accountability.

Raises fiscal and equity concerns: Localities facing budget constraints will face pressure to fund these grants, potentially diverting resources from actual services. The bill creates a two-tier system where government employees receive housing benefits unavailable to equally deserving private-sector workers, undermining the principle that compensation should be earned through market competition, not government favoritism.

NOT A MODERATE

SUMMARY: Please veto SB328. Rather than addressing housing affordability through supply-side reforms that benefit all Virginians, this bill creates a costly subsidy program that distorts markets, advantages government employees over private-sector workers, and expands local government into roles better left to the private sector.

Bill Analysis**HB15****Patron:****Price****Recommendation:****VETO****Va. Residential Landlord and Tenant Act; landlord remedies, noncompliance with rental agreement****What does the bill do?**

HB15 extends the notice period landlords must give tenants for nonpayment of rent from 5 days to 14 days before terminating a rental agreement. This nearly triples the time a tenant can remain in a unit without paying rent before a landlord can begin eviction proceedings. The bill applies statewide to all residential rental agreements.

Rationale for opposition:

Harms small landlords and affordable housing supply: Virginia's rental market depends heavily on small landlords—individuals who own one to four properties and operate on tight margins. Extending nonpayment periods from 5 to 14 days increases financial risk for these mom-and-pop operators, many of whom rely on timely rent to pay their own mortgages. When rental income becomes less reliable, small landlords exit the market or raise rents to offset risk, directly reducing the affordable housing supply that you have pledged to expand.

Creates perverse incentives and increases costs: A 14-day waiting period allows financially irresponsible tenants to game the system—living rent-free for two weeks each month by exploiting the mandatory delay. Good-faith tenants facing genuine hardship already have remediation options under subsection B. This change doesn't help those in true need; it simply extends the period during which landlords cannot act, increasing unpaid rent losses that get passed to other tenants through higher rents.

Conflicts with streamlining commitment: You campaigned on streamlining processes to lower costs and incentivize investment. This bill does the opposite—it adds bureaucratic delay to a straightforward contractual relationship. Property owners facing nonpayment shouldn't need government-mandated waiting periods nearly three times the standard. Markets work best when contracts are enforceable; this undermines basic property rights and discourages rental housing investment precisely when Virginia needs more supply.

**NOT A
MODERATE**

SUMMARY: Please veto HB15. This bill conflicts with your commitment to increase affordable housing supply by imposing new regulatory burdens on landlords that will reduce investment, increase rents, and drive small property owners out of the market.

Bill Analysis**SB531****Patron:****Srinivasan****Recommendation:****SIGN****Zoning; development and use of accessory dwelling units, delayed effective date****What does the bill do?**

SB531 establishes statewide standards allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as permitted uses in single-family residential zones, effective July 2027. Localities must allow at least one ADU per single-family lot, with reasonable restrictions on size (minimum 350-500 sq ft), parking, and owner-occupancy requirements. The bill prohibits localities from requiring special use permits, excessive setbacks, or street improvements, while preserving homeowner association covenants and existing local ADU ordinances adopted before 2026.

Rationale for support:

Removes regulatory barriers to housing supply: This bill directly advances your commitment to increase housing supply and access to affordable housing by eliminating arbitrary local restrictions that prevent homeowners from building ADUs. By establishing clear, predictable standards, it streamlines permitting processes and reduces costs for property owners seeking to add housing units.

Protects property rights while preserving local flexibility: The bill empowers property owners to use their land productively without requiring discretionary special use permits that politicize what should be a straightforward building decision. Localities retain authority over safety codes, setbacks, and lot coverage—ensuring appropriate standards while ending the practice of blocking ADUs through zoning manipulation.

Grandfathers existing ordinances and respects private covenants: The delayed 2027 effective date gives localities transition time, and the bill explicitly exempts localities with pre-2026 ADU ordinances that don't treat ADUs as special uses. Private property agreements, HOA covenants, and condominium instruments remain fully enforceable—this is a limit on government power, not private contracts.

Proven policy with bipartisan support nationwide: ADU reforms have succeeded in states across the political spectrum, from California to Maine, by increasing housing affordability without requiring taxpayer subsidies. This market-based solution lets homeowners create income-generating units, helps seniors age in place, and provides workforce housing—all without new government programs or spending.

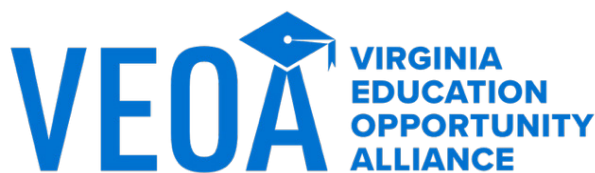
SUCCESS

SUMMARY: Please sign SB531. This bill removes unnecessary government barriers to property owners building accessory dwelling units, advancing your housing affordability goals through deregulation rather than mandates or spending.

POLICY AREA:
Education

LEAD ORGANIZATION:
Virginia Education Opportunity Alliance

CO-SIGNED:
Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy
The Family Foundation
Virginia Council
Virginia Institute Action
Virginia Institute for Public Policy
Virginia Tea Party
Yorktown Foundation for Public Policy



Dear Governor Spanberger,

Virginia's K-12 system needs reforms that improve student outcomes, not additional mandates that divert resources from the classroom. From 2015 to 2024, education spending grew from \$15B to \$21B while reading and math scores declined. Parents overwhelmingly support reform over more funding and want more school choice — not more compliance requirements imposed from Richmond.

We recommend you sign: STEM+C Competition Team Grants for Homeschoolers (SB105); College Partnership Laboratory Schools (HB206); and False statements as to school division or attendance zone residency (HB290).

We recommend you veto: Mandatory Mental Health Screenings, Grades 6-12 (HB355), History Credit Substitutions (HB182), Immigration Status School Enrollment Protections (HB836/SB491), Language Access Plans for LEP Parents (HB1278), School Performance Framework Restructuring (HB643), Mandatory FAFSA Completion (HB1095) and Sexually Explicit Content Library Exemptions (SB19).

SB105 is straightforward: it lets homeschool students access existing STEM grant funding. It expands opportunity without new spending — the kind of inclusive, practical reform Virginia families expect. HB206 ensures that laboratory school enrollment remains open through a fair lottery process, parents are informed about waiting list placement, and the parent / LSD partnership is strengthened without imposing new mandates. HB290 directs the Department of Education to study how school district residency requirements are enforced and whether penalties for non-compliance are appropriate, ensuring that violation consequences are proportionate and protecting the integrity of school enrollment rules.

The vetoes impose unfunded mandates that burden schools with administrative compliance while doing nothing to improve reading proficiency or math achievement. While an amendment delays its enactment, HB355 intends to require children to be screened annually for mental health conditions without funding or qualified staff. This marginalizes parents' rights to direct the upbringing, wellbeing, and education of their child. HB182 allows students to skip comprehensive U.S. history. HB836/SB491 forces schools to navigate contradictory federal and state legal requirements while opening them to costly litigation. HB1278 and HB643 expand state bureaucracy over local school boards. HB1095 turns schools into FAFSA compliance enforcers. SB19 strips local boards of authority over age-appropriate library content.

Virginia's schools should focus on teaching — not on implementing new compliance regimes that pull resources from the classroom. If you have any questions, please call me on (804) 240-2309.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig DiSesa".

Craig DiSesa
Executive Director

Co-signed by:



Bill Analysis
*SB105**Patron:*
*Stanley**Recommendation:*
*SIGN***STEM+C Competition Team Grant Program; eligibility for grants****What does the bill do?**

SB105 expands eligibility for the STEM+C Competition Team Grant Program to include teams established outside the traditional public school system, most notably benefiting homeschool families and co-ops. The bill allows grants for both new and existing STEM+C competition teams that meet Board of Education criteria, removing previous barriers that limited participation to conventional school-based teams.

Rationale for support:

Expands educational opportunity without new spending: This bill opens doors for homeschool students and alternative learning communities to access existing grant funding for robotics, coding competitions, and STEM team activities. It's about fairness — if Virginia taxpayers fund STEM education initiatives, all Virginia students should be eligible to benefit.

Strong bipartisan support and broad constituent benefit: The bill has bipartisan sponsorship and enthusiastic backing from Virginia's homeschool community, which represents thousands of families across urban, suburban, and rural areas. This is common-sense educational equity that doesn't pit one group against another.

Strengthens Virginia's STEM workforce pipeline: By removing arbitrary barriers to STEM competition participation, Virginia captures talent wherever it develops. Homeschool students compete successfully in national STEM competitions — this bill simply ensures Virginia's grant programs reflect that reality and invest in all pathways to STEM careers.



SUMMARY: Please sign SB105. This bipartisan bill expands educational opportunity for Virginia's homeschool community and strengthens our STEM talent pipeline without creating new bureaucracy or spending — exactly the kind of practical, inclusive policy Virginians expect.

*Bill Analysis**HB206**Patron:**Keys-Gamarra**Recommendation:**SIGN***College partnership laboratory schools; transparency****What does the bill do?**

HB206 improves transparency and parent-facing accountability for Virginia's college partnership laboratory schools. The bill requires these schools to publicly post governing board membership, meeting schedules, summaries of major operational, budgetary, and contractual decisions, and the Board of Education regulations that apply to them. It also clarifies enrollment lottery and waiting list procedures and requires parents to receive notice and a contact person when a laboratory school operates in partnership with one or more local school divisions.

Rationale for support:

Supports innovation with appropriate transparency: College partnership laboratory schools are one of Virginia's most promising vehicles for expanding educational innovation and building new pathways between K-12 education and higher education. HB206 strengthens public confidence in these schools without undermining the flexibility that makes them valuable. Requiring schools to post governing board information, meeting schedules, and summaries of major decisions gives parents and the public clearer visibility into how these schools operate.

Improves parent access and enrollment clarity: The bill strengthens fairness and predictability in the enrollment process by reinforcing lottery-based admission, requiring lottery-based waiting lists, and ensuring parents know their child's place on the waiting list. For collaborative partnerships with local school divisions, the bill also guarantees parents receive a designated contact person for questions or concerns. That is a practical, parent-centered improvement that should reduce confusion and improve accountability.

Preserves autonomy while reinforcing public trust: Importantly, HB206 does not dismantle the operational independence of laboratory schools or burden them with unnecessary new bureaucracy. Instead, it applies basic transparency expectations appropriate to publicly funded educational entities. This is a measured reform that respects innovation, strengthens oversight, and helps ensure laboratory schools remain credible and accessible options for Virginia families.

SUCCESS

SUMMARY: Please sign HB206. This bill strengthens transparency and parent access to information for Virginia's college partnership laboratory schools while preserving the flexibility that allows these innovative schools to thrive. By improving governance disclosure and enrollment clarity, the bill increases accountability and public trust without imposing new bureaucracy or limiting educational innovation.

Bill Analysis
HB290

Patron:
Anderson

Recommendation:
SIGN

School enrollment; false statements concerning residency; evaluation and recommendations

What does the bill do?

HB290 directs the Department of Education, in consultation with the Virginia State Crime Commission and other stakeholders, to evaluate how Virginia school divisions enforce the law against knowingly making false statements about a child's residency for school enrollment. The bill requires data collection, stakeholder input, and recommendations on improving enforcement, including possible alternatives to criminal penalties, and a report to the House and Senate education committees by November 1, 2026.

Rationale for support:

Protects fairness and the integrity of school assignment rules: Residency requirements exist to ensure that school enrollment is administered fairly and that school divisions can plan staffing, capacity, and budgets based on the students they are legally responsible to serve. When those rules are knowingly violated, the burden falls on taxpayers and on families who follow the law. HB290 takes a reasonable step toward understanding how often such violations occur and whether current enforcement tools are working.

Favors evidence-based reform over rhetoric: Rather than imposing a new one-size-fits-all mandate, HB290 asks the Department of Education to gather facts, consult with school divisions, and identify practical ways to improve compliance. That includes evaluating how frequently violations occur, how often school divisions pursue penalties, and whether tuition recovery mechanisms are effective. This is a prudent approach to a real administrative problem that deserves better statewide information before broader policy changes are considered.

Encourages proportionate enforcement: The bill also wisely directs attention to whether penalties are commensurate with the violation and whether effective civil or administrative alternatives may exist. That makes HB290 a balanced measure. It supports the rule of law and protects public resources while still allowing the Commonwealth to recommend enforcement tools that are fair, consistent, and workable for school divisions across Virginia.

NOTE: The Governor proposed a substitute bill, which was adopted.



SUMMARY: Please sign HB290. This bill protects the integrity of school enrollment rules by gathering needed data on residency violations and evaluating fair, effective enforcement options. It supports taxpayers, promotes evidence-based policymaking, and helps ensure school divisions can enforce residency requirements consistently across the Commonwealth.

*Bill Analysis**HB355**Patron:**Gardner**Recommendation:**VETO***Public school students in grades six through 12; annual mental health screening****What does the bill do?**

In its introduced form, HB355 required annual mental health screenings for all public school students in grades 6-12 beginning in the 2028-2029 school year, using state-developed tools administered by school boards. Parents could opt out only within the first two weeks of the school year. The Board of Education was directed to develop screening tools, guidance, and privacy procedures by September 1, 2027. The enrolled version replaces the mandate with a study and directs state entities to develop the framework and operational recommendations for implementing a future program. Experience shows that many large education initiatives begin in this way—first through a study or advisory report that establishes the structure for later statewide implementation. Once such a framework is created, it often becomes the basis for regulatory guidance or future legislation that moves the policy forward without fully revisiting the underlying concerns.

Rationale for opposition:**NOT A MODERATE**

Future Implementation costs will strain already-stretched school budgets: The bill provides no funding mechanism for screenings, staff training, or required mental health professional interventions. Rural districts with existing counselor shortages cannot comply with same-day intervention requirements. This creates another unfunded mandate that diverts resources from classroom instruction.

Privacy protections are inadequate for sensitive health data: The bill requires data sharing and storage protocols but lacks specific FERPA and HIPAA compliance standards. Student mental health information is exceptionally sensitive, and vague guidance on ‘confidentiality considerations’ exposes families to potential data breaches or unauthorized disclosure.

Opt-out window is impractically short for informed parental consent: Requiring opt-out decisions within two weeks of school start—before many families receive screening information—undermines meaningful parental involvement. Parents deserve adequate time to review screening tools, understand implications, and consult their own healthcare providers.

One-size-fits-all approach ignores diverse family circumstances: Many students already receive mental health care through private providers or community programs. Mandatory school screenings create duplication, potential conflicting diagnoses, and confusion for families actively managing their children’s care.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB355. While supporting student mental health is critical, this bill imposes unfunded mandates on schools, contains inadequate privacy protections for sensitive health data, and restricts parental decision-making with an impractically short opt-out window.

*Bill Analysis**HB182**Patron:**Reid**Recommendation:**VETO***High school graduation requirements; history and social studies credits****What does the bill do?**

HB182 allows students to substitute narrowly focused history courses (African American history, civics and economics, or Virginia and U.S. government) for the broader United States and Virginia history requirement. While students would still need three total history/social studies credits to graduate, they could do so without ever taking a comprehensive U.S. history course that provides the foundational chronological framework.

