

VACo Legislative Team



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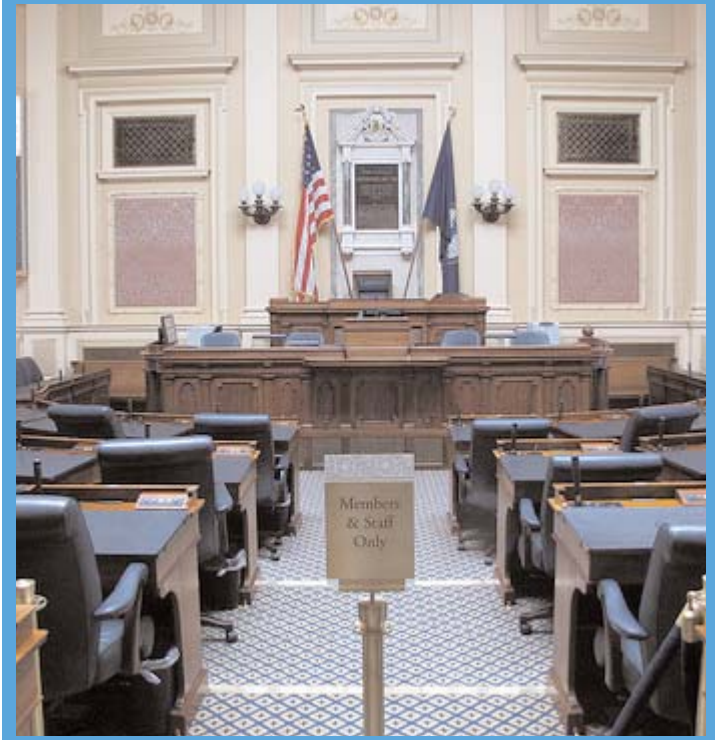
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2011 Legislative Priorities

Virginia Association
of Counties



VACo's 2011 Legislative Priorities

Thank you for reviewing VACo's 2011 Legislative Priorities that represent the association's top policy interests.

VACo members develop and adopt their annual legislative program from which the priorities are derived. The program then guides the membership and staff during the legislative session. The 2011 Legislative Program is available at www.vaco.org.

Fiscal concerns continue to be prominent because budget issues still dominate the time and attention of the Commonwealth's localities. VACo's membership has called for many revenue and tax reforms, including repealing the state's reduction in Aid to Localities, opposing the elimination or reduction of local tax revenues, and supporting the restructuring of state income and sales and use taxes to stabilize and increase revenues to meet current and foreseeable core service demands.

In addition to pressing fiscal and funding issues, VACo's priorities include concerns about the expansion of broadband services, supporting sufficient state funding for public education programs, transportation, unfunded mandates, sovereign immunity and environmental issues.

VACo's legislative team is honored to serve Virginia's counties and to work with the governor and members of the General Assembly.

Sincerely,



James D. Campbell
Executive Director

VACo's process for the development and adoption of its annual legislative program

- 1. Spring regional meetings:** In even number years VACo members are invited to attend regional meetings to identify and discuss key statewide legislative and policy issues.
- 2. Three Resolutions Committee meetings:** The committee oversees the development of the annual Legislative Program. The meetings occur in the spring after the regional meetings, early fall, and during the annual conference in November. The committee receives regular legislative updates, via conference call, during the annual legislative session.
- 3. VACo's eight steering committees meet at least twice:** Late summer and November during the annual conference. The steering committees develop their policy sections of the annual Legislative Program.
- 4. The membership is asked to adopt the new legislative program during the annual business meeting.** The meeting occurs on the last day of the annual conference in November.

Additional information

VACo's President appoints steering committee chairs and vice chairs. VACo members volunteer to serve on steering committees. In early October, prior to the annual conference, the membership receives a Preliminary Legislative Program, which is revised during the annual conference.

VACO's Priorities

immunity. VACO opposes bringing counties under the Virginia Tort Claims Act.

Stormwater

- VACO supports stormwater requirements related to new development, redevelopment and existing development that are cost-effective, affordable and manageable at the local level.

Transportation

- VACO urges the Commonwealth to enact a funding package for transportation with new revenues separate from the general fund that are stable, recurring and sufficient to meet Virginia's transportation infrastructure needs.

- VACO supports restoration of the Revenue Sharing program that existed prior to the 2006 session.

