

Capitol Contact

Virginia General Assembly

Virginia Association of Counties • 1207 E. Main Street, Suite 300 • Richmond, VA 23219
www.vaco.org • 804.788.6652

Thursday, January 16, 2025

VACo Opposes Bills Mandating Collective Bargaining and Other Employment Terms for Transportation Services

[SB 919 \(Salim\)](#) / [HB 2619 \(Helmer\)](#) would require the governing body of any county that contracts with a private company to provide transportation services, for the contract to include provisions requiring any employee of the private company be given compensation and benefits that are at a minimum equivalent to the compensation and benefits provided to a public employee.

Furthermore, the bill states that if a county has adopted an ordinance or resolution authorizing collective bargaining by employees of such county, in contracting with a private company for transportation services, the county would require such company to enter and adhere to a collective bargaining agreement.

KEY POINTS

- The bills would mandate collective bargaining within select counties, interfere with the ability for a county to make employment and services delivery decisions, and may have costly unintended consequences.
- The bills include language that could be potentially harmful to counties such as how “transportation services” are constituted. Generally, this means those who operate transit systems but could very likely include mechanics of such systems.

- The bills would almost certainly raise the operating costs of transportation delivery systems at a time when the budgets of these services are very tight as it is.

VACo opposes SB 919 and HB 1619.

VACo Contact: [James Hutzler](#)

VACo Opposes Bill to Reshape Water Quality Improvement Grants

[HB 2247 \(Runion\)](#) states that the Director of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is only required to enter into water quality improvement grant agreements with publicly owned wastewater treatment plants that apply for such grants if sufficient and unobligated funds are available in the Virginia Water Quality Improvement Fund at the time the Director enters into such grant agreements. Currently, the DEQ Director is required to sign an agreement with all eligible applicants.

KEY POINTS

- With the state not funding its share of these wastewater treatment upgrades, the legislation would completely change the water quality improvement grant process and could leave local governments and local wastewater plants to provide the funds necessary to complete the construction of this expensive nutrient removal technology.
- Local governments have enjoyed this financial agreement with the state to share costs of nutrient removal projects and the results from these projects have largely helped Virginia meet our clean water and Chesapeake Bay goals.

VACo opposes HB 2247.

VACo Contact: [James Hutzler](#)

VACo Testifies in Support of Senate K-12 Support Cap Removal

On January 16, the Senate Education and Health Committee recommended to report and refer [SB 977 \(Hashmi\)](#) on a vote of 11-3 to Senate Finance and Appropriations. The bill, which is a recommendation of the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission ([JLARC](#)) 2023 report on Virginia's K-12 Funding

Formula as well as a recommendation of the [Joint Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education Funding](#), would effectively eliminate the cap on K-12 support positions. **VACo provided public testimony in favor** of the legislation along with numerous members of the local government and K-12 education communities.

As previously [reported](#), VACo's 2025 top funding priority is to support legislative action to implement the recommendations of JLARC's landmark 2023 report on Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula where they coincide with local prevailing practices. In the near term, VACo encourages prioritization of efforts to restore pre-recession era K-12 funding, especially eliminating the cap on support positions; provide full state support for the actual number of K-12 staff positions employed; and revise the methodology for calculating teacher salaries to reflect the actual salaries more adequately being paid by school divisions. Though progress has been made in recent years by the state in restoring support position funding, fully eliminating the support cap would provide more than \$200 million to local governments across the Commonwealth for K-12 education costs being solely funded by localities.

In further detail, SB 977 would require the Department of Education (the Department)...

- (i) in calculating nonpersonal costs in the Standards of Quality funding formula, to include the costs associated with work-related employee travel and leased facilities;
- (ii) in calculating the deduction of federal funds in the Standards of Quality funding formula, to examine actual school division spending on support costs as a percentage of actual school division spending on all public education costs, with certain exceptions such as food service;
- (iii) in calculating the costs in the Standards of Quality funding formula beginning with fiscal year 2029, to include all employee benefit costs incurred by a majority of school divisions;
- (iv) in calculating the cost of salaries under the Standards of Quality funding formula, to include facilities staff and transportation staff salaries in the calculation of any cost of competing adjustment to salaries for instructional and support positions; and
- (v) in estimating the cost of any compensation supplement for instruction and support positions under the Standards of Quality funding formula, to include an estimate the cost of such a compensation supplement for facilities staff. The bill also prohibits the Department from applying any cap on inflation rate adjustments to non-personal cost categories during the biennial process of re-benchmarking the aid to the public education budget. The bill (a) requires a per-pupil Standards of Quality funding add-

on to be provided for each special education student; (b) requires support services positions to be funded based on a calculation of prevailing costs and prohibits such positions from being subject to any method of funding calculation that caps the number of funded support services positions based on a ratio of such positions to students enrolled in the school division, with the exception of certain support services positions enumerated in the bill; and (c) establishes the At-Risk Program for the purpose of supporting programs and services for students who are educationally at-risk, including programs and services of prevention, intervention, or remediation.