NOT A MODERATE**Rationale for opposition:**

Students need historical context before specialization: Allowing students to skip comprehensive U.S. history in favor of topical courses deprives them of the very chronological and thematic context they need to understand narrower bands of history. You cannot meaningfully study African American history, civics, or government without first understanding the broader narrative of American development, from colonial settlement through industrialization to the modern era. Specialized courses work best when students already have the foundational framework.

Undermines college and career readiness: This conflicts with your commitment to preparing students for 21st-century jobs and further education. Employers and colleges consistently report that critical thinking, contextual understanding, and the ability to connect disparate information are essential skills—precisely what comprehensive history courses develop. Fragmenting historical education into disconnected topical courses produces graduates who lack the analytical framework that interdisciplinary problem-solving requires.

Creates inequitable outcomes across divisions: Without a universal U.S. history requirement, students in under-resourced divisions may receive fragmented historical education while their peers in better-funded systems take comprehensive courses plus electives. This exacerbates educational inequality rather than addressing it. If the goal is expanding access to African American history or civics, the solution is adding those as requirements—not making foundational history optional.

Board of Education has curriculum expertise: The General Assembly should not micromanage graduation requirements that fall within the Board of Education's constitutional authority over curriculum standards. If there are gaps in how history is currently taught, the Board can revise the Standards of Learning. Legislative mandates that allow students to bypass foundational coursework undermine the Board's evidence-based School Performance and Support Framework.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB182. Students cannot meaningfully understand specialized history without first learning the comprehensive chronological framework that U.S. history provides—this bill puts the cart before the horse and conflicts with your commitment to college and career readiness.

*Bill Analysis**HB836/SB491**Patrons:**Rasoul/Pekarsky**Recommendation:**VETO*

Public schools; right to free public elementary and secondary education, discrimination, etc.

What does the bill do?

HB836/SB491 prohibits public schools from denying enrollment or excluding students based on immigration or citizenship status. It bars schools from collecting immigration information (except as required by law), restricts disclosure to law enforcement, and requires schools to develop procedures for reviewing law enforcement entry requests, monitoring interactions, and obtaining parental consent before granting immigration-related access to students. The bill creates a private cause of action with mandatory attorney fees for violations and requires Department of Education guidance and mandatory training by the 2026-2027 school year.

Rationale for opposition:

NOT A MODERATE

Schools shouldn't teach children that violating the law is acceptable: While well-intentioned, this bill sends the wrong message to Virginia's students. The rule of law matters. School employees are explicitly prohibited from assisting with execution of lawfully issued federal immigration warrants—teaching children that some laws can simply be ignored when we disagree with them. Schools should be places where we instill civic responsibility and respect for legal processes, not selective compliance with federal law.

Unfunded mandates divert resources from education: This bill requires every school to develop monitoring procedures, train all principals and administrators, and document all law enforcement interactions—with zero appropriation for implementation. These costly administrative requirements pull focus and funding away from what schools should prioritize: improving reading proficiency and math achievement. Virginia students deserve schools focused on academics, not complex legal compliance regimes.

Opens schools to expensive litigation: Section E creates a two-year window for lawsuits with mandatory attorney fees for prevailing plaintiffs. Any parent who believes their child was affected by a policy that might “have the effect of” discrimination—an impossibly vague standard—can sue. School divisions will face costly legal battles over routine administrative decisions, draining resources from classrooms.

Conflicts with federal law create impossible choices: The bill contains direct contradictions: Section C.4 broadly restricts disclosure of immigration status, while Section D acknowledges schools cannot be prohibited from sharing such information under federal law (8 U.S.C. §§ 1373, 1644). School administrators will face legal whipsaws—sued under state law for actions required by federal law, or vice versa.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB836/SB491. Schools should teach respect for the rule of law, not selective compliance. This unfunded mandate forces schools to navigate contradictory federal and state legal requirements while opening them to costly litigation—all pulling focus from their core mission of educating Virginia's children.

*Bill Analysis**HB1278**Patron:**Reaser**Recommendation:**VETO*

Standards of Quality; school board policies; communication and language accessibility for limited English proficient parents; requirements; report.

What does the bill do?

HB1278 requires each school board to develop, post, and annually update a comprehensive language access plan for limited English proficient (LEP) parents, including policies for translation of vital documents, interpretation services, parent identification and language tracking, employee training, and public posting of accessibility information. School boards must submit annual compliance reports to the Department of Education. The Department is authorized to adopt monitoring and enforcement policies and must designate staff to provide technical assistance and compliance support.

NOT A MODERATE**Rationale for opposition:**

Diverts resources from core academic priorities: Virginia students are struggling with fundamental skills — reading proficiency and 8th grade math scores remain below acceptable levels. This bill imposes extensive administrative requirements for plan development, annual reporting, employee training, document translation, and interpretation services, pulling limited personnel and financial resources away from classroom instruction and evidence-based interventions that directly improve student outcomes.

Creates unfunded mandate during budget constraints: The bill requires school boards to provide interpretation and translation services ‘at no cost to the LEP parent’ and through ‘qualified human interpretation’ supplemented by technology, without appropriating implementation funds. School divisions will bear costs for staffing, contracted services, technology platforms, ongoing training, and compliance reporting — all while facing existing budget pressures that affect teacher salaries and classroom resources.

Expands state control over local school governance: By mandating Department of Education approval of service delivery contracts, requiring annual compliance reports, and permitting VDOE to ‘adopt such policies and procedures as it deems necessary for monitoring and enforcing’ compliance, this bill significantly expands state oversight. School boards lose discretion to address their communities’ unique needs, and the designated VDOE compliance staff creates another layer of bureaucracy second-guessing local decisions.

Imposes one-size-fits-all approach across diverse communities: Virginia’s 132 school divisions range from rural counties with minimal LEP populations to urban districts with dozens of languages spoken. Requiring identical plan components, reporting formats, and service standards regardless of local circumstances forces small districts to maintain infrastructure for rare translation needs while preventing innovative local solutions tailored to actual community demographics.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB 1278. While supporting LEP parents is important, this bill diverts scarce educational resources from classroom instruction into administrative compliance, expands state control over local school boards, and imposes unfunded mandates that will strain budgets without improving the academic outcomes Virginia students desperately need.

*Bill Analysis**HB643**Patron:**Rasoul**Recommendation:**VETO***School Performance and Support Framework; certain changes required****What does the bill do?**

HB643 mandates extensive revisions to Virginia's School Performance and Support Framework by July 2027, including new performance label terminology, reduced weight for failing assessment scores, increased emphasis on growth metrics, caps on high school readiness points, and exclusions for recently arrived English learners from proficiency calculations. The bill requires the Board of Education to fundamentally restructure how Virginia measures and communicates school performance.

NOT A MODERATE**Rationale for opposition:**

Undermines objective academic standards: This bill dilutes accountability by reducing the consequences for students who fail proficiency assessments (cutting failure points from 0.75 to 0.5) while increasing weight on subjective growth metrics. Virginia families deserve transparent information about whether their children can read and do math at grade level—not obscured performance scales that mask academic deficiencies.

Conflicts with evidence-based accountability: The current Board of Education framework was developed through rigorous review and stakeholder input. This legislative micromanagement of technical scoring methodologies—dictating point values, weights, and calculation formulas—undermines expert judgment and creates a dangerous precedent of political interference in education standards. Virginia should focus resources on improving actual student outcomes in core subjects, not gaming accountability metrics.

Excludes vulnerable students from accountability: Requiring exclusion of English learners from proficiency calculations for up to three years creates a perverse incentive to neglect these students' academic needs. Schools serve all children, and accountability systems should measure success for all populations, not create carve-outs that allow struggling students to become invisible in performance data.

Creates implementation burden without proven benefit: This bill mandates ten separate structural changes to a functioning accountability system, requiring extensive regulatory revisions, federal approval processes, new scoring algorithms, and system-wide recalibration—all without evidence that these specific technical adjustments will improve student learning. The administrative costs and disruption will divert attention from classroom instruction.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB 643. Virginia's accountability system should transparently measure student proficiency in core subjects, not obscure performance through diluted metrics and political manipulation of scoring formulas that prioritize optics over outcomes.

*Bill Analysis**HB1095**Patron:**Singh**Recommendation:**VETO*

High school students; completion of certain applications for student financial aid required; opt-out; exemption

What does the bill do?

HB1095 mandates that all high school students (or their parents if minors) must either submit FAFSA or VASA financial aid applications and confirm submission to their school board, or formally opt out in writing before graduation. School boards must track compliance, obtain written confirmation or opt-out forms, and may only exempt students after making ‘reasonable efforts’ to obtain documentation.

Rationale for opposition:


NOT A MODERATE

Imposes one-size-fits-all solution ignoring student diversity: Not all students benefit from immediately pursuing four-year college degrees. Many will enter apprenticeships, military service, entrepreneurship, or technical careers where FAFSA completion is irrelevant. Strong economies need skilled tradespeople and technical workers as much as college graduates. This mandate assumes a college-for-all model that doesn’t reflect workforce reality or respect families’ educational choices.

Creates unfunded mandate diverting resources from academics: This bill transforms schools into compliance enforcers for federal financial aid applications, requiring staff time to track submissions, chase down opt-out forms, and document ‘reasonable efforts’ for non-compliant students. These resources would be better spent on core academic instruction—particularly reading and 8th grade math, where Virginia students need the most support.

Undermines parental rights through bureaucratic pressure: While the bill includes an opt-out provision, the requirement to submit formal paperwork to school boards creates bureaucratic friction designed to pressure compliance. Families who choose not to pursue higher education or prefer private college planning shouldn’t need to justify that choice to government officials. This presumption that all students must follow a single post-graduation pathway conflicts with Virginia’s commitment to diverse career pathways, including the career and technical education programs you have championed.

Collects sensitive family financial data unnecessarily: FAFSA applications require detailed disclosure of family income, assets, and tax information. For families not seeking federal aid, this represents an unnecessary invasion of privacy. The confirmation requirement means schools become repositories of data about which families completed financial aid applications—information that has no educational purpose but creates privacy risks.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB1095. Schools should focus on academic instruction, not policing federal financial aid applications. This unfunded mandate diverts resources from teaching, pressures families into unwanted bureaucratic processes, and conflicts with your support for diverse career pathways including technical education and apprenticeships.

Bill Analysis
SB19/HB1499

Patron:
Locke

Recommendation:
VETO

DOE; policies relating to instructional material that contains sexually explicit content

What does the bill do?

SB19/HB1499 requires the Department of Education to create policies for parental notification when teachers assign instructional materials containing sexually explicit content. However, the bill explicitly exempts library books from notification requirements unless specifically assigned for coursework. Section D prohibits school boards from using these policies as justification to remove sexually explicit books from school libraries, restricting local authority over library content decisions.

Rationale for opposition:

NOT A MODERATE

Undermines local control: The bill prevents local school boards from exercising judgment about age-appropriate library materials, overriding community standards with a statewide mandate. Virginia's 132 school divisions serve diverse communities with different values—a one-size-fits-all approach from Richmond removes decisions from parents and local officials who know their schools best.

Creates unworkable notification gap: Students can access sexually explicit library materials without parental knowledge, while teachers face notification requirements for assigned content. This inconsistency undermines the bill's stated purpose of parental involvement and creates confusion for educators about when notification applies.

Expands state bureaucracy: The bill requires DOE to develop statewide model policies, guidance, procedures, and standards—adding administrative layers while tying school boards' hands on enforcement. This expands state oversight while reducing local flexibility, increasing costs without improving outcomes.

Constitutional concerns: Section D's broad prohibition against using these policies for book removal raises First Amendment questions about government-mandated speech in schools. Courts have recognized school boards' authority to make curriculum decisions; this bill may invite costly litigation by creating ambiguity about that authority.

SUMMARY: Please veto SB19/HB1499. While parental notification is important, this bill strips local school boards of decision-making authority while creating an unworkable system that notifies parents about assigned materials but not library books students can freely access. Local communities, not Richmond bureaucrats, should determine age-appropriate content for their schools.

POLICY AREA:
Healthcare

LEAD ORGANIZATION:
Virginia Institute for Public Policy

CO-SIGNED:
Americans For Prosperity
Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy
Virginia Tea Party
Virginia Institute Action
Virginia Council

Virginia Institute

for Public Policy

Dear Governor Spanberger,

Your Growing Virginia Plan rightly identifies affordable, quality healthcare as essential to Virginia's economic competitiveness and the wellbeing of working families. We share that commitment. Virginia continues to face critical healthcare access challenges — particularly in rural communities where physician shortages, hospital closures, and regulatory barriers leave families without adequate care.

Several bills on your desk present an opportunity to advance meaningful reform. Others, while well-intentioned, would raise costs, destabilize insurance markets, or create barriers that ultimately harm the patients they aim to help. Bills we recommend you SIGN:

State Health Services Plan Task Force for Underserved Areas (HB1337/SB239)

Non-Compete Prohibition for Healthcare Workers (SB128)

Remote Patient Monitoring for Pregnant & Postpartum Patients (HB425)

We recommend you VETO:

Doubling the Medical Malpractice Cap (SB536)

The bills we recommend signing advance your stated commitment to affordable, quality healthcare for all Virginians. The task force bill targets COPN barriers in underserved communities using a bipartisan, evidence-based approach. Eliminating non-competes for healthcare professionals increases workforce mobility where it's needed most. And remote monitoring for maternal care is a proven, fiscally responsible investment that reduces costs while improving outcomes — particularly for rural and minority women facing the highest risks.

The malpractice cap bill, by contrast, would spike insurance premiums without actuarial analysis, forcing physicians to drop Medicaid patients and potentially pushing financially fragile rural hospitals toward closure — directly undermining your affordability agenda.

If you have any questions on these recommendations, please contact Caleb Taylor at (770) 906-7186 or ctaylor@virginiainstitute.org.

Sincerely,



Caleb Taylor (Policy Director, Virginia Institute for Public Policy)

Co-signed by:



Bill Analysis
HB1337/SB239

Patrons:
Clark/Head

Recommendation:
SIGN

State Health Services Plan Task Force; designated areas of state in need of additional project

What does the bill do?

HB 1337/SB 239 creates a task force to study and designate areas of the Commonwealth in need of additional healthcare projects under the State Health Services Plan. The task force will identify communities facing healthcare access barriers and recommend targeted Certificate of Public Need (COPN) reforms or exemptions to address gaps in underserved areas.

Rationale for support:

Advances healthcare equity in underserved communities: This bill directly targets the healthcare access crisis in rural and high-poverty areas where COPN restrictions have created artificial barriers to care. Research shows that targeted COPN reforms in underserved areas can increase ambulatory surgery center capacity by 92-112% per capita in rural communities, bringing essential services closer to patients who currently face long travel times for basic procedures.

Aligns with your affordability commitment: This task force approach advances your commitment to affordable and quality healthcare for all Virginians. By identifying communities where COPN barriers prevent competition and increase costs, the study will create a roadmap for evidence-based reforms that lower prices while expanding access to care.

