



2024 GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION

WEEK #4 SESSION REPORT

February 3, 2024

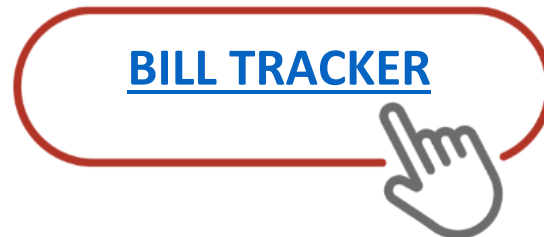
Prepared for:



greater
williamsburg
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONCLUDES WEEK #4

To date, of the 2,598 bills and resolutions introduced, 265 have been passed in the House and 265 have been passed in the Senate. The legislature has chosen not to advance 180 bills, continued 149 bills to the 2025 session, and 2,140 are still pending action. As the session proceeds, we will continue to update our bill tracker with the most up-to-date information. Click below for the latest updates.



As the 4th week of the Virginia General Assembly session concludes, the focus continues to be primarily on moving legislation through subcommittees and full committees. In the coming 10 days, we'll see a shift to action on the floor of the House and the Senate for the legislation that is advanced at the committee level. In addition, we expect to also see more action on legislation with a fiscal impact and budget amendments in the coming week.

The deadline for each body to complete action on the bills in the body of origin, with the exception of the Budget bill, is February 13, otherwise known as "crossover." Following that, on Sunday, February 18, the money committees will vote on their respective budgets.

Between now and then, we expect to be in meetings that begin early in the morning and that continue well into the evenings. Updates to come as we have them. In the meantime, below is some other news from the past week.

BILL TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR TRANSPORTATION SAFETY MEASURES PASSED SENATE

[SB 282](#) (Roem) will require that, beginning in 2025, 10% of any surplus revenues be deposited to the Virginia Highway Safety Improvement Program for the purpose of funding projects consistent with objectives of the Program.

Sen. Roem expressed during the hearing for her bill, that the goal is to make sure there are dedicated funds to make infrastructure improvements that are focused on improving public safety without raising taxes and other fees.

SB 282 was passed by the members from the Transportation Committee and was re-referred to Finance.

LEGISLATION PROPOSED TO IMPROVE STUDENT LITERACY RATES

Members of the General Assembly have proposed both legislation and budget amendments to improve literacy rates for students in Virginia, a key priority of the Greater Williamsburg Chamber.

[HB 624](#) (Rasoul) seeks to place parameters on the Standards of Quality funding calculations performed by the Department of Education, including:

- Requiring the Department to include facilities staff and transportation staff salaries in the calculation of any cost of competing adjustment to salaries for instructional and support positions that is provided as part of the state share of basic aid pursuant to the general appropriation act;
- Requiring the Department to include an estimate the cost of such a compensation supplement for facilities staff;
- Prohibiting the Department from applying any cap on inflation rate adjustments to non-personal cost categories during the biennial process of rebenchmarking the direct aid to public education budget; and
- Requiring the Department to utilize a three-year average of the most recently available data to calculate the composite index of local ability-to-pay for each school division.

The bill also proposes the following changes:

- Includes in the definition of "support services position" any central office clerical position that is not otherwise set forth in such definition.
- Requires a per-pupil Standards of Quality funding add-on to be provided for English language learner and special education students.
- Requires state funding to be provided to cover the actual average school division cost to educate children with disabilities.
- Establishes the At-Risk Program, defined in the bill as any state funding provided for programs of prevention, intervention, or remediation or pursuant to the at-risk add-on for the purpose of supporting programs for students who are educationally at risk.

HB 624 was reported unanimously by the House Education Committee and was referred to the House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday.

Proposed [Item 288 #9h](#) (Carr) seeks to provide funding and language directing the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) to contract with Reach Out and Read to create a pilot program for pediatric primary care providers to implement an evidence-based model that promotes early literacy and parental bonding as part of routine pediatric primary care visits. Language in the budget amendments provides DMAS with the authority to amend the CHIP/Title XXI State Plan to implement this program.

Sen. Barbara Favola has introduced two proposed budget amendments related to the improvement of student literacy rates.

- [Item 125 #3s](#) provides direct aid to K-3 reading intervention services from the Lottery Proceeds Fund to local school divisions to provide early reading intervention services to students in grades kindergarten through three who demonstrate deficiencies based on their individual performance on diagnostic tests which have been approved by the Department of Education.
- [Item 124 #38s](#) provides \$3.5 million in general fund dollars each year to support the implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act.

Noted in previous reports, [HB 647](#) (Coyner) and [SB 624](#) (Lucas) seek to clarify several provisions of the Virginia Literacy Act, which was enacted during the 2022 General Assembly session.

