

VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY



2018 Legislative Priorities

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VACo 2018 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

OVERARCHING LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY POSITION

Increase Education Funding

To assure each child in Virginia the quality education necessary for his or her success, VACo calls upon the Governor and General Assembly to fully fund the Standards of Quality as recommended by the Board of Education, where these recommendations coincide with prevailing local practice, as well as the Standards of Accreditation. The provision of a quality education for all Virginia's children is the most important function of state and local government. The infusion of K-12 funding provided in the 2016 General Assembly session and the additional dollars supplied in 2017 were steps in the right direction toward restoring the state's partnership with localities in fulfilling this critical mission. However, when adjusted for inflation, state direct aid per-pupil spending on public education in FY 2018 is less than funding levels in FY 2006. With increased educational mandates, increased numbers of students, increased numbers of students with special needs, and state policy changes that decreased education funding, local school divisions have had to eliminate important academic programs, cut instructional and support staff, and increase class sizes, despite strong local efforts to improve efficiencies in public education.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Broadband

VACo urges the Commonwealth and the federal government to assist communities in their efforts to deploy universal affordable access to broadband for all areas, particularly in underserved and rural areas. Additionally, VACo opposes mandates that limit or restrict local land use authority for the siting of telecommunications infrastructure or result in a negative fiscal impact to county budgets.

Proffers and Growth Management Tools

VACo supports changes to the conditional zoning law to allow greater flexibility in the process for determining impacts to be addressed when considering an application for development. VACo also supports legislation that grants localities additional tools to adequately meet increasing needs for public services driven by new development without burdening current residents with the cost of new growth through increased real estate taxes. Such additional tools may include broad impact fee authority for all counties, and adequate public facilities provisions.

ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE

Water Quality Improvement Funding

VACo supports effective partnerships across all levels of government to improve water quality. VACo urges state and federal agencies to consider impacts of any initiatives intended to reduce pollutants in state waters from point and non-point sources. In order for comprehensive water quality improvement strategies to be effective, major and reliable forms of financial and technical assistance will be necessary. VACo supports the goal of improved water quality and opposes strategies that penalize local governments by withdrawing current forms of financial assistance or imposing monitoring, management or similar requirements without providing sufficient resources. 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.

Hydraulic Fracturing

Advances in technology for the extraction of natural gas known as "hydraulic fracturing" has the potential to tap vast reserves in what are known as the Marcellus Shale and Taylorsville Basin deposits. Concerns about how the process of hydraulic fracturing could impact both public and private groundwater supplies have been raised both regionally and nationally. VACo supports a state regulatory program that addresses these concerns while protecting the authority of local governments to regulate and/or ban this type of mining activity through their land use ordinances. VACo supports a state regulatory program that addresses these concerns, promotes transparency and accountability, and protects the authority of local governments to regulate this type of mining activity through their land use ordinances.

FINANCE

Local Finance

VACo supports the authority of county governments to levy and collect revenue from local business taxes.

Equal Taxing Authority

VACo supports granting counties equal taxing authority to that enjoyed by cities and towns to enact local excise taxes without referendum, such as the authority to adopt a local meals tax without referendum and to levy and collect a cigarette tax.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Local Authority

VACo supports relaxation of the Dillon Rule by granting and maintaining local authority and autonomy in matters including land use, revenue measures, procurement and other issues of local concern. VACo supports extending powers currently granted to some local governments to all local governments.

HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Health and Human Resources Funding

VACo supports transparent state policies and funding to ensure the Commonwealth's at-risk families have access to high quality and appropriate services. The Commonwealth should provide full funding to localities and their state administrative entities for state-mandated human services and provide the necessary program flexibility to enable localities to provide comprehensive and case-tailored services.

TRANSPORTATION

Local-State Transportation Funding and Cooperation

VACo believes that the 2018 General Assembly Session must confront the funding challenges facing Virginia's transportation systems. These include addressing an annual \$130 million shortfall for transit capital needs and finding a dedicated funding solution for Metro. Unless increased revenues are approved, Virginia will continue to face a congestion and mobility crisis that is strangling economic growth, threatening public safety and negatively affecting the quality of life of all residents. VACo supports the continuation of the state's investment in Virginia's transportation infrastructure statewide. While VACo appreciates the additional funding that has been provided in recent years to address the needs of Virginia's highway system, more funding will be needed in the immediate future for secondary roads, which are vital for economic development for Virginia's counties. VACo also believes it is important to closely monitor and evaluate the implementation of "Smart Scale" and all other processes employed in recent years for distributing transportation funds.

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