Bipartisan, data-driven approach to healthcare access: With bipartisan sponsorship from Del. Clark (D) and Sen. Head (R), this bill takes a measured, study-based approach rather than wholesale deregulation. It focuses reforms where they're needed most—communities with physician shortages, high poverty rates, and limited hospital access—ensuring that policy changes are targeted and evidence-based.

SUCCESS

SUMMARY: PLEASE SIGN HB1337/SB239. This bipartisan task force will identify how to remove healthcare access barriers in Virginia's most underserved communities, advancing your commitment to affordable, quality care for all Virginians.

*Bill Analysis**SB128**Patron:**Van Valkenburg**Recommendation:**SIGN***Exceptions for Certificate of Public Need****What does the bill do?**

SB 128 prohibits employers from enforcing non-compete agreements against health care professionals and low-wage workers. The bill allows affected employees to sue for damages and attorney fees, imposes civil penalties up to \$10,000 per violation on employers who violate the prohibition, and requires employers to post notices about these protections in workplaces.

**Rationale for support:**

Advances healthcare access commitments: This bill directly supports your commitment to affordable and quality healthcare for Virginians. By eliminating non-competes for nurses, physicians, counselors, and other healthcare professionals, the bill removes artificial barriers that restrict where providers can practice, particularly in underserved communities facing physician shortages.

Bipartisan workforce mobility reform: Non-compete restrictions have drawn bipartisan criticism nationwide as anti-competitive practices that suppress wages and limit career advancement. The Federal Trade Commission's recent action against non-competes reflects growing consensus that these agreements harm workers and consumers alike. Virginia would join a growing number of states protecting workers' freedom to change jobs.

Economic competitiveness and worker protection: Research shows non-competes reduce worker mobility, suppress wages by an estimated 3-10%, and disproportionately harm low-wage workers who lack bargaining power. By protecting both healthcare professionals and low-wage employees, this bill strengthens Virginia's competitive position in attracting and retaining talent while ensuring workers can pursue better opportunities without legal threats.

Balanced approach preserves legitimate business interests: The bill explicitly preserves employers' ability to use non-disclosure agreements to protect trade secrets and confidential information. It targets only non-compete restrictions that limit where former employees can work, not agreements protecting genuine proprietary business information.

SUMMARY: Please sign SB128. This bill advances your healthcare access agenda while protecting workers' ability to pursue better opportunities, all while preserving legitimate business protections through non-disclosure agreements.

Bill Analysis
HB425

Patron:
Bolling

Recommendation:
SIGN

Pregnant and postpartum patients; reimbursement for remote monitoring services through pregnancy

What does this bill do?

HB 425 requires Medicaid to reimburse healthcare providers for remote patient monitoring services for pregnant and postpartum patients. This would expand coverage to include digital health tools that track vital signs, symptoms, and health data between in-person visits, particularly benefiting rural and underserved communities with limited access to specialty maternal care.



Rationale for support:

Directly advances your healthcare affordability commitment: This bill aligns with your campaign promise to ensure affordable and quality healthcare for Virginians. Remote monitoring reduces the need for costly emergency interventions by catching complications early, while eliminating travel costs and time off work for frequent in-person visits—particularly valuable for working families.

Strong bipartisan support addressing a urgent public health crisis: With eight Democratic co-patrons and Virginia’s maternal mortality rate among the worst in the nation, this bill represents common-sense modernization of care delivery. Remote monitoring has proven effective in reducing preeclampsia complications, gestational diabetes complications, and preterm births—particularly for Black and rural women who face the highest risks.

Fiscally responsible investment with documented ROI: Every dollar spent on prenatal care saves \$3-4 in neonatal intensive care costs. Remote monitoring programs in other states have reduced NICU admissions by 20-30%, representing significant Medicaid savings while improving outcomes. The technology infrastructure already exists—this simply ensures reimbursement.

Expands access without adding regulatory burden: Unlike mandates that impose new requirements on providers, this bill simply adds a reimbursement category for services providers already want to offer. It removes a financial barrier to innovation, letting medical professionals use proven tools to serve patients better—especially in underserved rural areas where OB-GYN access is limited.

SUMMARY: Please sign HB425. This bill advances your commitment to affordable, quality healthcare by modernizing Medicaid to cover remote monitoring for pregnant women—a proven, cost-effective way to reduce maternal mortality and improve birth outcomes for Virginia’s most vulnerable families.

POLICY AREA:

Energy

LEAD ORGANIZATION:

Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy

CO-SIGNED:

Virginia Institute Action

Virginia Tea Party

Virginia Council



Thomas Jefferson Institute
For Public Policy

Dear Governor Spanberger,

Virginia is experiencing unprecedented energy demand, driven largely by the rapid expansion of data centers in Northern Virginia. These facilities are critical for our economy and national security, and your Growing Virginia Plan rightly emphasizes better alignment among energy needs, resources, and grid infrastructure. We share that goal.

However, several bills reaching your desk would move Virginia in the opposite direction — imposing costly mandates, overriding local authority, and locking ratepayers into rigid requirements before the necessary cost-benefit analysis has been done. At a time when affordability is a top concern for Virginia families, these bills would drive up electricity costs without delivering proportionate benefits.

Please find attached some summary information on key energy bills we recommend you veto. Specifically, on behalf of our members and the people of the Commonwealth, we ask that you act quickly to keep the following bills from becoming law:

- Expanded Energy Storage Mandates (HB 895/SB 448)
- Integrated Resource Plans (HB 429/SB 249)
- Income-Qualified Weatherization Mandate (HB 3/SB 5)
- Prescriptive Climate Change Instructional Materials (HB 1037)
- State Override of Local Energy Project Siting (SB 443/HB 891)
- Mandatory By-Right Solar Facility Zoning (HB 711)

Each of these bills, while well-intentioned, would raise costs for working families, reduce local control, or impose rigid mandates that conflict with your stated commitment to keeping Virginia affordable and maintaining a competitive business environment.

If you have any questions on any of these bills that we recommend you veto or reject, please contact Derrick Max at dmax@thomasjeffersoninst.org or by phone at 540-751-8255.

Sincerely,

Derrick Max, President and CEO, Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy

Co-signed by:



*Bill Analysis**HB895/SB448**Patrons:**Sullivan/Bagby**Recommendation:**VETO*

Electric utilities; energy storage requirements; Department of Energy to develop model ordinance; work groups; reports

What does the bill do?

HB895/SB448 mandates that electric utilities procure over 135 gigawatt hours of battery energy storage by 2035, with specific deployment targets phased in over time. The bill requires the Department of Energy to develop model ordinances for local regulation of energy storage projects and establishes a work group to advise on safety standards and best practices.

NOT A MODERATE

Rationale for opposition:

Imposes extraordinary costs on ratepayers without cost analysis: Based on federal data and utility filings, battery storage costs range from \$520 million to \$675 million per gigawatt hour. The 135+ gigawatt hours mandated by this bill would cost Virginia ratepayers between \$70 billion and \$91 billion—costs that will be passed directly to families and businesses through higher electric bills. Tesla’s recent \$2.7 billion contract with Georgia Power covers less than one-eleventh of the storage this bill requires, illustrating the massive scale of this unfunded mandate.

Conflicts with your commitment to align energy needs with resources: Your Growing Virginia Plan emphasizes ‘better alignment among energy needs, resources, and grid infrastructure.’ This bill mandates a specific storage amount without first conducting the technical analysis to determine what our grid actually needs. The cart is being placed before the horse—we should let grid operators and utilities determine optimal storage levels based on system requirements, not legislative mandate.

Technology and markets are rapidly evolving: Battery storage technology is advancing quickly, with costs declining and new chemistries emerging. Locking in today’s technology through legislative mandate may force utilities to invest in systems that become obsolete, when waiting even two to three years could yield far more cost-effective solutions. Market forces and utility planning processes are better suited to timing these massive infrastructure investments.

Creates implementation challenges for localities: While the model ordinances provision is well-intentioned, the December 2026 deadline gives the Department of Energy less than a year to develop comprehensive safety standards for emerging technology, coordinate with multiple state agencies, and convene a diverse stakeholder work group—all while localities face pressure to approve projects to meet the bill’s aggressive storage targets.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB 895/SB448. Mandating \$70-91 billion in battery storage costs without technical justification or cost-benefit analysis will drive up electric bills for Virginia families and businesses while potentially locking ratepayers into today’s technology when better, cheaper solutions may emerge in the near future.

*Bill Analysis**HB429/SB249**Patrons:**Bolling/Surovell**Recommendation:**VETO***Electric utilities; integrated resource plans, report****What does the bill do?**

HB 429 rewrites Virginia’s integrated resource planning (IRP) process for electric utilities, mandating incorporation of the “social cost of carbon” into generation planning, requiring 20-year forecasts instead of 15, and directing utilities to model scenarios that maximize energy efficiency programs, grid-enhancing technologies, and demand response aggregation. The bill also removes Commission discretion by changing “should” to “shall” throughout the IRP requirements.

Rationale for opposition:**NOT A MODERATE**

Directly conflicts with your affordability commitment: The social cost of the carbon mandate will increase electricity rates for Virginia families and businesses. The bill requires utilities to treat carbon emissions as a cost even when no actual carbon pricing exists, forcing ratepayers to subsidize theoretical environmental benefits while struggling with real monthly bills. This undermines your promise to keep Virginia affordable.

Hamstrings data center competitiveness: Virginia competes nationally for data center investment based on reliable, affordable power. Mandating 20-year planning horizons with rigid carbon costs and energy efficiency targets reduces grid flexibility precisely when data centers need dynamic solutions. Your campaign emphasized better alignment of energy needs and infrastructure—this bill moves in the opposite direction.

Removes regulatory flexibility when circumstances change: Converting IRPs from advisory “should” guidance to mandatory “shall” requirements eliminates the State Corporation Commission’s ability to adapt to changing technology costs, fuel prices, or grid conditions. When federal energy policy shifts or new technologies emerge, Virginia utilities will be locked into outdated mandates.

Implementation costs fall on working families: The bill’s requirements for virtual power plants, vehicle-to-grid infrastructure, and maximized efficiency programs sound innovative but require massive upfront investment. These costs get passed directly to ratepayers through higher electricity bills—the opposite of affordability.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB 429/SB249. While energy planning improvements deserve consideration, this bill locks Virginia into rigid, expensive mandates that will raise electricity costs for families and businesses—directly contradicting your commitment to affordability and threatening Virginia’s competitive advantage in attracting business investment.

*Bill Analysis**HB3/SB5**Patrons:**Bolling/Locke**Recommendation:**VETO***Income-Qualified Energy Efficiency and Weatherization Task Force; established, report****What does the bill do?**

HB 3 creates an Income-Qualified Energy Efficiency and Weatherization Task Force to develop a plan by September 2027 for providing ‘whole-home energy efficiency retrofits’ to all eligible low-income households by December 31, 2034. The bill defines these retrofits broadly to include major renovations like electrical panel upgrades, mold and asbestos removal, and repairs ‘necessary for electrification,’ with costs likely borne by ratepayers.

Rationale for opposition:

Unfunded mandate threatens affordability for working families: The bill sets a 2034 deadline for universal whole-home retrofits without identifying funding sources, virtually guaranteeing massive utility rate increases on all Virginians. Low-income families who don’t qualify for the program would face higher energy bills to subsidize renovations for others—a perverse outcome that could push more households into energy poverty.

Scope creep transforms weatherization into full-scale home renovation: Traditional weatherization focuses on cost-effective efficiency measures like insulation and air sealing. This bill redefines the mission to include asbestos removal, electrical upgrades, and broad ‘electrification’ retrofits—essentially converting a targeted assistance program into open-ended home reconstruction funded through energy bills rather than appropriated budgets subject to legislative oversight.

Implementation timeline ignores workforce reality: Virginia lacks the trained workforce to retrofit hundreds of thousands of homes by 2034. Rushing this scale of work will drive up labor costs, create quality control problems, and potentially expose vulnerable homeowners to contractor fraud—exactly the implementation barriers the task force is supposed to study before setting deadlines.

Better path: evidence-based policy, not predetermined mandates: A genuine study would gather data and recommend cost-effective solutions. Instead, this bill presumes the answer—universal retrofits by 2034—and tasks the committee with justifying predetermined conclusions. If we’re serious about helping low-income Virginians reduce energy costs, commission a real study without the political deadline and unfunded mandate attached.

NOT A MODERATE

SUMMARY: Please veto HB3/SB5. This well-intentioned bill would saddle Virginia families with massive rate increases to fund an unfunded mandate for whole-home renovations disguised as weatherization assistance, driving up costs for the very working families we should protect.

*Bill Analysis**HB1037**Patron:**Carr**Recommendation:**VETO***Instructional materials on climate change & environtl. literacy; model pol. & proced. for selection****What does the bill do?**

HB 1037 requires the Board of Education to develop model policies for selecting climate change instructional materials based on peer-reviewed scientific sources. It mandates that selected materials accurately portray climate patterns, human impacts, and effects on people and resources.

Rationale for opposition:

Duplicates existing authority and creates unnecessary mandate: The Board of Education already has full authority to develop instructional guidance and model policies. This bill creates a new statutory mandate without adding meaningful value, consuming staff time and resources that could be directed toward implementation rather than policy development.

Vague standards invite litigation and implementation confusion: Terms like ‘accurately portray’ and ‘peer-reviewed scientific sources’ lack clear definition, leaving school divisions uncertain about compliance. This ambiguity could expose localities to legal challenges from multiple perspectives, diverting resources from classroom instruction to legal defense.

Local control concern raised by school board associations: Virginia’s 133 school divisions have diverse needs, demographics, and existing curricula. A one-size-fits-all state model may not serve rural, urban, and suburban communities equally well. Local boards should retain flexibility to select materials appropriate for their students while meeting existing science standards.

Implementation burden without dedicated funding: The bill provides no funding for developing new materials, training teachers, or updating curricula. School divisions already struggling with teacher shortages and budget constraints would face additional unfunded compliance requirements.



NOT A MODERATE

SUMMARY: Please veto HB 1037. While education is vital, this bill creates redundant mandates and implementation burdens without funding, and invites litigation through vague standards. The Board already has authority to develop guidance without a new statutory requirement.

*Bill Analysis**SB443/HB891**Patrons:**Shin/McPike**Recommendation:**VETO***Siting of battery energy storage projects; commercial solar photovoltaic generation facilities****What does the bill do?**

SB443/HB891 establishes state-level siting authority for battery energy storage projects and commercial solar photovoltaic facilities, overriding local zoning controls. The bill allows these energy projects to proceed even when local governments and communities object, shifting decision-making authority from localities to state agencies.

Rationale for opposition:

Undermines local control and community input: This bill strips elected county supervisors and city councils of their traditional zoning authority, silencing the voices of residents who know their communities best. Rural and suburban localities across Virginia—including many represented by Democrats—have raised concerns about losing the ability to protect agricultural land, manage traffic impacts, and preserve community character.

Conflicts with your commitment to smart energy policy: Your Growing Virginia Plan emphasizes ‘better alignment among energy needs, resources, and grid infrastructure.’ This bill creates misalignment by forcing projects on communities without regard to local infrastructure capacity, transmission constraints, or regional energy needs. State mandates without local buy-in undermine the collaborative approach needed for effective energy planning.