This legislation also seeks to:

- Clarify that the term "evidence-based literacy instruction" does not include practices that instruct students to gain meaning from print with three-cueing, which includes semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic cues; meaning, structure, and visual cues; or (visual memory for word recognition);

- Removes the option to use a literacy screener approved by the Department of Education (DOE);
- Requires DOE to develop a list of core literacy curricula for students in kindergarten through grade five and supplemental instruction practices and programs and intervention programs for students in kindergarten through grade eight that consist of evidence-based literacy instruction aligned with science-based reading research; and
- Requires each division literacy plan to address how the local school board will align core reading and literacy curriculum for students in kindergarten through grade five and screening, supplemental instruction, and interventions for students in kindergarten through grade eight with evidence-based literacy instruction practices aligned with science-based reading research.

This past week, HB 647 was passed in the House by a unanimous block vote and has already been referred to the Senate Committee on Education and Health. There is an accompanying proposed budget amendment in the House, [Item 117 #30h](#) (Coyner), which provides \$5.7 million the first year and \$3.7 million the second year from the general fund for the development and implementation of a literacy screener to accomplish provisions of the bill.

SB 624 was reported unanimously by the members of the Senate Education and Health Committee on Thursday.

As this legislation and related budget amendments move through the process, further updates will be provided.

HOUSE RECYCLING BILLS MEET MIXED FATES

As previously reported, the Greater Williamsburg Chamber joined the Coalition for Consumer Choices, a coalition that focuses on successful recycling of plastics and opposes the banning of necessary or convenient consumer products needed for our strong economy.

As a member of the Coalition, the Chamber supports [HB 316](#) (Bulova) and [HB 1227](#) (Willett).

As a refresher, HB 316 creates the Virginia Recycling Development Center to further the development of markets and processing for recycled commodities and products.

This bill also creates the Virginia Recycling Development Center Advisory Committee, establishes reporting requirements, and creates the Recycling Market Development Fund to be used to fund the Center. Last week, HB 316 advanced this week by a vote of 10-Y 0-N from the Natural Resources Subcommittee and the recommendation was made to re-refer the bill to the House Appropriations Committee.

The bill's patron, Del. David Bulova, also introduced a budget amendment, which will provide \$750,000 each year to accomplish what is described in the bill ([Item 113 #5h](#)).

Unfortunately, HB 1227, which would have established a Recycling Infrastructure Improvement Fund, failed to advance in the Commerce Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday.

Further updates on the Coalition's bills to come as the session proceeds.

LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO PROMOTE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ADVANCES IN THE SENATE

As mentioned in last week's report, policymakers have proposed a number of bills this session to help foster the integration of career and technical education pathways to connect K-12 and post-secondary education with practical training to promote work-based learning opportunities.

Since last week's report, [SB 27](#) (Stanley), which seeks to establish the Public School Trades Incentive Program and Fund, was passed by the Senate by a unanimous vote on Friday.

Both [HB 1009](#) (Lovejoy) and [HB 1345](#) (Anthony), which seek to require the Board of Education to develop a comprehensive list of industry-recognized workforce credentials for students, have not been heard in their respective committees. More updates to come as this legislation moves through the process.

EXPANSION OF VIRGINIA'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT PROGRAM ADVANCES IN THE HOUSE

Highlighted in last week's report, the Greater Williamsburg Chamber joined a number of other chambers, business organizations, and localities in support of expanding the Virginia Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program.

[HB 960](#) (Lopez) and [SB 556](#) (Williams Graves) seek to increase from \$5 million to \$10 million the maximum amount of the tax credit that may be claimed by a taxpayer in any taxable year, beginning in taxable year 2024. This legislation also adds a provision in cases where a taxpayer incurs expenses for the rehabilitation of a certified historic structure in a locality that has a designated enterprise zone, they may claim up to an additional \$10 million in any taxable year.

This past week, HB 960 was passed by the members of the House Finance Committee and referred to the House Appropriations Committee. The Senate version has not yet been heard in the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee but is expected to be heard next week.

Both historic rehabilitation tax credit bills have accompanying budget amendments, [Item 3-5.17 #1h](#) (Lopez) and [Item 0 #10s](#) (Williams Graves), to conform the existing budget language to the provisions of the bills, which propose to increase the individual taxpayer cap from \$5 million to \$10 million.

Other highlights from week #4 are provided below.

ATTORNEY GENERAL MIYARES ANNOUNCES \$350M SETTLEMENT WITH PUBLICIS FOR OPIOID MARKETING

(February 1, 2024) Attorney General Jason Miyares announced a \$350 million national settlement with Publicis Health to resolve investigations into the global marketing and communications firm's role in the prescription opioid crisis.