This bill will likely be joined by additional legislation and budget amendments that will be reported on and supported by VACo. As previously [reported](#), legislation such as SB 977 is critical to moving forward with much needed funding reforms.

VACo Contact: [Jeremy R. Bennett](#)

VACo Opposes Bill to Limit County Ability to Access Drinking Water

[SB 923 \(Stuart\)](#) would prohibit the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) from issuing a Virginia Water Protection Permit for any surface water withdrawal in Virginia if more than 5 percent of the nonconsumptive volume of water withdrawn will be returned to a different major river basin.

VACo opposes the bill on the grounds that this would impose limitations on the ability of water utilities to provide drinking water to citizens now and in the future.

Efforts to supply water needs are not necessarily confined by the boundaries of river basins and inter-basin transfers of water have proven to be beneficial in using surplus water to meet drinking needs in Virginia. The bill would ban all inter-basin water transfers and harm counties that engage in regional water planning now and in the future and by doing so, limit the development and growth goals of counties.

VACo Contact: [James Hutzler](#)

General Assembly Convenes, Adopts Schedule for 2025 General Assembly Session

Key dates for the 2025 session, as approved by the General Assembly in its procedural resolution, are as follows:

- **Wednesday, January 8:** General Assembly convenes. Last day to introduce legislation creating or continuing a study, or legislation regarding the Virginia Retirement System
- **Friday, January 10:** Deadline for Senate budget amendments
- **Monday, January 13:** Governor’s State of the Commonwealth Address; last day to pre-file legislation (by 10 a.m.); deadline to submit House budget amendments
- **Friday, January 17:** Last day to file bills, except for bills offered by unanimous consent or bills submitted on behalf of the Governor
- **Sunday, February 2:** “Budget Sunday” deadline for House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees to report their respective budgets by midnight
- **Tuesday, February 4:** “Crossover” deadline for each chamber to complete work on legislation originating in that chamber (except the budget bill)
- **Thursday, February 6:** Deadline for each chamber to complete work on its budget bill
- **Wednesday, February 12:** Deadline for each chamber to complete consideration of the other chamber’s budget bill and revenue bills
- **Monday, February 17:** Deadline for committee action on legislation by midnight
- **Saturday, February 22:** Scheduled adjournment *sine die*
- **Wednesday, April 2:** Reconvened session for consideration of Governor’s amendments and vetoes

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)

Advocate for Your Community at the VACo County Government Day

Thursday, January 23, 2025 | [Omni Richmond Hotel](#)



REGISTRATION FORM

It's a day for us. Counties. It's a day for us to learn how the decisions being made by the General Assembly might affect us. And it's a day to make our voices heard. Attend County Government Day. Then visit the Capitol to meet with your legislators and observe committee meetings. Later join us for a reception.

Date: Thursday, January 23, 2025

Reserve a Room: [Omni Richmond Hotel Room Link](#)

Who should attend: ALL County Supervisors and staff are encouraged to register and attend.

Registration Fee

\$100 | Includes Day Briefing (Noon – 2pm) and Reception (430pm – 630pm)

Agenda

- **9am** | VACo Board of Directors Meeting
- **10am** | Registration
- **1130am** | Lunch
- **Noon** | VACo County Government Day
- **Afternoon** | Visit the Capitol to speak with legislators
- **430pm-630pm** | VACo Legislative Reception | Omni Richmond Hotel

Please email Valerie Russell at vrussell@vaco.org with questions.

For information on how to reach your representatives, see the [Virginia House of Delegates](#) and the [Senate of Virginia](#) member websites. Find information about VACo's positions in the [2025 Legislative Program](#). We will distribute the County Government Day Bulletin before the event.

VACo Contact: [Valerie Russell](#)