Premature given current technology costs: Solar and battery storage costs remain high relative to other energy sources. Rather than mandating deployment through zoning preemption, Virginia should invest in research and development to drive down costs organically. Forcing expensive projects on unwilling localities burdens ratepayers and creates backlash against renewable energy.

Bipartisan opposition from local governments: The Virginia Association of Counties and local elected officials from both parties oppose state preemption of local land use decisions. This should not be a partisan issue; it should be about respecting the fundamental principle that communities should control their own development patterns.

NOT A MODERATE

SUMMARY: Please veto SB443/HB891. While renewable energy is important it needs to be the right renewables in the right way. Overriding local zoning authority alienates communities, conflicts with your commitment to smart infrastructure alignment, and forces deployment of technologies that need further cost reductions to achieve broad public support.

*Bill Analysis**HB711**Patron:**Herring**Recommendation:**VETO***Solar facilities; local regulation, special exceptions****What does the bill do?**

HB711 strips localities of their zoning authority over solar facilities by mandating that ground-mounted solar projects be permitted by-right on agricultural, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use properties, provided they meet basic setback requirements. The bill removes the phrase “unless a local ordinance provides otherwise” from existing law, eliminating local discretion. It also requires localities to grant special exceptions for solar projects serving other properties, fundamentally shifting solar facility approval from local option to state mandate.

Rationale for opposition:

Undermines local control and community input: This bill overrides local zoning authority and silences community voices on land-use decisions that directly affect their neighborhoods, property values, and rural character. Virginians deserve a say in how their communities develop—this one-size-fits-all mandate from Richmond ignores local conditions, agricultural priorities, and citizen concerns.

Conflicts with the your business climate commitments: While you have pledged to reclaim Virginia’s rank as ‘America’s Top State for Business’ through reliable and predictable governance, this bill creates uncertainty by removing local decision-making from the equation. Businesses value stable, locally-driven land-use planning—not unpredictable state mandates that bypass community buy-in.

Solar remains cost-prohibitive without further innovation: Large-scale solar facilities remain economically inefficient compared to other energy sources. Rather than mandating their deployment through zoning overrides, Virginia should invest in research and development to drive down solar costs and improve efficiency. Forcing deployment before the technology is cost-competitive burdens ratepayers and property owners.

Creates implementation chaos for localities: By removing local discretion and requiring by-right approval, this bill forces localities to approve projects that may conflict with comprehensive plans, agricultural preservation goals, or infrastructure capacity. Counties will face legal and administrative burdens defending decisions they have no authority to make.

NOT A MODERATE

SUMMARY: Please veto HB711. This bill strips localities of their constitutional zoning authority, silences community voices, and mandates deployment of solar facilities that remain cost-prohibitive without further technological innovation.

POLICY AREA:
Family Policy

LEAD ORGANIZATION:
The Family Foundation

CO-SIGNED:
Virginia Tea Party
Virginia Council



Dear Governor Spanberger,

Virginia families are counting on their Governor to protect parental rights, support children’s wellbeing, and ensure that policy decisions affecting families are grounded in evidence and fiscal responsibility. We believe several bills on your desk align with those goals — and several others, while well-intentioned, would undermine them.

Bills we recommend you SIGN: HB632/SB305 (kinship foster care waiver), HB515 (sports betting credit card ban), HB644 (youth privacy protections), HB131 (religious accommodations in higher ed), SB568 (school screen time limits), HB653 (military family excused absences), and SB245 (school social media communication)

Bills we recommend you VETO: HB38 (mental health training mandate), HB211 (universal Head Start mandate), SB794 (abortion provider immunity), HB642/SB542 (retail cannabis market), SB137 (health-care facility speech restrictions), HB1182/SB361 (contraceptive coverage mandate), and SB661 (“skills game” legalization).

We recommend that you AMEND HB6/SB596 to ensure that it protects children from harm.

The bills we recommend signing are practical, bipartisan reforms that strengthen families. HB632 keeps children with loving relatives rather than in institutional care. HB515 protects working families from debt-fueled gambling. HB644 safeguards children’s privacy while maintaining parental access.

The bills we recommend vetoing share a common thread: they expand government mandates without adequate funding, analysis, or respect for parental authority. HB38 asks teachers to perform mental health screening they aren’t trained to provide — Virginia should invest in qualified school counselors instead. HB211 commits the Commonwealth to an unfunded universal pre-K mandate before understanding costs. HB1499/SB19 undermines both parental rights and local school board authority by creating loopholes in sexually explicit content policies. And HB43 makes a foundational change to Virginia’s legal framework without the comprehensive study such a significant shift demands.

If you have any questions regarding the list of bills in this packet recommended for veto, please contact me, Todd Gathje, at todd@familyfoundation.org or by phone at 804-730-7854.

Sincerely,

Todd Gathje, Ph.D., Vice President of Government Relations

Co-signed by:



*Bill Analysis**HB632/SB305**Patrons:**Aird/Pekarsky**Recommendation:**SIGN***Kinship foster care; barrier crime waiver, report****What does the bill do?**

HB632 creates a waiver process for kinship foster care placements when a relative or close family friend has a criminal conviction that would otherwise disqualify them under Virginia's barrier crime laws. The bill allows local departments of social services to apply for waivers on behalf of qualified individuals who have non-federal barrier crimes, provided a thorough assessment determines the placement would be safe and in the child's best interest. The Department of Social Services retains final approval authority over all waiver applications.

Rationale for support:

Keeps children connected to family: Research consistently shows that children in kinship care experience better outcomes—greater stability, stronger cultural connections, and fewer behavioral problems—than those placed with non-relatives. This bill recognizes that an old, non-violent conviction shouldn't automatically prevent a loving grandmother or aunt from providing a safe home when local caseworkers determine placement is appropriate.

Protects child safety through rigorous oversight: HB632 maintains strong safeguards: federal barrier crimes (serious violent and sexual offenses) remain absolute disqualifiers with no waiver option. Local departments must conduct comprehensive assessments considering eight specific factors including rehabilitation evidence, time elapsed, and community input. The state Department of Social Services retains final approval authority, ensuring two levels of professional review before any waiver is granted.

Addresses Virginia's foster care capacity crisis: Virginia faces a chronic shortage of foster placements, forcing some children into institutional settings or placements far from their communities. Kinship care reduces state costs while improving outcomes. This measured reform expands options for caseworkers without compromising safety standards, giving them tools to make individualized decisions based on each child's unique circumstances.

SUCCESS

SUMMARY: Please sign HB632. This pro-family reform keeps children connected to relatives while maintaining robust safety protections, addressing Virginia's foster care challenges through common-sense flexibility that puts children's best interests first.

Bill Analysis**HB515****Patron:****Martinez****Recommendation:****SIGN****Sports betting; prohibition on use of credit cards****What does the bill do?**

HB515 prohibits sports betting operators in Virginia from accepting credit cards as a payment method for funding betting accounts. The bill maintains other funding methods including debit cards, bank transfers, and wire transfers, but specifically removes credit cards from the list of approved payment mechanisms.

Rationale for support:

Protects families from spiraling debt: Allowing sports betting on credit means Virginians can wager money they don't have, turning entertainment into a debt trap. This is particularly harmful to working families who may already be managing tight budgets and cannot afford to accumulate high-interest credit card debt from gambling losses.

Maintains responsible access while reducing harm: Sports bettors can still fund accounts through debit cards, bank transfers, and other methods. This simply ensures people are wagering their own money, not borrowed funds. This reasonable guardrail reduces the risk of problem gambling escalating into financial crisis without eliminating consumer choice.

Follows best practices from other states: Several states have implemented similar credit card restrictions in their sports betting frameworks as a consumer protection measure. Virginia would join a growing number of jurisdictions that recognize the difference between regulated gambling and facilitating debt-fueled addiction.

SUCCESS

SUMMARY: Please sign HB515. Prohibiting credit card funding for sports betting is a common-sense consumer protection that helps Virginia families avoid debt traps while preserving access to legal sports betting through responsible payment methods.

Bill Analysis**HB38****Patron:****Henson****Recommendation:****VETO****Public schools; mental health awareness training and instruction, requirements****What does the bill do?**

HB38 requires school boards to mandate mental health awareness training for all full-time teachers and other personnel at least once. The training must address needs of high-risk youth populations including those bereaved by suicide, with disabilities, experiencing homelessness, in foster care, or identifying as LGBTQ+. School boards may contract with various entities to provide the training, including via online modules.

Rationale for opposition:

Teachers aren't mental health professionals: This bill asks educators to identify signs of complex mental health conditions they are not qualified to diagnose or monitor. While well-intentioned, requiring teachers to screen for suicide bereavement, substance disorders, and other serious conditions without clinical training creates liability risks and may lead to misidentification or inappropriate interventions that harm vulnerable students.

Unfunded mandate diverts resources from instruction: The bill provides no funding for training implementation, leaving school divisions to absorb costs during a time of teacher shortages and budget constraints. More fundamentally, adding another compliance requirement pulls teachers away from their core mission: educating students. Virginia teachers already face expanding non-instructional duties that reduce classroom time.

School counselors and social workers are the right professionals: Schools should invest in hiring more trained mental health professionals—counselors, social workers, psychologists—rather than expecting classroom teachers to fill this gap. The funding required for this mandate would be better directed toward expanding access to qualified mental health staff who can properly support high-risk students.

NOT A MODERATE

SUMMARY: Please veto HB38. This unfunded mandate asks teachers to perform mental health screening they aren't qualified to provide, diverting time and resources from instruction when Virginia should instead invest in trained school counselors and social workers.

Bill Analysis**HB644****Patron:****Kent****Recommendation:****SIGN****FOIA Exemption for records of minors participating in state programs****What does the bill do?**

HB 644 adds a narrow exemption to Virginia's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to protect personal information of minors participating in state-run programs. The bill mirrors an existing protection already in place for minors in local and regional park programs, extending it to similar state-operated programs. The exemption maintains parental access rights and follows federal privacy standards for youth programs.

Rationale for support:

Protects vulnerable populations without undermining transparency: This bill safeguards children's privacy in state recreational and educational programs—a commonsense protection that parents across Virginia expect. The exemption is carefully tailored, maintaining parental access rights and applying the same standards already used successfully at the local level.

Bipartisan support for youth privacy: The bill passed with broad support and simply extends to state programs the same privacy protections that local parks have used for years without controversy. It aligns Virginia with federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act standards, ensuring consistency across government youth programs.

SUCCESS

SUMMARY: Please sign HB644. This is a straightforward privacy protection for children in state programs that enjoys bipartisan support and mirrors protections already working well at the local level.

Bill Analysis**HB211****Patron:****Gardner****Recommendation:****VETO**

Head start, etc., Head Start State Collaboration Office to develop for endorsement a report, etc.

What does the bill do?

HB211 requires the Head Start State Collaboration Office to develop a plan for universal access to Head Start and Early Head Start programs by the 2032-2033 school year, targeting 100% enrollment of eligible families. The bill sets interim goals of 60% access by 2030-2031 and 80% by 2031-2032, and directs the office to recommend funding requirements and implementation strategies to the General Assembly.

Rationale for opposition:


Families need options, not mandates: While well-intentioned, a universal access plan creates pressure toward mandatory enrollment and undermines families who choose home-based early learning. Pre-K education should remain optional, respecting parents' choice to provide nurturing and learning at home during critical early years.

Fiscal commitment before cost analysis: The bill asks the General Assembly to endorse a plan and fund universal access before understanding the true cost. Achieving 100% enrollment of eligible families would require billions in state funding over six years, competing with K-12 education, healthcare, and transportation needs. Sound budgeting requires cost estimates before policy commitments.

Implementation challenges are substantial: Expanding Head Start capacity requires recruiting thousands of qualified early childhood educators in a tight labor market, building or leasing facilities statewide, and navigating complex federal-state funding partnerships. Other states pursuing similar goals have faced chronic teacher shortages and facility gaps. A more realistic approach would pilot expansions in underserved communities before committing to universal mandates.

Federal program, state liability: Head Start is federally funded with federal standards. Committing Virginia to 100% access makes the Commonwealth dependent on continued federal appropriations while assuming responsibility for gaps. If federal funding falls short, Virginia taxpayers bear the cost or families lose promised services.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB 211. Universal pre-K access sounds appealing, but this bill commits Virginia to an unfunded mandate before determining costs, threatens parental choice in early childhood education, and creates unrealistic timelines that set families up for disappointment.

Bill Analysis**HB131****Patron:****Simon****Recommendation:****SIGN****Higher educational institutions; reasonable accommodations for religious beliefs, etc.****What does the bill do?**

HB131 requires Virginia's public colleges and universities to provide reasonable accommodations for students' religious observances regarding admissions, class attendance, exams, and assignments, provided such accommodations don't fundamentally alter academic requirements or create undue hardship. The bill also mandates that institutions establish grievance procedures in student and faculty handbooks for students who believe they've been unreasonably denied accommodations.

**Rationale for support:**

Protects fundamental First Amendment rights: This bill ensures students can practice their faith without academic penalty, codifying existing constitutional protections. Virginia's public universities serve an increasingly diverse student body whose religious practices shouldn't force them to choose between academic success and religious observance.

Balances individual rights with institutional needs: The 'reasonable accommodations' standard includes built-in protections against abuse—accommodations cannot fundamentally alter academic requirements or create undue hardship on faculty or staff. This framework respects academic integrity while protecting individual liberty, allowing universities to maintain standards while serving all students fairly.

Creates transparent, accessible process: By requiring grievance procedures in handbooks, the bill establishes clear accountability when accommodations are denied. Students and faculty alike benefit from knowing the process, reducing potential conflicts and litigation. This is good governance—transparent rules fairly applied.

Minimal fiscal impact, broad bipartisan support: This bill creates no new bureaucracy or unfunded mandates. Most institutions already provide religious accommodations informally; this simply requires consistent, documented policies. The bill passed the House with bipartisan backing, reflecting broad recognition that protecting religious freedom in higher education serves all Virginians.

SUMMARY: Please sign HB131. This bill protects students' constitutional right to religious practice while maintaining academic standards, advances fairness in higher education, and costs taxpayers nothing.

Bill Analysis**SB794****Patron:****Perry****Recommendation:****VETO****Virginia Health Care Protection Act; established, prohibition on extradition for certain crimes****What does the bill do?**

This bill provides strong legal protections for Virginia healthcare providers and patients engaging in abortion and reproductive care lawful in the state. It bars Virginia law enforcement from aiding out-of-state probes into “protected health care activity” and prohibits extradition for related charges unless the conduct is also criminal in Virginia. The bill requires sworn attestations (under penalty of perjury) for out-of-state subpoenas or extradition requests tied to protected care. It creates a private right of action with at least \$5,000 in damages against those pursuing “abusive litigation” against Virginia providers, allows the Attorney General to levy civil penalties up to \$10,000 per violation, and waives sovereign immunity for officials who breach these safeguards. Finally, it requires a 365-day investigation period before the Governor may act on healthcare-related extradition demands.

Rationale for opposition:**NOT A MODERATE**

Protects providers who harm women: This bill creates a dangerous accountability gap. If a Virginia abortion provider injures or kills a woman from North Carolina through negligence or malpractice, her family cannot seek justice. The bill blocks civil lawsuits, criminal investigations, and even wrongful death claims by families of women who die from botched procedures. No other medical specialty receives blanket immunity from accountability for patient harm.