In agreeing to the terms of the settlement, Publicis recognized the harm its conduct caused, and that the agreement will provide communities hit the hardest by the opioid epidemic more financial support for treatment and recovery, establishing lasting infrastructure, and, ultimately, saving lives. The company will also disclose on a public website thousands of internal documents detailing its work for opioid companies,

like Purdue Pharma, and will stop accepting client work related to opioid-based Schedule II or Schedule III controlled substances.

“The opioid epidemic has impacted every community in Virginia, destroying relationships and tearing apart families. Although it is impossible to quantify the value of the lives lost, I’m glad that my office has secured \$7.82 million to go towards education, prevention, and recovery efforts,” said Attorney General Miyares.

Today’s filings illustrate how Publicis’ work contributed to the crisis by helping Purdue Pharma and other opioid manufacturers market and sell opioids. Court documents detail how Publicis acted as Purdue’s agency of record for all its branded opioid drugs, including OxyContin, and even developed sales tactics relying on farming data from private recordings of personal health-related in-office conversations between patients and providers. The company was also instrumental in Purdue’s decision to market OxyContin to providers on patient’s electronic health records.

To date, Virginia has secured over \$1 billion in legal settlements with drug manufacturers and others for their roles in the crisis.

Colorado led the multistate group during this investigation and was joined on an executive committee by the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Idaho, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, and Vermont. They are joined by the attorneys general from all states, territories, and the District of Columbia.

GOVERNOR GLENN YOUNGKIN ANNOUNCES RELEASE OF VIRGINIA PERMIT TRANSPARENCY WEBSITE

(January 31, 2024) Governor Glenn Youngkin announced the release of the Virginia Permit Transparency (VPT) [website](#) to bring increased transparency and efficiency to the Commonwealth's permitting processes.

“Our administration is committed to increasing transparency in the permitting process. The Virginia Permit Transparency website allows Virginia to continue to lead the country by bringing greater visibility to the regulatory and permitting processes,” said Governor Glenn Youngkin. “Virginia is demonstrating how a transparent permitting process can continue to attract top-quality business and job opportunities.”

VPT provides the public a centralized platform to track the daily status and timeline of critical steps for Commonwealth of Virginia's permits. Users can search permit applications or filter results by fields such as agency, application number, locality, and more. VPT can be accessed at Permits.Virginia.Gov.

Today, the permits of three agencies are available on the website: Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Virginia Energy (ENERGY), and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC). Additional agencies will be added in the coming months. The program was first launched as a pilot program last year at DEQ and has won several awards including the “2023 State Program Innovation Award” from the Environmental Council of the States.

“The Commonwealth of Virginia continues to drive innovation in transparency and accountability for government. VPT is another example of Virginia setting the standard for the rest of the country,” said

Director of the Office of Regulatory Management Andrew Wheeler, whose office is leading the VPT development and expansion.

VIRGINIA'S FIRST LADY AND ATTORNEY GENERAL JOIN STATE AND LOCAL LEADERS TO LAUNCH FENTANYL AWARENESS PILOT PROGRAM IN ROANOKE

(January 30, 2024) First Lady Suzanne S. Youngkin and Attorney General Jason Miyares announced the launch of their Fentanyl Awareness Pilot Program at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute in Roanoke, VA.

The first-of-its-kind, Virginia Department of Health awareness initiative is being implemented with support from the First Lady of Virginia and the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth (VFHY) in partnership with Attorney General Miyares' 'One Pill Can Kill' campaign.

The campaign strives to warn parents and caregivers that "It only takes one." One bad decision, one counterfeit pill can cost a life. An average of five Virginians die from fentanyl poisoning every day, becoming the leading cause of unnatural death in the Commonwealth. Since 2019, deaths have more than doubled in the Roanoke region.

"Fentanyl is killing our young people and hurting families across the Commonwealth," said First Lady Suzanne S. Youngkin. "By bringing attention to the dangers of this illicit drug, while giving a voice to victims, we aspire to save lives. Ultimately, caring for one another is our higher calling."

First Lady Suzanne S. Youngkin, Attorney General Miyares and Roanoke City Mayor Sherman Lea spoke to the importance of increased education on the dangers of fentanyl at the press conference, along with others who have been personally impacted by the crisis.

"As our family approaches the one-year mark from when we lost our only child, Cayden Foster, we wholeheartedly support this initiative. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach that includes removing dealers from our neighborhoods and schools, spreading awareness, treating addiction and more," said Afrodita and Sean Foster. "This initiative will help greatly with that effort, and we look forward to continued partnership with the First Lady and Attorney General to push back and eliminate the flood of this deadly poison into our communities."

Fentanyl can be mixed with marijuana or made to look like prescription pills such as Xanax, Adderall or Percocet. Unsuspecting young adults often turn to these pills to help themselves cope with stressor pain, unaware that they are not legitimate pharmaceuticals. To combat this, the multi-media campaign will distribute targeted messaging in the Roanoke area to spread awareness of the drug and provide a web-based resource platform for Virginians to access information on where to get help.