- VACO opposes any legislation or regulation that would require the transfer of responsibility for construction, maintenance or operation of new and existing roads to counties.

Unfunded Mandates

- VACO opposes unfunded mandates by the Commonwealth.

Water Quality

- VACO supports partnerships among all levels of government to improve water quality.

- VACO opposes any strategy to penalize local governments by withdrawing current financial assistance or imposing monitoring, management or similar requirements on localities without providing sufficient resources to accomplish those processes.

- VACO opposes the imposition of a state fee, tax or surcharge on water, sewer, solid waste or any service provided by a local government or authority.

State and Local Obligations and Revenues

- VACO reaffirms its commitment to protecting state and local fiscal stability that enables the Commonwealth and local governments to provide core public services critical to the long-term economic vitality of Virginia. The counties in Virginia stand ready to collaborate with the Commonwealth to make the tough fiscal and programmatic decisions required.

State Funding

- VACO is dedicated to protecting the reliability and sustainability of the Commonwealth's general fund that funds core government services mandated by the state but provided by local governments, including public primary and secondary education (K-12).

Local Government Fiscal Policy

- VACO calls for the repeal of the state's reduction in Aid to Localities.

- VACO supports local discretion to manage state mandated reductions for non-educational services.

Local Government Revenues and State Tax Reform

- VACO opposes elimination or reduction of specific local tax revenues, including local business taxes.

- VACO supports equal taxing authority for cities and counties. VACO also asks that the Commonwealth grant counties and cities the option, by action of the local governing body without a referendum, the ability to increase the local sales and use tax by 0.5 percent to help offset state budget reductions affecting localities.

- VACO opposes mandated "one-size-fits-all" budget, revenue and investment policies that

hinder local government efficiencies.

- VACo opposes changing the legal presumption for the application of local taxes.

State Tax Reform

- VACo supports tax reform that includes restructuring of state income and sales and use taxes to stabilize and increase revenues to meet current and foreseeable core service demands. Tax reform also will reduce pressure on local government leaders who must continually consider raising real estate tax rates to fund K-12 public education, public safety, the Comprehensive Services Act, mental health and mental retardation, and other critical services.

Broadband

- VACo urges the Commonwealth to assist communities in their efforts to deploy universal affordable broadband services, particularly in underserved and rural areas, by adopting targeted statewide budgetary and statutory policies.

Education

- VACo supports sufficient state funding for public education programs, including the Standards of Quality, the Standards of Accreditation, the Standards of Learning, teacher salaries and retirement costs, incentive and categorical aid, and capital and maintenance support.
- VACo opposes changes in methodologies and the division of financial responsibility intended to shift education costs from the state to localities.

Health and Human Resources

- VACo supports state policies and funding to ensure the Commonwealth's at-risk families have access to high quality and appropriate services.

Growth Management Tools

- VACo opposes any legislation to weaken the authority to plan and regulate land use.

- VACo supports legislation to grant localities additional tools necessary to meet citizens' increasing public infrastructure needs that are driven by new development.

ABC Privatizing Virginia's Wholesale and Retail Operations of Distilled Spirits

- VACo opposes any privatization of Virginia's Wholesale and Retail Operations of Distilled Spirits unless the following principles are met:
 - o Localities must retain full authority to participate in the initial ABC licensing process for retail liquor outlets and in subsequent processes that will result in the transfer of those licenses;
 - o Businesses selling distilled spirits must remain subject to all local land use and zoning ordinances, including public hearing requirements and regulations;
 - o State general fund dollars that are available from the Commonwealth's ownership of ABC must be replaced on a dollar-for-dollar basis and steps must be taken to ensure that, at a minimum, this ABC related funding is available to the general fund in the long run;
 - o Businesses selling distilled spirits must be subject to all local taxes that are levied on any other similar establishments (e.g., BPOL);
 - o The state must ensure that revenues from privatization adequately fund the enforcement of state ABC laws and locally-administered substance abuse prevention and rehabilitation programs;
 - o The state must recognize that new, one-time revenues are not a replacement for a comprehensive, adequately funded revenue stream that is dedicated to meeting all of Virginia's multi-modal transportation needs; and
 - o In the event the state gains new revenues from privatization, the state must resume the sharing of profits from the sale of all ABC products with localities.

Sovereign Immunity

- VACo opposes any substantive change in local governments' present defense of sovereign