Violates interstate cooperation principles: The Uniform Extradition Act has governed interstate criminal cooperation since 1936. This bill unilaterally withdraws Virginia from that framework for politically-favored actors, setting a precedent that other states will follow for their preferred industries. If Virginia won’t extradite abortion providers who harm patients, why should other states extradite gun dealers, polluters, or other actors Virginia wants prosecuted?

Constitutional concerns under Full Faith and Credit Clause: Article IV requires states to honor each other’s judicial proceedings. This bill instructs Virginia courts to ignore valid subpoenas and judgments from sister states, creating serious federalism conflicts that will lead to costly litigation Virginia cannot win. The Supreme Court has repeatedly struck down state attempts to nullify other states’ legal processes.

Exposes Virginia to massive liability: By shielding providers from accountability, Virginia becomes the destination for the abortion industry’s highest-risk practitioners. When women are injured, Virginia taxpayers will bear the cost through Medicaid, emergency care, and potential state liability for creating a safe haven for negligent providers. The bill’s 365-day delay provision for extradition requests will cost Virginia millions in legal fees defending an indefensible position.

SUMMARY: Please veto SB 794. No medical provider should receive blanket immunity from accountability when their negligence harms or kills patients, regardless of where those patients live. This bill protects bad actors at the expense of women’s safety and Virginia’s constitutional obligations.

Bill Analysis**SB568****Patron:**
Sturtevant**Recommendation:**
SIGN**Public elementary and secondary schools; use of school-issued devices for instructional purposes****What does the bill do?**

SB568 authorizes local school boards to adopt policies limiting daily instructional screen time for students in grades K-12, with flexibility to set different limits by grade level. The bill exempts students with IEPs or Section 504 Plans who require devices as accommodations, permits teachers to continue using digital instruction alongside non-screen methods, and requires school boards to post policies online and report annually to the Department of Education.

Rationale for support:

Empowers local control over education decisions: This bill exemplifies local governance by permitting—not mandating—school boards to set screen time policies based on their communities’ needs. It respects the principle that educational decisions are best made closest to students and families, not through state mandates.

Protects students with disabilities: The bill explicitly exempts students whose IEPs or Section 504 Plans require device access, ensuring that technology accommodations for students with disabilities cannot be limited. This protection prevents unintended harm to Virginia’s most vulnerable learners.

Advances evidence-based instruction: By encouraging substantial non-screen instruction while preserving digital tools where appropriate, this bill supports balanced pedagogy aligned with research on effective learning. It gives local educators flexibility to reduce excessive screen dependency without banning beneficial technology use.

Enhances parental transparency: Required public posting of screen time policies and annual reporting gives parents clear information about how their children’s schools use technology for instruction. This transparency supports parental engagement in education decisions affecting their children.

SUCCESS

SUMMARY: Please sign SB568. This bill empowers local school boards to address excessive instructional screen time while protecting students with disabilities and maintaining teacher flexibility—advancing both educational quality and local control without imposing state mandates.

*Bill Analysis**HB642/SB542**Patrons:**Krizek/Aird**Recommendation:**VETO*

Cannabis control; establishes framework for creation of retail marijuana market, penalties, report

What does the bill do?

HB642/SB542 establishes a comprehensive regulatory framework for retail marijuana sales in Virginia, including licensing requirements, taxation structure, quality controls, and criminal penalties. The bill creates a new state bureaucracy to oversee cultivation, processing, distribution, and retail sales of recreational cannabis products.



Rationale for opposition:

Public safety concerns remain unresolved: Virginia lacks reliable roadside testing for marijuana impairment, and studies show cannabis-related traffic fatalities have increased in states with legal retail markets. Law enforcement agencies across the Commonwealth have expressed concerns about their ability to identify and prosecute impaired drivers, putting all Virginians at risk on our roads.

Massive new regulatory apparatus: This bill creates an entirely new state agency with broad enforcement powers, adding permanent bureaucratic costs to the state budget. The implementation will require significant staffing, technology infrastructure, and enforcement mechanisms — all funded by taxpayers even before the first retail sale occurs. Experience from other states shows these costs consistently exceed initial projections.

Youth access and public health risks: Data from Colorado and Washington demonstrate increases in youth usage rates and emergency room visits following legalization of retail sales. Virginia's public health infrastructure is not prepared to handle the documented increases in cannabis use disorder, particularly among adolescents whose developing brains are most vulnerable to THC exposure.

Undermines workplace safety: Employers, particularly in manufacturing, construction, and transportation sectors, face new liability challenges and reduced ability to maintain drug-free workplaces. This places Virginia businesses at a competitive disadvantage and increases workers' compensation costs across industries that form the backbone of our economy.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB642/SB542. While proponents promise tax revenue and criminal justice reform, the unresolved public safety concerns, substantial new government bureaucracy, and documented public health harms in other states make this premature. Virginia should not repeat other states' mistakes.

Bill Analysis**HB653****Patron:****Kent****Recommendation:****SIGN**

Excused student absences; visitation of immediate family members on active duty military, etc.

What does the bill do?

HB653 allows students to take up to five excused absences to visit immediate family members who are active duty military and scheduled for deployment, on leave from deployment, or returning from deployment outside the United States. Division superintendents may grant additional excused absences at their discretion.

Rationale for support:

Supports military families without mandating new programs: This bill honors the sacrifices of Virginia's military families through a simple policy accommodation that requires no new funding, bureaucracy, or regulatory burden. It gives local superintendents discretion to grant additional absences when warranted.

Recognizes unique challenges of military life: Deployment cycles create limited windows for family connection that don't align with school calendars. Allowing excused absences for deployment-related visits respects the reality that military families face circumstances beyond their control and acknowledges the toll of military service on children.

Builds on existing excused absence framework: Virginia already excuses absences for religious observances and tribal nation pow wows. Extending similar respect to military families is consistent with current practice, creates no administrative complexity, and aligns with your commitment to supporting Virginia's robust military community.



SUMMARY: Please sign HB653. This simple, cost-free measure honors Virginia's military families by allowing students brief excused absences to connect with deploying or returning service members. It is a reasonable accommodation that respects both our Armed Forces and local control.

*Bill Analysis**SB137**Patrons:**Pekarsky**Recommendation:**VETO***Obstructing health care facility access; penalties.****What does the bill do?**

SB137 creates a new Class 1 misdemeanor criminal penalty for anyone who, by force, threat, or physical obstruction, intentionally interferes with another person obtaining or providing reproductive health services, or who damages a facility providing such services. The bill defines ‘reproductive health care facility’ specifically to include facilities providing reproductive health services such as pregnancy termination, and creates criminal liability for actions that restrict freedom of movement or place persons in reasonable apprehension of bodily harm.

Rationale for opposition:


Existing laws already prohibit these acts: Virginia’s criminal code already covers assault, battery, trespassing, property damage, threats, and disorderly conduct. Creating a separate, duplicative offense for the same conduct at specific facilities serves no law enforcement purpose and signals unequal protection under the law based on the type of medical facility involved.

Vague definitions invite selective enforcement: Terms like ‘interfere with,’ ‘intimidate,’ and ‘rendering passage unreasonably difficult’ are subjective and will lead to inconsistent application. What one officer considers ‘unreasonably difficult’ passage, another may view as lawful protest. This vagueness puts peaceful demonstrators at risk of arrest for constitutionally protected activity.

First Amendment concerns despite savings clause: While subsection C states nothing restricts message content, the bill criminalizes conduct based on the speaker’s purpose and the facility type. Courts have scrutinized similar buffer zone and targeted facility laws as content-based restrictions that fail strict scrutiny. The disclaimer doesn’t cure the constitutional problem.

Creates hierarchy of medical facilities: Why should obstructing access to a reproductive health facility carry different penalties than obstructing access to a cardiac clinic, dialysis center, or cancer treatment facility? Patients seeking all medical care deserve equal protection. This bill creates a special class of facility that signals some medical services warrant more government protection than others.

SUMMARY: Please veto SB 137. Virginia’s existing laws already criminalize assault, trespassing, threats, and property damage at all locations. Creating duplicative, facility-specific criminal penalties raises constitutional concerns and serves no compelling law enforcement need that current statutes don’t already address.

Bill Analysis**SB245****Patron:****Head****Recommendation:****SIGN****School boards; use of social media by schools, etc.****What does the bill do?**

SB 245 prohibits public schools from using social media platforms as the sole means of communication for extracurricular activities, while allowing superintendents to grant written exceptions when necessary. The enrolled version removed problematic provisions from the introduced text that would have mandated time limits on minors' social media use and imposed extensive privacy requirements on platforms — leaving only the narrow school communication prohibition.

Rationale for support:

Protects parental control over student communications: The bill ensures parents can monitor school-related communications by preventing coaches and activity sponsors from conducting all business through platforms parents may not access. This supports transparency and parental involvement in extracurricular programs without creating a blanket ban.

Maintains local flexibility through superintendent exceptions: Division superintendents retain authority to grant written exceptions when social media use is necessary to meet legitimate objectives, preserving local control while establishing a sensible default. This balances accountability with operational needs.

Advances student focus on core education: By reducing reliance on platforms designed for engagement rather than education, the bill supports your workforce development goals by encouraging use of more appropriate communication tools that don't distract from academic preparation and career readiness.

SUCCESS

SUMMARY: Please sign SB245. The enrolled version contains only a reasonable limit on school communication practices that protects parental involvement in extracurricular activities while preserving local control through superintendent exceptions.

Bill Analysis
HB1182/SB361

Patrons:
Thomas/Foy

Recommendation:
VETO

Health insurance; coverage for contraceptive drugs & devices, including over-the-counter.

What does the bill do?

HB1182/SB361 mandates that health insurance plans cover all FDA-approved contraceptive drugs and devices, including over-the-counter products, without cost-sharing. The bill requires coverage for a 12-month supply dispensed at one time and prohibits insurers from imposing prior authorization, step therapy, or other utilization management techniques on contraceptive services.

Rationale for opposition:

Conscience protections inadequately addressed: The bill's broad language encompasses drugs like ella and Plan B, which can prevent implantation of fertilized embryos—a mechanism many Virginians view as abortifacient rather than contraceptive. This creates potential conflicts with religious liberty and conscience rights for both employers and insurers without clear exemptions.

Premium increases will burden working families: Mandating coverage for over-the-counter products typically costing \$15-50 monthly adds administrative costs and shifts expenses from point-of-sale to premiums. Insurance mandates consistently drive up costs for all policyholders, including those who don't use these products. Generic oral contraceptives are already widely available at \$9-20 monthly.

Federal preemption concerns: This mandate may conflict with federal ERISA provisions governing self-insured employer plans, creating legal uncertainty and potential litigation costs. Similar state mandates have faced successful legal challenges on preemption grounds.

Market-based solutions work better: Virginia's robust insurance marketplace already offers numerous plans with contraceptive coverage for those who prioritize it. Mandates remove consumer choice and prevent actuarially fair pricing based on individual preferences and needs.

NOT A MODERATE

SUMMARY: Please veto SB361/HB1182. While expanding access to contraception is a worthy goal, this mandate's inclusion of potential abortifacients raises conscience concerns, will increase premiums for all Virginians, and restricts the market-based choice that better serves diverse consumer preferences.

Bill Analysis**HB6/SB596****Patrons:****Price/Foy****Recommendation:****AMEND****Contraception; establishes right to obtain, applicability, enforcement****What does the bill do?**

HB6/SB596 establishes a statutory right to obtain and use contraception in Virginia, with enforcement mechanisms. The bill creates a private right of action for individuals to challenge laws or policies that restrict access to contraceptive care.

NOT A MODERATE**Rationale for amendment:**

This bill should be amended to exclude children, and to provide clarity on the type of contraceptives covered.

Child safety must be paramount: As drafted, this bill would give children the automatic right to obtain contraceptives without any adult supervision, parental knowledge or consent. Even if you believe that there exist circumstances where children should have access to contraceptives, creating an absolute right would open the door to multiple abuse scenarios where adults might facilitate improper relationships with children.

Parental rights must be protected: Virginia law appropriately requires parental involvement in other medical decisions for minors. Parents are the fiercest champions of their own children and the best able to advocate for them if there is potential abuse. This bill would create a double standard whereby parents must be involved in more trivial medical decisions, while

Clear definitions prevent unintended consequences: The bill lacks precise definitions distinguishing contraceptives from abortifacients. Without clarity on which drugs and devices are covered, this creates legal uncertainty for providers and potential conflicts with conscience protections. The legislation should explicitly define ‘contraception’ to mean drugs or devices that prevent conception, not those that act after fertilization, ensuring the law advances its stated purpose without controversy over abortion-related pharmaceuticals.

Targeted amendments would make this bill workable:

- (1) Clarify that the right applies to adults or requires parental consent for minors, consistent with existing medical consent laws;
- (2) Define contraception explicitly to exclude abortifacients. These changes preserve the core goal of protecting access to birth control while respecting parental rights and avoiding definitional disputes that could lead to protracted litigation.
- (3) Limit “health care provider” to only a doctor or primary care physician. Health care providers such as a podiatrist or counselor, which are listed under U.S.C § 8.01-581.1, do not know the medical background of a young minor.
- (4) Restore language from SB596 that requires parental consent for voluntary sterilizations as required under §54.1-2969.

SUMMARY: Please request amendments to the conference report before signing. The bill’s goal of protecting contraceptive access requires three critical fixes: preserving parental consent requirements for minors, limiting health care provider to primary care doctors, and clearly defining contraception to exclude abortifacients.

*Bill Analysis**SB661**Patron:**Rouse**Recommendation:**VETO***Va. Small Business Economic Dev. Act; established, regulation and taxation of skill game machines****What does the bill do?**

SB661 establishes the Virginia Small Business Economic Development Act to regulate and tax skill game machines. The bill creates a regulatory framework for skill-based gaming devices, imposing state taxation and licensing requirements on operators while legalizing their operation in certain establishments.

Rationale for opposition:

Hurts the workers Virginia needs to protect most: So-called “skill games” disproportionately harm low-income Virginians who can least afford losses. Research shows these machines cluster in lower-income neighborhoods, effectively functioning as a regressive tax on working families. This directly conflicts with your commitment to keeping Virginia affordable for all families.

Devastates rural Virginia’s economic recovery: Communities with lower costs of living—precisely the rural and small-town areas you have pledged to support—will bear the brunt of the social and economic costs. Problem gambling rates increase measurably in areas with higher concentrations of these devices, straining local social services and reducing productive economic activity.

Makes Virginia less competitive for quality business investment: You campaigned on reclaiming Virginia’s rank as “America’s Top State for Business.” Legalizing predatory gaming devices sends the wrong signal to employers seeking to relocate to Virginia. No state has improved its business climate ranking by expanding gambling access; several have seen measurable declines in workforce participation and retail spending in affected areas.

Creates new regulatory burden and enforcement costs: This bill establishes yet another state regulatory apparatus requiring ongoing taxpayer funding for oversight, enforcement, and compliance monitoring. Local law enforcement will bear additional costs without adequate state support, and the promised tax revenue rarely materializes at projected levels once implementation and enforcement costs are deducted.