"Our teens and college-aged kids often don't realize that one pill can kill unless a friend or loved one is impacted by fentanyl," said Attorney General Jason Miyares. "Educating parents, teachers and friends about the threat is a simple but powerful way to fight fentanyl before it ever has a chance to harm our loved ones."

For more information and additional resources, visit [ItOnlyTakesOneVA.com](https://www.ItOnlyTakesOneVA.com).

IN THE NEWS

Below, you will find several news articles that may be of interest from the past week.

CNU and VPCC announce pathway program to simplify transferring

Source: Wavy, Date: February 2, 2024

It will soon be easier for Virginia Peninsula Community College students to transfer to Christopher Newport University. To read more, click [here](#).

A Prescription Drug Affordability Board is a bipartisan opportunity to lower the cost of living

Source: Cardinal News, Date: February 1, 2024

On the day after the November election, Gov. Glenn Youngkin signaled he would take a bipartisan approach to the upcoming legislative session. To read more, click [here](#).

After 75 years, General Assembly is still trying to figure out how to help localities build schools

Source: Cardinal News, Date: February 1, 2024

One of the most consequential pieces of legislation for rural areas in this year's General Assembly comes from a legislator in the most decidedly non-rural part of the state — Northern Virginia. To read more, click [here](#).

Want a cocktail to go? Virginia lawmakers say that should be allowed indefinitely

Source: WTOP News, Date: February 1, 2024

Virginia lawmakers voted overwhelmingly Wednesday in favor of making cocktails-to-go a permanent part of the restaurant industry across the state. To read more, click [here](#).

Virginia Senate committee kills bill that would have eliminated 1% grocery tax

Source: ABC 8 News, Date: January 30, 2024

A Virginia Senate committee has voted to effectively kill a bill that proposed cutting local sales taxes on groceries and certain hygiene products. To read more, click [here](#).

Virginia colleges are trying to make it easier for community college students to transfer. Doing so may boost enrollment.

Source: Cardinal News, Date: January 30, 2024

It's part of a statewide push to make the transition from community college to four-year university easier for transfer students, who have historically been overlooked in favor of incoming freshmen. To read more, click [here](#).

With child care increasingly unaffordable, Virginia lawmakers propose long-term fixes

Source: Virginia Mercury, Date: January 29, 2024

As federal relief funds dry up, Virginia policymakers are increasingly looking for solutions to residents' problems in securing affordable child care. To read more, click [here](#).

Virginia Democrats again push for paid family and medical leave

Source: Virginia Mercury, Date: January 29, 2024

Virginia Democrats are again backing a proposal to create a universal paid family and medical leave program that would be run through the Virginia Employment Commission. To read more, click [here](#).

Youngkin willing to change Virginia's artificial intelligence policy

Source: ABC 8 News, Date: January 29, 2024

Gov. Glenn Youngkin wanted artificial intelligence (AI) rules in place “as soon as possible” because state agencies have been using the fast-evolving technology for years, but he’s open to changes, a key member of his administration said. To read more, click [here](#).

Virginia Senate passes bill to let localities increase sales tax to pay for school construction

Source: Virginia Mercury, Date: January 29, 2024

The Virginia Senate on Monday passed a bill authorizing local governments to increase their local sales tax to fund school construction projects if voters approve the hike in a referendum. To read more, click [here](#).

Virginia car tax well hated, but also widely needed by localities

Source: The Roanoke Times, Date: January 28, 2024

It’s no middle of the road issue. Everybody in Virginia loves to hate the car tax. To read more, click [here](#).

A major push for Virginia's renters is under way in General Assembly

Source: Richmond Times-Dispatch, Date: January 26, 2024

As a School Board member, Del. Carrie Coyner, R-Chesterfield, kept hearing stories about families taking children out of one school and sending them to another because they could not afford their rent and had to move. To read more, click [here](#).

Lucas threatens future Democratic cooperation if Youngkin vetoes minimum wage bill

Source: VA Scope, Date: January 26, 2024

Democrats in Virginia’s General Assembly are advancing a bill that would increase the minimum wage to \$13.50 per hour in 2025 and \$15 per hour in 2026. To read more, click [here](#).

IMPORTANT DATES AND MILESTONES

Upcoming dates and deadlines are listed below.

- February 13th – Crossover (otherwise known as the half-way point of the session when all bills must be acted on in their body of origin).
- February 18th – “Budget Sunday,” when the House and Senate money committees will recommend their proposed budgets.
- March 9th – Final day of session, otherwise known as Sine Die.
- April 17th – Reconvened/Veto session, where legislature returns to act on Governor’s amendments and vetoes.
- July 1st – Effective date for legislation and budget unless otherwise specified.

We hope this report is helpful. Further updates to come as the session proceeds.

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