

**VIRGINIA
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



Virginia Association of Counties
1207 E. Main St., Suite 300
Richmond, VA 23219

VACo 2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

OVERARCHING LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY POSITION

Equal Taxing Authority

Counties provide the same core services, such as public education, human services, and public safety, to their residents as cities and towns, but have limited opportunities to raise revenue. VACo supports granting counties the same authority that is enjoyed by cities and towns to enact local taxes without referendum.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Broadband

VACo urges the Commonwealth to provide adequate financial assistance to counties to build the necessary telecommunications infrastructure to deploy universal affordable access to the internet for all areas, particularly in underserved and rural areas. Additionally, VACo supports legislation that provides additional tools for counties to finance, build and operate open access networks in partnership with commercial internet service providers.

EDUCATION

Education Funding

VACo urges the General Assembly to provide full state funding for public education, including the Standards of Quality (SOQ) as recommended by the Board of Education, where these recommendations coincide with prevailing local practice, targeted incentive programs, capital, and maintenance support, and teacher salaries.

Full state funding should be achieved without reduction to other parts of state public education budgets or to other core services. Changes to school security and high school graduation standards will require additional resources to implement and those costs must be adequately funded by the state. VACo supports additional state resources and additional funding options for localities for capital and school construction costs.

VACo supports the current practice whereby all year-end funds appropriated to the school divisions by the locality revert to the locality, retaining discretion with the governing body to evaluate and approve the reallocation of year-end fund balances.

ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE

Water Quality Improvement Funding

VACo supports effective partnerships across all levels of government as well as adequate financial and technical assistance from the federal and state governments to improve water quality. VACo supports improved water quality but opposes strategies that penalize local governments by withdrawing current forms of financial assistance or imposing monitoring, management, or similar requirements on localities without providing sufficient resources to accomplish those processes. VACo supports efforts to continue to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay but opposes additional nutrient regulations on wastewater treatment facilities that are scientifically unsound, economically unfeasible, or unnecessary for meeting the Commonwealth's goals. 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.

FINANCE

Local Finance

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

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Unfunded Mandates

VACo opposes unfunded mandates and shifting fiscal responsibility for existing programs by the Commonwealth from the state to localities. When funding for a mandated program is altered, the mandate should be suspended until full funding is restored. When legislation with a cost to localities is passed by the General Assembly, the cost should be borne by the Commonwealth, and the legislation should contain a sunset clause providing that the mandate is not binding on localities until funding by the Commonwealth is provided.

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

Transportation Funding

VACo supports expedited action to address the causes for declining growth in transportation revenues and to develop recommendations to grow revenue over time to meet increasing demands for new construction and maintenance for existing transportation infrastructure. Such action must address the secondary road needs of counties throughout the Commonwealth, as such funding has been vastly reduced over the past 10 years.

VACo supports changes to simplify the Smart Scale process for allocating transportation funds to reduce time and costs to prepare and review applications.

VACo supports adequate funding levels to maintain existing transit capital state match rates which are projected to decline starting in 2021 due to the depletion of transportation bonds.

In 2018 the legislature enacted a dedicated funding solution for Metro that came largely through reallocation of existing revenues, at the expense of other significant transportation projects throughout Northern Virginia. To address this issue, VACo supports continuing efforts to replace the regional funding that was redirected from the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority.

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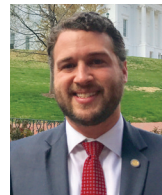
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