SUMMARY: Please veto SB661. This bill harms the working families and rural communities you pledged to protect, creates a regressive revenue scheme that preys on those who can least afford it, and undermines Virginia’s competitiveness as a destination for quality employers.

POLICY AREA:

Economy (taxation and fiscal policy)

LEAD ORGANIZATION:

Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy

CO-SIGNED:

Virginia Council

Virginia Institute Action

Virginia Tea Party



Thomas Jefferson Institute
For Public Policy

Dear Governor Spanberger,

Virginia's economic competitiveness depends on balanced policies that support workers without overburdening the small businesses and local governments that employ them. Several bills on your desk would impose costly new mandates that conflict with your own commitments to affordability, fiscal responsibility, and growing Virginia's economy.

We urge you to veto the following: Minimum Wage Increase with Unlimited Indexing (HB1), Prevailing Wage Mandate for Public Works (HB569/SB518), Employment; Paid Sick Leave (HB5/SB199) and Public Employee Collective Bargaining (HB1163/SB378). We would prefer that you also veto Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program (HB1207/SB2), but, understanding that it forms part of a campaign promise, we also suggest pragmatic amendments.

These bills share a common problem: they impose rigid, one-size-fits-all mandates on a state with vastly different regional economies. What works in Northern Virginia can force layoffs in Southwest Virginia. HB1's unlimited CPI indexing locks the Commonwealth into perpetual wage increases regardless of economic conditions. HB569/SB518 raises public project costs 10-20% while pricing small local contractors out of their own communities. HB1163/SB378 strips local elected officials of the budget flexibility they need to serve constituents. The compounded effect of HB1, HB1207/SB2, and HB5/SB199 will increase labor costs by 22.5% for workers on minimum wage. This will increase prices, destroy businesses, and cause significant job losses if you do not use your veto powers.

Sound economic policy requires balancing worker protections with fiscal reality. We would welcome the opportunity to work with your administration on approaches that support Virginia's workforce without undermining the small businesses that drive our economy.

Sincerely,

Derrick Max

President and CEO

Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy

Co-signed by:



Bill Analysis**HB1****Patron:****Ward****Recommendation:****VETO****Minimum wage; increases incrementally to \$15.00 per hour by January 1, 2028****What does the bill do?**

HB 1 raises Virginia's minimum wage to \$13.75 on January 1, 2027, and to \$15.00 on January 1, 2028. Beginning in 2029, the minimum wage would automatically increase annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U), with no limit on future increases.

Rationale for opposition:

This conflicts with your campaign commitment to small business support: While raising the minimum wage was a campaign goal, this bill's aggressive timeline and unlimited indexing mechanism will disproportionately harm the small businesses, including minority, women, and veteran-owned enterprises, that you pledged to support. Many small employers in rural Virginia operate on margins too thin to absorb a huge wage increase this quickly, particularly when combined with other cost pressures.

Regional economic diversity demands a more nuanced approach: Virginia's cost of living varies dramatically—from Northern Virginia's high-cost metros to Southwest Virginia's rural communities. A one-size-fits-all mandate ignores this reality. What works in Arlington may force layoffs in Abingdon. This bill treats Bristol the same as Fairfax, despite fundamentally different labor markets and business conditions.

Unlimited automatic increases create fiscal uncertainty: The post-2029 CPI indexing provision, with no cap or circuit breaker, locks Virginia into perpetual wage increases regardless of economic conditions. During recessions or slow-growth periods, businesses need flexibility—not mandated cost escalation. This undermines the reliable and predictable governance you promised businesses considering Virginia.

Job displacement will hurt the workers this bill aims to help: Economic research consistently shows that rapid minimum wage increases accelerate automation and reduce entry-level positions, particularly in retail, hospitality, and food service. Young workers, those with limited work histories, and individuals in rural areas with fewer alternative employers will face reduced job opportunities—the opposite of expanding economic opportunity.

NOT A MODERATE

SUMMARY: Please veto HB1. This bill's aggressive timeline, unlimited indexing, and one-size-fits-all approach will harm the small businesses you pledged to support and reduce job opportunities for the workers it intends to help. Please work with the legislature on a more gradual, regionally-sensitive approach that balances workers' needs with the needs of business and economic realities.

Bill Analysis
HB569/SB518

Patrons:
Feggans/Rouse

Recommendation:
VETO

Public works contracts; prevailing wage rate, definitions, civil penalty

What does the bill do?

HB569/SB518 requires public works contractors to pay workers a state-determined prevailing wage rate rather than market-based wages, and establishes civil penalties for non-compliance. The bill mandates wage floors based on government surveys for all state-funded construction projects.

Rationale for opposition:

NOT A MODERATE

Reduces competition and raises costs for taxpayers: Prevailing wage mandates reduce the pool of qualified bidders on public projects, particularly excluding smaller regional contractors who cannot afford artificially inflated wage requirements. Fewer bidders means higher costs—estimates from other states suggest 10-20% increases in project costs, directly contradicting your commitment to keeping Virginia affordable for families and businesses.

Hurts workers in lower cost-of-living regions: Southwest and Southside Virginia have dramatically different labor markets than Northern Virginia. A one-size-fits-all state wage mandate ignores regional economic realities, pricing local contractors out of their own communities' projects and forcing rural localities to pay urban wage rates they cannot afford. This concentrates work with large out-of-region firms rather than supporting local small businesses.

Creates bureaucratic complexity without improving outcomes: The bill requires government wage surveys, enforcement mechanisms, and penalty systems—adding administrative costs without evidence that market wages are insufficient. Your minimum wage increase to \$15/hour already establishes a meaningful floor. This bill layers artificial mandates atop market forces, reducing flexibility and efficiency in public construction.

Makes Virginia less competitive for projects and investment: Virginia's competitive advantage relies on being business-friendly while maintaining strong workforce protections. This bill tips the balance toward excessive regulation, potentially deterring companies considering Virginia for major facilities or headquarters.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB569/SB518. Government wage mandates reduce competition, raise costs for taxpayers, and hurt rural communities—undermining your commitment to affordability and pragmatic economic policy.

*Bill Analysis**HB1263/SB378**Patrons:**Tran/Surovell**Recommendation:**VETO*

Public employees; repeals existing prohibition on collective bargaining, etc.

What does the bill do?

HB1263/SB378 repeals Virginia's longstanding prohibition on collective bargaining for public employees, allowing state and local government workers to engage in collective negotiations over wages, benefits, and working conditions. The bill would establish a framework for union certification, contract negotiations, and potentially binding arbitration for public sector labor disputes.

Rationale for opposition:

Threatens fiscal stability of local governments: Localities across Virginia are already struggling with budget pressures. Binding arbitration removes local elected officials' ability to balance competing budget priorities, potentially forcing tax increases or service cuts to fund arbitrated settlements. Small counties and rural localities lack the administrative capacity and legal expertise to navigate complex labor negotiations, creating unfunded mandates.

Implementation timeline creates chaos during budget season: With no transition period or adequate funding mechanism, localities would face immediate pressure to establish labor relations frameworks while finalizing FY2027 budgets. This conflicts with SW your commitment to streamline government operations and lower costs for businesses and taxpayers.

Lacks essential safeguards found in other states: Unlike comparable legislation in neighboring states, this bill provides insufficient protections for essential services during labor disputes and fails to establish clear parameters for arbitration. Even states with strong labor traditions include sunset provisions, phased implementation, and fiscal impact guardrails that this bill omits.

Bipartisan concern from local elected officials: The Virginia Association of Counties and municipal leaders from both parties have raised serious operational concerns. Local governments need flexibility to respond to constituent needs, not rigid labor frameworks imposed without adequate preparation or resources.



SUMMARY: Please veto HB1263/SB378. While workers deserve fair treatment, this bill imposes unfunded mandates on struggling localities without adequate safeguards, threatening fiscal stability and effective governance across Virginia.

*Bill Analysis***HB1207/SB2***Patrons:***Sewell/Boysko***Recommendation:***AMEND/VETO****Paid family and medical leave insurance program; definitions, notice requirements, civil action****What does the bill do?**

HB1207/SB2 establishes a statewide paid family and medical leave insurance program in Virginia. The bill mandates that employers and employees contribute to a state-administered fund through payroll deductions, providing up to 12 weeks of paid leave for qualifying family or medical reasons. It also includes notice requirements for employers and allows for civil actions against non-compliant entities.

Rationale for amendment:**NOT A MODERATE**

Add practical guardrails to your workforce commitment: Although we would prefer a veto on this bill, we understand that this bill advances your campaign promise to establish paid family and medical leave. If you do intend to sign, we believe three amendments are needed to protect core public services.

(1) Exempt K-12 teachers. Teacher absences correlate with measurable learning loss, particularly in high-poverty schools where substitute quality varies widely. Unlike most professions, teaching operates on a fixed academic calendar where mid-year leave disrupts hundreds of students. An exemption for teachers would acknowledge this unique reality while preserving the program's benefits for workers without similar built-in time off.

(2) Require one year of continuous employment before benefit eligibility to prevent program abuse and ensure that employees' contributions precede claims.

(3) Raise the employer threshold to 30 employees, giving Virginia's smallest businesses—the backbone of job creation—protection from the problems this new mandate would cause them. A one-year employment requirement and higher firm-size threshold mirror best practices in other states while reducing administrative burden on small employers still recovering from pandemic-era challenges.

The fundamental problem with this bill is that it raises costs for businesses. Whereas large businesses may be able to cope with the financial stress, small businesses cannot. Adding these three amendments would balance your Affordability agenda with your campaign promise to establish paid family and medical leave.

SUMMARY: We would prefer this bill to be vetoed. However, if signed, we request that you first amend HB1207/SB2 by exempting K-12 teachers, requiring one year of employment before eligibility, and raising the employer threshold to 30 employees. These changes would at least provide some protections for students and small businesses.

Bill Analysis**HB5/SB199****Patrons:****Convirs-Fowler/Favola****Recommendation:****VETO****Employment; paid sick leave, civil penalties.****What does the bill do?**

HB5/SB199 mandates that all Virginia employers provide paid sick leave to employees, establishing minimum accrual rates, usage requirements, and enforcement mechanisms including civil penalties. The legislation creates new state-level oversight of workplace leave policies and imposes binding requirements on businesses of all sizes regarding how and when employees can use paid time off.

Rationale for opposition:**NOT A MODERATE**

The hidden tax on working Virginians: Paying one hour of sick leave for every 30 hours of employment adds 3.3% to the cost of hiring labor (or an additional 43 cents per hour to hire a worker on minimum wage). For businesses, especially small businesses, who have to pay overtime at 1.5 times to cover, this would be an effective tax of almost 5%. Taken together with the minimum wage increase (HB1) of an additional \$2.23/hour, and the costs of paid medical family leave (HB1207/SB2), such mandated paid leave programs function as a 22.5% labor tax when fully accounting for costs including temporary replacement workers, lost productivity, and administrative overhead.

These costs will be passed to consumers through higher prices, reduced to workers through lower base wages, or absorbed through reduced hiring. The families this bill aims to help will pay the price, in direct contradiction to your Affordability agenda

One-size-fits-all mandates hurt small businesses: A manufacturing plant, a tech startup, a family restaurant, and a home healthcare agency have vastly different operational needs and cash flow realities. This rigid mandate ignores those differences. Small businesses operating on thin margins will face impossible choices: reduce staff, cut wages, or raise prices in an already difficult economic environment.

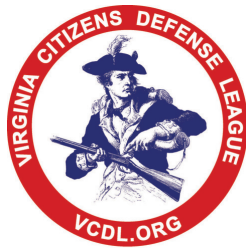
Virginia's competitive advantage at risk: Virginia competes with North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas for business investment and jobs. None of these states impose this type of mandate. When site selection consultants compare labor costs, this immediately makes Virginia less competitive. Your commitment to streamline business regulations and attract investment is undermined by adding costly new mandates.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB5/SB199. This rigid mandate that functions as a hidden tax on labor, disadvantages Virginia in interstate competition, and constrains small businesses. Design a thoughtful, sustainable program rather than signing a one-size-fits-all requirement that will harm the workers it intends to help.

POLICY AREA:
Second Amendment Rights

LEAD ORGANIZATION:
Virginia Citizens Defense League

CO-SIGNED:
Virginia Council
Virginia Institute Action
Virginia Tea Party



Dear Governor Spanberger,

Your Growing Virginia Plan emphasizes reliable and predictable governance, a competitive business climate, and protecting Virginians from unnecessary regulatory burdens. We write to you on that basis: not as a partisan appeal, but as a practical one.

Several firearms bills on your desk raise serious concerns about constitutional viability, enforcement practicality, and unintended economic consequences. Regardless of where one stands on gun policy, bills that face near-certain legal challenge under current Supreme Court precedent waste taxpayer resources and create regulatory uncertainty; not the stable governance Virginia businesses and families need!

Bills we recommend you VETO: Assault Firearms & Magazine Ban (HB217/SB749), Statewide Carry Prohibition (HB1524/SB727), Civil Liability for Firearm Industry Members (HB21/SB27), Concealed Carry Reciprocity Restrictions (SB115).

Why these bills warrant vetoes

Each of these bills, while addressing legitimate public safety concerns, carries significant practical and legal risks:

HB217/SB749 and **HB1524/SB727** ban or restrict firearms the U.S. Supreme Court has indicated are constitutionally protected under *Heller* and *Bruen*. Virginia would face immediate, costly litigation it is unlikely to win — diverting resources from evidence-based violence prevention programs that actually work.

HB21/SB27 creates open-ended civil liability for lawful businesses — including retailers selling routine accessories like holsters and gun cases — for criminal acts by third parties they cannot control. This directly conflicts with your commitment to making Virginia “America’s Top State for Business” through predictable governance, and would drive small retailers out of business or out of the Commonwealth entirely.

SB115 would trigger retaliatory loss of reciprocity agreements with other states, making traveling Virginians less safe and harming tourism-dependent small businesses — particularly in rural communities that rely on hunting and outdoor recreation revenue.

If the goal is reducing gun violence, we would welcome collaboration on evidence-based approaches that address root causes without inviting constitutional challenge or harming Virginia’s economy.

If you have any questions on any of these bills that we recommend you veto, please contact me directly at 804-874-8235, or president@vcdl.org.

Sincerely,

Philip Van Cleave

President, VCDL

Virginia Citizens Defense League



Bill Analysis
HB217/SB749

Patrons:
Helmer/Salim

Recommendation:
VETO

Assault firearms & certain ammunition feeding devices; purchase, sale, etc., prohibited, penalties

What does the bill do?

SB749 prohibits the importation, sale, manufacture, purchase, or transfer of firearms defined as ‘assault firearms’ based on cosmetic features (handguns with two features, long guns with one feature, not counting removable magazines). It caps magazine capacity at 15 rounds for new purchases, grandfathers existing higher-capacity magazines for possession only, and prohibits anyone under 21 from possessing these firearms. Violations are Class 1 misdemeanors, and conviction results in a three-year firearm prohibition.

