

Capitol Contact

Virginia General Assembly

Virginia Association of Counties • 1207 E. Main Street, Suite 300 • Richmond, VA 23219
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Tuesday, February 3, 2026

ACTION ITEM: VACo Opposes Mandatory Collective Bargaining Bill

VACo urges opposition to [SB 378 \(Surovell\)](#), which as introduced, would remove local authority and create substantial [local fiscal impact](#) by imposing mandatory collective bargaining for local governments if a group of employees petition and vote to form a bargaining unit. The bill would also create a state Public Employee Relations Board with no specified local government representation and impose binding arbitration, among other provisions. Furthermore, the bill has no provisions for grandfathering in local governments that have agreed to collective bargaining agreements with employee representatives beyond the expiration date of existing agreements.

The Senate Commerce and Labor Committee heard the bill on February 2 and voted 8 to 6 to report and Refer SB 378 to the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee. VACo led testimony in opposition to the bill.

ACTION REQUIRED

- **VACo Members** - Contact the [Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee](#) to oppose SB 378 now. Please include VACo in your correspondence and share with your locality fiscal and other impacts of the legislation.

SB 378 is similar to previous labor organization-backed legislation from previous general assembly sessions, which was [reported](#) on by VACo last year.

KEY POINTS

- The estimated [local fiscal impact](#) for this legislation is massive.

- Virginia is home to a diverse array of localities with significant variations in population, resources, and administrative capacity. Mandating a uniform collective bargaining framework ignores these differences and places an undue burden on many localities that lack the resources to manage the complexities of collective bargaining agreements.
- Disregard for locally tailored solutions disrupts established practices and agreements and creates unnecessary confusion and administrative burden.
- This legislation preempts local governance, introduces fiscal uncertainty, and disregards the progress made under the current framework.

VACo urges the General Assembly to respect the autonomy of local governments and reject this measure.

VACo opposes a similar bill, [**HB 1263 \(Tran\)**](#), which hasn't been heard in Subcommittee #2 of the Labor and Commerce Committee.

KEY CONTACT

- [**Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee**](#)

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

ACTION ITEM: Bills to Allow “By-Right” Development of Faith-Based Owned Property Advance Out of Committee

[**SB 388 \(McPike\)**](#) and [**HB 1279 \(Cole\)**](#) passed out of committee and are now headed to the floors of the Senate and House for further consideration. The bills override local decision-making authority by allowing development of housing on land owned by property tax-exempt religious organizations or certain property tax-exempt nonprofit organizations and provides that zoning ordinances shall allow the by-right development of up to 20 units per acre on property owned by such organizations. The measures specify that the review of such [**developments**](#) be completed pursuant to general law and states that localities shall not require a special exception, special use permit, conditional use permit, rezoning, or any discretionary review or approval process.

ACTION REQUIRED

- **Contact your Delegates ([House of Delegates Email List 1](#) | [House of Delegates Email List 2](#)) and**

HB 1279 passed in House Counties, Cities, and Towns by a [vote of 13 to 8](#) and will likely be considered for final passage in the house on Thursday, February 5.

SB 388 passed in Senate Local Government by a [vote of 9 to 4](#) and will likely be considered for final passage in the Senate on Thursday February 5. The bill was also amended in committee to permit ground-floor nonresidential uses not to exceed 30 percent of gross floor area of the building. The amended bill specifies that ... *Permitted nonresidential uses shall include religious worship space, child day centers as defined in § [22.1-289.02](#), health clinics, coffee shops, or other uses that are ancillary to the operation or mission of the property tax-exempt religious organization or 501(c)(3) property tax-exempt nonprofit organization.*

KEY POINTS

- VACo supports maintaining local decisions regarding the location and density of residential and mixed-use development and how such projects may fit within and benefit their community.
- By right development of residential and mixed-use development on any property, regardless of its location and access to adequate publicly funded facilities such as water, sewer, and roads, is inconsistent with the goals and objectives of sound land use policy and practice.

KEY CONTACTS

- [House of Delegates Email List 1](#) | [House of Delegates Email List 2](#)
- [Senators](#)

VACo Contact: [Joe Lerch, AICP](#)

VACo Opposes Speed Camera Bills that Would Waive Sovereign Immunity

As with recent General Assembly sessions, the 2026 Session has seen many bills that aim to add provisions and requirements regarding photo speed enforcement programs that are used by various localities across Virginia. The following are the bills county officials should know about and if passed, would most impact the way current programs are operated and administered:

[HB 1220 \(Delaney\)](#) makes various changes to the requirements for the use of photo speed monitoring devices, including:

- Civil penalties collected should go towards the operating cost of a localities photo speed monitoring program and excess funds collected are to be deposited in a local fund used solely for planning, design, and construction projects for traffic safety; speed management; bicycle and pedestrian safety.
 - Any such excess funds shall first be used for such purposes in highway work zones, high-risk intersection segments, or school crossing zones prior to being used for such purposes in any other area signage
- Data retention and storage
- Device calibration
- Making certain information available to the public
- Directs the Supreme Court of Virginia to develop a universal summons
- Delayed provisions and reporting requirements

While VACo doesn't oppose most of the proposed language, there is a provision in HB 1220 that states, in any court proceeding for the failure of a locality or a private vendor acting on its behalf to comply with the requirements for the operation of photo speed monitoring devices, such locality shall waive its sovereign immunity in such proceeding.

HB 994 (Seibold) differs slightly from HB 1220 – the main difference is that in HB 994 expands of the use of photo speed monitoring devices to “safety red zones.” The bill would direct the Commissioner of Highways to develop criteria for designating a highway segment as a high-risk pedestrian corridor for purposes of identifying safety red zones. HB 994 includes many of the same other changes proposed in HB 1220, including the very concerning language that localities waive their sovereign immunity in court proceedings.