NOT A MODERATE

Rationale for opposition:

Constitutional vulnerability threatens state resources: The U.S. Supreme Court in *DC v. Heller* and *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen* held that firearms “in common use” are protected by the Second Amendment. With over 20 million AR-15s and millions of magazines exceeding 15 rounds in civilian hands nationwide, these are among the most commonly owned firearms in America. This bill will face immediate legal challenge and likely injunction, wasting taxpayer resources on unwinnable litigation while creating regulatory uncertainty.

Cosmetic feature tests fail to address firearm function: The bill defines “assault firearms” based on cosmetic features like barrel shrouds, folding stocks, or threaded barrels—not lethality or rate of fire. Functionally identical firearms without these features remain legal, making enforcement arbitrary and creating perverse incentives for manufacturers to redesign cosmetics rather than meaningfully improve public safety. Virginia prosecutors and law enforcement have raised concerns about the workability of feature-based bans.

Grandfathering creates compliance nightmares: Pre-July 2026 magazines over 15 rounds can be possessed and carried but not sold or transferred. This creates an unenforceable regime where law enforcement cannot distinguish legal grandfathered magazines from illegal new ones, burdens gun owners with proof-of-purchase requirements, and guarantees Fourth Amendment litigation over searches and seizures. Other states with similar provisions have seen widespread noncompliance and selective enforcement.

Broad bipartisan opposition from law enforcement and sportsmen: The Virginia Sheriffs’ Association and rural law enforcement have expressed concerns about enforceability and rural constituents’ reliance on these firearms for legitimate sporting and self-defense purposes. County attorneys and commonwealth’s attorneys across the political spectrum have warned about practical implementation challenges and the criminalization of law-abiding Virginians.

SUMMARY: Please veto SB749. While well-intentioned, this bill bans firearms the Supreme Court has indicated are constitutionally protected, guarantees costly litigation Virginia cannot win, and creates unenforceable cosmetic-feature distinctions that fail to improve public safety while criminalizing millions of law-abiding gun owners.

*Bill Analysis**HB1524/SB727**Patrons:**McGuire/Jones**Recommendation:**VETO***Assault firearms, loaded; carrying in public areas prohibited in the Commonwealth, penalty****What does the bill do?**

SB727 expands the geographic scope of existing restrictions on carrying assault-style firearms in public from eleven specific localities to the entire Commonwealth. The bill also removes existing exemptions for concealed handgun permit holders and licensed security guards, who have been allowed to carry such firearms in public without incident for over a decade.

NOT A MODERATE**Rationale for opposition:**

Likely unconstitutional under current Supreme Court precedent: The U.S. Supreme Court in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen* (2022) ruled that citizens have a constitutional right to carry firearms in public for self-defense. This bill's blanket prohibition on commonly owned firearms in all public spaces lacks the historical precedent required under *Bruen* and invites costly litigation the Commonwealth will likely lose.

Removes exemptions for law-abiding permit holders without evidence of problems: Concealed handgun permit holders and licensed security guards have carried such firearms publicly for over a decade without causing legal issues. These individuals undergo background checks and, in the case of security guards, professional training. Eliminating these exemptions while maintaining them for government employees creates an arbitrary classification that punishes responsible gun owners.

Enforcement challenges and unintended consequences: The bill creates a patchwork of criminal liability for firearms that are lawfully owned and commonly used for self-defense and sporting purposes. Law-abiding Virginians traveling through the Commonwealth could inadvertently commit Class 1 misdemeanors, while the exemption for government personnel raises equal protection concerns.

Better alternatives exist: If the goal is enhanced public safety, evidence-based approaches like community violence intervention programs, and enhanced mental health services are more likely to reduce gun violence without infringing on constitutional rights or criminalizing law-abiding citizens.

SUMMARY: Please veto SB727. While gun safety is a legitimate concern, this bill is likely unconstitutional under *Bruen*, removes exemptions from responsible permit holders who have caused no problems, and invites expensive litigation the Commonwealth will lose.

Bill Analysis**HB21/SB27****Patrons:****Helmer/Foy****Recommendation:****VETO****Firearm industry members; definitions, standards of responsible conduct, civil liability****What does the bill do?**

SB27 creates new civil liability standards for firearm manufacturers, distributors, and sellers by defining violations of ‘reasonable controls’ as a public nuisance. The bill allows the Attorney General, local prosecutors, and private citizens to sue firearm industry members for damages, injunctions, and attorney fees if their products are used in crimes, even when intervening criminal actions occur. It applies not only to firearms but to all ‘firearm accessories’ including holsters, cases, slings, and butt stocks.

Rationale for opposition:**NOT A MODERATE**

Unprecedented liability for benign products: The bill holds manufacturers and sellers of even the most routine firearm accessories—gun cases, holsters, slings, butt stocks—liable if they fail to ‘properly’ prevent theft or criminal misuse. A store selling a holster has no reasonable way to determine if the buyer is prohibited or intends unlawful use. This is equivalent to holding an auto parts store liable when a customer who bought floor mats later drives drunk and kills someone.

Vague ‘reasonable controls’ standard invites litigation chaos: The bill requires ‘reasonable controls’ but provides no clear guidance on what procedures satisfy this standard. Every sale becomes potential grounds for a lawsuit. Small gun shops and accessory retailers—who lack large legal departments—face existential risk from both government enforcement and private lawsuits seeking punitive damages and attorney fees. This uncertainty will drive retailers out of business or out of Virginia entirely.

Conflicts with commitment to predictable business climate: This bill directly undermines your stated commitment to making Virginia ‘America’s Top State for Business’ through reliable and predictable governance. Creating open-ended liability for lawful commerce in constitutionally protected products—where manufacturers can be sued for unforeseeable criminal misuse by third parties—is the opposite of a predictable regulatory environment.

Constitutional concerns and federal preemption issues: Federal law already regulates firearms commerce extensively. This bill’s attempt to impose state-level liability for federally lawful conduct raises serious preemption questions. Additionally, holding manufacturers liable for third-party criminal acts, despite ‘intervening actions,’ contradicts established principles of proximate causation and may violate both state and federal constitutional protections.

SUMMARY: Please veto SB27. While gun violence prevention is a legitimate goal, this bill uses unfocused liability standards that would punish lawful businesses for criminal acts they cannot control, harm Virginia’s business climate, and face serious constitutional challenges—all while doing nothing to actually reduce gun violence.

*Bill Analysis**SB115**Patron:**Pekarsky**Recommendation:**VETO***Concealed handgun permits; reciprocity with other states****What does the bill do?**

SB115 restricts concealed carry reciprocity by requiring the State Police and Attorney General to evaluate whether other states' permit standards match Virginia's, potentially revoking existing reciprocity agreements by December 2026. The bill also prohibits Virginia residents from using out-of-state permits to carry concealed handguns in Virginia, even if they hold valid permits from other states.

Rationale for opposition:**NOT A MODERATE**

Reduces safety for traveling Virginians: Currently, Virginia honors permits from all states, enabling Virginians to carry in most other states through reciprocal agreements. This bill will cause other states to drop reciprocity with Virginia in retaliation, leaving law-abiding Virginia permit holders unable to carry for self-defense when traveling—making them less safe on the road.

Harms tourism and small business: Out-of-state permit holders have peacefully carried in Virginia for years without incident. Restricting their ability to carry will discourage gun owners from visiting the Commonwealth, hurting tourism revenue, hospitality businesses, and sporting goods retailers—particularly in rural areas that depend on hunting and outdoor recreation dollars.

A solution in search of a problem: There is no evidence that out-of-state permit holders pose a public safety threat in Virginia. This bill creates bureaucratic reviews and legal uncertainty for reciprocity agreements that are working well, while punishing responsible Virginia gun owners by limiting where they can exercise their Second Amendment rights across state lines.

Bipartisan opposition from gun owners and civil libertarians: Both Second Amendment advocates and civil liberties groups view this as an unjustified restriction on law-abiding citizens. The bill's sponsor may frame this as a safety measure, but the practical effect is to burden responsible permit holders while doing nothing to address actual gun violence.

SUMMARY: Please veto SB115. This bill makes traveling Virginians less safe by triggering loss of reciprocity agreements, harms tourism-dependent small businesses, and solves no actual public safety problem—while insulting law-abiding gun owners who have carried responsibly for years.

POLICY AREA:
Election Integrity

LEAD ORGANIZATION:
Virginia Fair Elections

CO-SIGNED:
Virginia Council
Virginia Institute Action
Virginia Tea Party



Dear Governor Spanberger,

Virginia's election laws should inspire confidence that every eligible voter can cast a ballot and every ballot is accurately counted. Unfortunately, nine bills on your desk would weaken election integrity safeguards, handcuff local election officials, and undermine public trust in our election systems.

Please veto:

Extended Absentee Ballot Receipt Deadline (HB82/SB58)
 Forced Election Certification Without Verification (HB78)
 Restricted Voter Roll Data Sources (HB111)
 Mandatory ERIC Participation & Data Sharing (HB215/SB57)
 Ranked Choice Voting for Local Elections (HB630/SB176)
 Private Election Funding Approval (HB639)
 National Popular Vote Compact (HB965/SB322)
 Elimination of Voter Registration Challenges (HB640)
 List Maintenance Omnibus (HB972)

These bills fall into three categories. First, several would make voter rolls less accurate by restricting the tools and data sources registrars use to maintain clean lists (HB111, HB215/SB57, HB640, HB972). Virginia already has robust safeguards against wrongful removals — these bills add bureaucratic barriers without evidence of misuse. Second, HB82/SB58 and HB78 would delay election results and force certification without verification, trading accuracy for speed in ways that erode rather than build public confidence. Third, HB630/SB176, HB639, and HB965/SB322 would fundamentally alter how Virginians vote and how elections are funded — changes of this magnitude deserve far more deliberation than they have received.

Virginia already offers 45 days of early voting and no-excuse absentee ballots. Our elections are accessible. What they need is greater integrity, not sweeping changes that solve problems that don't exist while creating new vulnerabilities.

We stand ready to provide additional information about these bills should it be desired. Please do not hesitate to reach out for additional information on these bills. You can reach me at 540-245-1776.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Taylor,
 Chair, Virginia Fair Elections
 Co-signed by:



Bill Analysis**HB82/SB58****Patrons:****McClure/Favola****Recommendation:****VETO**

Elections; deadline for receipt of absentee ballots and certain other information; 5:00 p.m. on the third day after the election.

What does the bill do?

HB82/SB58 extends the deadline for receipt of absentee ballots from the close of polls on Election Day to 5:00 p.m. on the third day after the election. This changes the current requirement that absentee ballots must be received by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day to be counted.

Rationale for opposition:


Delays election results and undermines public confidence: Extending the counting window by three days means voters, candidates, and communities won't know outcomes for potentially a week after polls close. In closely contested races, this prolonged uncertainty fuels conspiracy theories and erodes trust in election administration — exactly what we're trying to avoid in today's polarized environment.

Creates operational chaos for local election officials: Registrars would need to keep ballots in secure chain-of-custody for three additional days, maintain extended staffing, and delay certification timelines. Many smaller localities lack the resources for this extended operation. The Virginia Association of Registrars has raised concerns about implementation costs and logistical burdens.

No demonstrated need justifies this change: Virginia already offers 45 days of early voting, no-excuse absentee voting, and prepaid return postage. Voters have ample opportunity to cast ballots. Data shows the vast majority of absentee ballots arrive before Election Day. This bill solves a problem that doesn't exist while creating new vulnerabilities.

Post-election receipt invites legal challenges: Accepting ballots after Election Day (even if postmarked earlier) opens the door to litigation about postmark validity, chain of custody, and vote tampering allegations. This makes Virginia's elections less secure in practice, even if the intent is to be more inclusive.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB 82/SB 58. While expanding access sounds appealing, this bill trades election security and public confidence for a marginal increase in late-arriving ballots, creating operational chaos without demonstrated benefit.

Bill Analysis**HB78****Patron:****Price****Recommendation:****VETO**

Elections administration; duties of local electoral boards; certification of election; grounds for removal; civil penalty

What does the bill do?

HB78 mandates that local electoral boards certify election results as a ministerial duty with no discretion, imposing civil penalties up to \$1,000 and removal proceedings against board members who refuse or delay certification. The bill authorizes the State Board of Elections to intervene and complete certification if local boards fail to act, and eliminates local boards' ability to verify accuracy before certifying results.

Rationale for opposition:

NOT A MODERATE

Undermines local election oversight and accountability: Virginia's decentralized election system relies on local electoral boards to verify accuracy before certifying results. This bill strips that authority, making certification automatic regardless of unresolved discrepancies, equipment malfunctions, or counting errors. Local officials closest to the process should retain discretion to ensure accuracy.

Creates perverse incentives that could reduce voter confidence: By threatening \$1,000 fines and removal for any delay in certification, the bill pressures local boards to rush certification even when legitimate questions exist. This prioritizes speed over accuracy and could paradoxically reduce public trust in election integrity by forcing officials to certify results they haven't fully verified.

Centralizes power in ways that may violate separation of powers: Allowing the State Board to intervene and complete local certification duties represents an unprecedented transfer of authority from locally-appointed boards to a state agency. This raises constitutional concerns about the proper separation of state and local election administration responsibilities established by Virginia's Constitution.

Lacks safeguards for legitimate verification concerns: The bill provides no exception for circumstances where delayed certification is warranted—such as pending recounts, court orders, or risk-limiting audits. Other states that have attempted similar mandates have created exemptions for these scenarios. Without them, local officials face an impossible choice between legal compliance and election integrity.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB78. While well-intentioned, this bill undermines the local oversight that ensures accuracy in our elections, creates perverse incentives to rush certification, and centralizes power in ways that may reduce rather than enhance public confidence in election integrity.

*Bill Analysis**HB111**Patron:**Laufer**Recommendation:**VETO***Voter registration; cancellation of registration, sources of data****What does the bill do?**

HB111 restricts the sources of data that local registrars can use to maintain accurate voter rolls, prohibiting them from using any data source not explicitly approved by the State Board of Elections or a state agency, even when cancelling registrations of deceased voters or individuals who have moved. The bill requires registrars to reject information from credible third-party sources that could help maintain list accuracy.

Rationale for opposition:

Undermines election integrity by handcuffing local officials: Local registrars currently use multiple reliable sources—death records from funeral homes, address updates from utility companies, notifications from other states—to keep voter rolls current. This bill would force them to ignore credible information about deceased voters or residents who’ve moved, potentially leaving ineligible voters on the rolls and creating opportunities for administrative errors or fraud.

Creates operational chaos without improving accuracy: The blanket prohibition on third-party data sources means registrars couldn’t act on information they know to be reliable until it’s been processed through state bureaucracy. In practice, this delays necessary list maintenance, increases administrative costs, and makes voter rolls less accurate—the opposite of the bill’s stated intent.

Solves a problem that doesn’t exist: Virginia’s current system already includes robust safeguards. Voters receive notice before cancellation and can challenge erroneous removals. There’s no evidence that local registrars are abusing their authority or using unreliable data sources. This bill adds red tape without addressing any documented problem.

Bipartisan opposition from election administrators: Local registrars have expressed concerns that this restriction would make their jobs harder and voter rolls less accurate. When the professionals who run our elections warn that a bill will backfire, we should listen.



SUMMARY: Please veto HB 111. Well-intentioned efforts to protect voters shouldn’t handcuff local election officials from using reliable information to maintain accurate rolls, and this bill would make our voter lists less accurate while creating unnecessary bureaucratic barriers.

Bill Analysis**HB215/SB57****Patrons:****Henson, Van Valkenburg****Recommendation:****VETO****Voter registration; list maintenance, third-party data exchanges approved by State Bd. of Elections****What does the bill do?**

HB215/SB57 mandates that Virginia join the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a nonprofit multi-state voter data consortium, and requires a two-thirds vote by the State Board of Elections to approve or modify any third-party voter data exchange agreements. The bill also requires the Department of Elections to share statewide DMV customer data, including information on minors, with ERIC without individual consent or opt-out provisions.

NOT A MODERATE**Rationale for opposition:**

Privacy concerns for Virginia families: The mandatory data-sharing requirement forces the Commonwealth to transmit DMV records of all Virginians—including minors who cannot vote—to a third-party nonprofit without individual consent or parental approval. This creates unnecessary privacy risks for families and bypasses basic data protection standards that Virginians expect from their government.

Codifying a single vendor subverts procurement oversight: By writing one specific nonprofit organization into law, this bill circumvents standard competitive procurement processes designed to ensure taxpayers get the best value and most effective services. The Department of Planning and Budget estimates costs exceeding \$500,000 in the first two years and \$200,000 annually thereafter—with no mechanism to evaluate alternatives or renegotiate terms.

Supermajority requirement creates administrative gridlock: Requiring a two-thirds vote of the State Board for data agreements—rather than a simple majority—invites bureaucratic delays and potential partisan obstruction of routine list maintenance activities. This could prevent timely updates to voter rolls, risking the very inaccuracies the bill seeks to prevent.

Bipartisan concerns about ERIC's transparency: As a nonprofit, ERIC operates with limited government oversight, and many of its list maintenance reports are restricted from public disclosure in apparent violation of National Voter Registration Act requirements. Election officials from both parties in multiple states have raised concerns about ERIC's governance structure and data practices.

SUMMARY: Please VETO HB215/SB57. While accurate voter rolls are essential, this bill mandates participation in a single nonprofit vendor, exposes Virginians' personal data—including minors' information—without consent, and creates bureaucratic barriers that could delay critical list maintenance.

Bill Analysis**HB630/SB176****Patrons:****Callsen/Van Valkenburg****Recommendation:****VETO****Elections; ranked choice voting; locally elected offices, report****What does the bill do?**

HB630/SB176 authorizes local governments to implement ranked choice voting (RCV) for locally elected offices and requires a report on implementation. Under RCV, voters rank candidates in order of preference, and if no candidate receives a majority of first-choice votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and their supporters' second choices are redistributed until someone achieves a majority.

Rationale for opposition:**NOT A MODERATE**

Ballot exhaustion disenfranchises voters: RCV often produces winners supported by fewer voters than traditional runoffs. When ballots don't include rankings for remaining candidates, they are 'exhausted' and discarded. Studies show exhaustion rates of 10-25%, meaning the 'majority winner' may actually receive votes from only 40-45% of participating voters — less democratic than the current system.

Implementation costs strain local budgets: RCV requires expensive new voting equipment, extensive voter education campaigns, and staff retraining. Rural and small localities will face disproportionate costs per voter. At a time when localities need resources for schools, public safety, and infrastructure, mandating complex election system changes diverts scarce funds.

Voter confusion reduces participation: Evidence from jurisdictions using RCV shows increased rates of incomplete or spoiled ballots, particularly among elderly voters, voters with limited English proficiency, and those with less formal education. Making voting more complicated reduces turnout among the very populations we should be empowering.

Bipartisan concerns about transparency: Election administrators from both parties have raised concerns that RCV's multi-round tabulation process is harder for voters to observe and verify, potentially undermining public confidence in results. In an era of election denialism, we should make elections more transparent, not less.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB630/SB176. Despite good intentions, ranked choice voting creates ballot exhaustion that disenfranchises voters, imposes significant costs on cash-strapped localities, and complicates elections in ways that reduce participation among vulnerable populations.

Bill Analysis**HB639****Patron:****Krizek****Recommendation:****VETO****Elections; administration; acceptance of certain gifts and funding; approval required****What does the bill do?**

HB639 requires a two-thirds supermajority vote from either the State Board of Elections or local governing bodies before election officials can accept private donations exceeding \$1,000 for voter education, registration programs, or other election expenses. The bill exempts polling place facilities and federal grants that include private funding.

Rationale for opposition:

Private election funding undermines public trust: When billionaires and partisan nonprofits fund election administration, voters reasonably question whether the process is neutral. The 2020 experience with heavily partisan private grants funneled through select jurisdictions demonstrated how private money can create unequal access and erode confidence in election integrity.

Loophole defeats the purpose: The federal grant exemption allows unlimited private money to flow through federal pass-throughs, completely undermining the bill's stated intent. This provision exposes the bill as political symbolism rather than genuine reform—it appears to restrict private influence while preserving the very channels most likely to be exploited.

SUCCESS

SUMMARY: If private election funding is genuinely problematic, it should be prohibited. There's no benefit to making it contingent on supermajority approval while leaving federal backdoors wide open.

Bill Analysis**HB965/SB322****Patrons:****Price/Ebbin****Recommendation:****VETO****Presidential electors; National Popular Vote Compact****What does the bill do?**

HB965/SB322 would enter Virginia into the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, an agreement among participating states to award their electoral votes to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes nationally, regardless of the outcome in Virginia. The compact would take effect only when states representing a majority of electoral votes (270) have joined.

Rationale for opposition:


Disenfranchises Virginia voters: This compact could force Virginia's electors to vote against the choice of Virginia's own citizens. If Virginians vote 55-45 for one candidate, but the national popular vote goes the other way, our electoral votes would go to the candidate Virginia voters rejected. This fundamentally undermines the principle that state officials should represent their own constituents.

Creates serious legal and constitutional vulnerabilities: The compact faces significant constitutional challenges under the Compact Clause, which requires congressional consent for interstate agreements that increase state political power relative to federal authority. Virginia would be entering a legally uncertain arrangement that could be invalidated by courts or Congress, potentially throwing a presidential election into chaos. Our electoral votes could be contested or voided entirely.

Eliminates Virginia's voice in presidential elections: Under this system, Virginia would lose its importance as a battleground state. Candidates would have little incentive to campaign in Virginia or address issues important to Virginians. They would focus exclusively on high-population centers in California, Texas, New York, and Florida. Virginia's unique concerns—military families, agricultural communities, coastal resilience—would be ignored in favor of issues that drive turnout in megacities.

Surrenders state sovereignty to other states' election systems: Virginia would be binding its electoral votes based on vote counts certified by other states over which we have no oversight. Different states have different voting rules, ballot access requirements, recount procedures, and verification standards. Virginia would be trusting Florida's election administration, Texas's ballot counting, and every other state's processes to determine how Virginia's electoral votes are cast.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB965/SB322. Virginians deserve to have their votes count in presidential elections, not be overruled by the national popular vote, and Virginia should not surrender its constitutional authority to determine its own electors based on other states' election systems.

Bill Analysis**HB640****Patron:****Krizek****Recommendation:****VETO****Elections; challenges to a voter or voter's registration****What does the bill do?**

HB640 eliminates multiple statutory provisions that allow voters and election officials to challenge potentially invalid voter registrations, including challenges at polling places and procedures for reviewing registration accuracy. The bill repeals §§ 24.2-429, 24.2-430, 24.2-432, 24.2-433, and 24.2-651, which currently provide mechanisms for maintaining accurate voter rolls through citizen oversight and timely challenges. The bill also prohibits filing petitions challenging registrations within 60 days of any primary or general election.

NOT A MODERATE**Rationale for opposition:**

Voter confidence requires transparent safeguards: Eliminating challenge mechanisms removes critical checks and balances that ensure only eligible voters participate in elections. Both Democratic and Republican voters benefit from systems that prevent registration errors, duplicate registrations, and ineligible voters from diluting legitimate ballots. These safeguards protect election integrity without preventing any qualified voter from casting a ballot.

Creates a 60-day window vulnerable to manipulation: The bill prohibits any registration challenges in the 60 days before elections—precisely when fraudulent registrations are most likely to occur and when verification is most critical. This creates a strategic window that bad actors could exploit, undermining public confidence in election outcomes. Other states have faced litigation over similar blackout periods.

Removes bipartisan oversight mechanisms: Current law allows any three qualified voters—regardless of party—to challenge suspicious registrations. A court challenge will create a much greater obstacle. By repealing these provisions, the bill concentrates power in administrative hands and eliminates citizen participation in maintaining accurate voter rolls, a change that should concern voters across the political spectrum.

Conflicts with federal law and best practices: The Help America Vote Act requires states to maintain accurate voter registration lists. Eliminating challenge procedures may conflict with federal requirements and expose Virginia to litigation. Most states maintain robust challenge procedures precisely because they strengthen, rather than weaken, electoral integrity and public trust.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB640. Eliminating voter challenge mechanisms removes critical safeguards that protect election integrity and voter confidence, while creating a 60-day vulnerability window that could be exploited to undermine free and fair elections.

Bill Analysis**HB972****Patron:****Price****Recommendation:****VETO****List maintenance omnibus****What does the bill do?**

HB972 restricts Virginia's Department of Elections from using the federal SAVE (Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements) database for voter registration verification. The bill prohibits ELECT from using SAVE data as the sole reason for rejecting registrations, prevents batch uploading of voter lists into SAVE for comparison, and bars ELECT from sharing voter lists with the Department of Homeland Security. It also repeals several existing list maintenance provisions that allow cross-checking voter rolls against federal databases.

Rationale for opposition:**NOT A MODERATE**

Weakens election integrity safeguards: SAVE is a federal system specifically designed to verify citizenship and immigration status. Prohibiting its use for voter registration purposes eliminates one of the few reliable tools registrars have to verify eligibility. While opponents claim this prevents discrimination, it actually removes a neutral, objective verification method that protects all voters by ensuring rolls are accurate.

Creates operational barriers for local registrars: By banning batch comparisons and data sharing with DHS, this bill forces registrars into inefficient, time-consuming manual verification processes. Local election officials need streamlined tools to maintain accurate voter lists. This legislation adds bureaucratic hurdles that will slow list maintenance and increase administrative costs without improving accuracy or voter access.

Bipartisan concerns about voter roll accuracy: Maintaining clean, accurate voter rolls must not be allowed to become a partisan issue—both parties benefit from public confidence in election integrity. Multiple states use federal databases for verification purposes without voter suppression. This bill solves a problem that doesn't exist while creating real risks: outdated rolls with ineligible voters, increased opportunities for errors, and diminished public trust in election administration.

No evidence of misuse to justify restrictions: The bill provides no documentation that Virginia has misused SAVE data or that current verification methods have caused wrongful rejections. Removing effective tools based on hypothetical harms while ignoring the concrete benefits of accurate voter lists is poor policy. Election administrators need more resources and better data, not fewer verification options.

SUMMARY: Please veto HB972. This bill removes important verification tools from election administrators without evidence of misuse, making it harder to maintain accurate voter rolls and potentially undermining public confidence in election integrity—a bipartisan concern that transcends partisan politics.



AFP Virginia is the Commonwealth's leading grassroots advocacy organization, proudly fighting for lower taxes, less government overreach, more educational freedom for families, and policies that unleash Virginia's energy abundance and economic potential. From the Blue Ridge Mountains to Virginia Beach, our activists build movements for policies that enable the American Dream to be felt by every Virginian. Led by everyday citizens like you, we've helped secure historic tax reforms, expand health care choice, and remove burdensome regulations that hold small businesses back.

<https://va.americansforprosperity.org/>



The Family Foundation is Virginia's largest and oldest pro-family advocacy organization. We promote Biblical principles in public policy to strengthen families, protect life, marriage, parental rights, and religious freedom at the state and local levels. We provide a voice for families through education, grassroots mobilization, legislative engagement, and legal support.

<https://www.familyfoundation.org/>



Thomas Jefferson Institute is an independent, nonpartisan research and education organization dedicated to crafting and promoting public policy solutions that advance prosperity and opportunity for all Virginians. Through in-depth research, targeted messaging, and strategic networking, we emphasize lowering taxes, affordable and reliable energy, education reforms that empower parents, and limited government.

Note: Since the original publication, TJI has merged with the Yorktown Foundation to form the Jefferson forum.

<https://www.thomasjeffersoninst.org/>



Virginia Citizens Defense League (VCDL) is a non-profit, non-partisan, grassroots organization committed to championing the fundamental human right to self-defense and defending Virginians' Second Amendment rights. We advocate for responsible firearm ownership, monitor legislation, and mobilize citizens to preserve these freedoms for future generations.

<https://www.vcdl.org/>



Virginia Council is composed of Virginians dedicated to preserving the traditions that define Virginia and advancing civil discourse and the rule of law to ensure all citizens prosper. We advance civil discourse, the rule of law, truthful history based on evidence, and policies that promote opportunity, tradition, and prosperity across the Commonwealth.

<https://thevirginiacouncil.org/>



Virginia Education Opportunity Alliance (VEOA) is a statewide grassroots coalition committed to advancing parental rights and education opportunities. We promote transparency in public schools, empower parents to make informed decisions, and support innovative options that fit each child's unique learning needs.

<https://veoa.org/>



Virginia Fair Elections (VFE) is a dynamic coalition established in 2021, dedicated to securing free and fair elections across Virginia. We work through education, grassroots participation, local task forces, poll watcher training, and advocacy for secure election procedures. Our motto—"Easy to Vote, Hard to Cheat"—guides efforts to ensure election integrity and trustworthiness at every level.

<https://vafairelections.org/>



Virginia Institute for Public Policy is an independent, nonpartisan education and research organization promoting individual liberty, free enterprise, and constitutionally limited government. We conduct research, offer policy recommendations, and advocate for solutions in areas like healthcare, education, and economic freedom to foster opportunity and growth in Virginia.

<https://virginiainstitute.org/>



Virginia Institute Action is an independent, nonpartisan advocacy organization and the policy action arm affiliated with the Virginia Institute for Public Policy. We advance legislative initiatives that promote individual opportunity, economic prosperity, free-market principles, limited government, lower taxes, deregulation, education reform including school choice, healthcare reform, and protections for individual liberties.

<https://virginiaaction.org/>



The Virginia Tea Party is a politically non-partisan statewide coalition committed to the principles of the Founding Fathers and the U.S. Constitution. We encourage and facilitate citizen participation in the political process to empower all Virginians with a voice and influence in demanding limited, constitutional governance.

<https://vatp.org/>



Yorktown Foundation is committed to preserving Virginia's heritage, promoting free enterprise, and advancing limited government. Our mission focuses on influencing public policy through research and education to achieve results in the Virginia General Assembly that respect individual liberty, responsibility, free markets, and enterprise.

Note: Since the original publication, the Yorktown Foundation has merged with the Thomas Jefferson Institute to form the Jefferson forum.

<https://www.yorktownfoundation.org/>

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