VACo opposes HB 1220 and HB 994 because without sovereign immunity, localities face open-ended liability for lawsuits, including high-dollar verdicts. VACo opposes any substantive change in local governments' present defense of qualified immunity and sovereign immunity.

Also introduced are **HB 1330 (Seibold)** and **SB 84 (Williams-Graves)**, which are similar to a bill brought by Senator Willaims-Graves last session. These bills would authorize state and local law-enforcement agencies to place and operate **pedestrian crossing violation and stop sign violation monitoring systems** in school crossing zones, highway work zones, and high-risk intersection segments for purposes of recording pedestrian crossing and stop sign violations. The bill also adds multiple guard rails to but does not expand photo speed monitoring device programs and would rename these devices to “speed safety cameras.”

Civil penalties collected through pedestrian crossing violation monitoring systems, stop sign violation monitoring systems, and speed safety cameras can be kept at the local level and used for the installation and operation of these programs. Any funds collected that exceed installation and operation expenses must be deposited in a local fund, and localities may use these funds solely for local infrastructure and safety upgrades.

There are many administrative changes to the bill including reporting requirements, calibration, signage requirements and others. VACo has no position on HB 1330 and SB 84, which passed through the Senate Transportation Committee by a [11-3 vote](#). HB 1330 is docketed for February 10.

VACo Contact: [James Hutzler](#)

Problematic Workers' Compensation Unfunded Mandate Laid on Table

The Compensation and Retirement Subcommittee of House Appropriations [voted](#) to lay on the table [HB 130 \(Cornett\)](#), which would have expanded the workers' compensation presumption of compensability for certain cancers causing the death or disability of certain employees who have completed five years of service in their position to include sheriffs or deputy sheriffs. As previously [reported](#), though not opposed to the policy intent of the legislation, the bill would have imposed significant costs to local government risk insurers, which would then be reflected in higher insurance premium costs for local governments.

VACo opposes any effort to expand workers' compensation presumptive illnesses eligibilities for public employees that is not done in concert with additional state funding assistance to local governments to offset additional insurance liabilities. VACo testified in opposition to the bill and was joined in opposition by VAcorp.

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

VACo Opposes Restrictive PFAS Testing Bill

[HB 1443 \(Lopez\)](#) would require any owner of a sewage treatment works that is land applying, marketing or distributing sewage sludge in the Commonwealth to collect a sample of finished sewage sludge product quarterly and have such sample analyzed by a laboratory for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The bill restricts or prohibits land application of sewage sludge through a tiered system and requires the owner to send the test results to the landowner of every property at which the owner intends to land apply such sewage sludge if the analysis reveals certain concentrations of PFAS in such sewage sludge.

VACo opposes the introduced version of HB 1443 as the testing, lab analysis and disposal requirements in the introduced bill have the potential to place a large fiscal impact on wastewater facilities and local governments across the Commonwealth.

VACo is committed to working with stakeholders and the patron on HB 1443 and will provide updates when available.

VACo Contact: [James Hutzler](#)

Bus Obstruction Monitoring System Legislation Introduced

[**SB 583 \(Salim\)**](#) would allow localities to authorize the use of bus obstruction monitoring systems by a public transit agency operating within the locality for the purpose of enforcing local ordinances related to parking, stopping, or standing in bus stop zones or in lanes reserved for transit buses.

SB 583 passed the Senate Transportation Committee, 8-7, and will be taken up for a floor vote later this week. VACo has no position on the bill but will provide updates as they become available.

VACo Contact: [James Hutzler](#)

Key Dates for 2026 General Assembly Session

The General Assembly convenes today for a scheduled 60-day session.

Key dates for the 2026 session, as approved by the Joint Rules Committee in the procedural resolution setting out the schedule for the session, are as follows:

- **Wednesday, January 14:** General Assembly convenes; pre-filed bills must be submitted by 10:00 a.m. (after the prefiling deadline, legislators are limited to five additional bills or resolutions). Last day to submit bills creating or continuing a study or to submit bills dealing with the Virginia Retirement System. Governor Youngkin will address a joint session of the General Assembly at 7 p.m.
- **Friday, January 16:** Deadline to submit budget amendments.
- **Saturday, January 17:** Inauguration of Governor-Elect Spanberger, Lieutenant Governor-Elect Hashmi, and Attorney General-Elect Jones.

- **Monday, January 19:** Joint session of the General Assembly for remarks by Governor Spanberger.
- **Friday, January 23:** Last day to submit legislation, other than bills submitted by unanimous consent or bills requested by the Governor.
- **Tuesday, February 17:** Last day for bills to be acted upon in their chambers of origin, other than the budget bills. Bills must “cross over” to the opposite chamber by Wednesday, February 18.
- **Sunday, February 22:** “Budget Sunday” deadline for House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations committees to report their respective budget proposals.
- **Thursday, February 26:** Deadline for each chamber to act on its respective budget proposal.
- **Wednesday, March 4:** Deadline for each chamber to act on budget and revenue bills from the other chamber and appoint conferees as necessary.
- **Monday, March 9:** Deadline for committee action on all legislation by midnight.
- **Saturday, March 14:** Scheduled adjournment *sine die*.
- **Wednesday, April 22:** Reconvened session to consider Governor’s actions on bills and budget items.

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)

Advocate for Your Community at the VACo Local Government Day

Thursday, February 5, 2026 | [Omni Richmond Hotel](#)

REGISTER TODAY

It's a day for us. Localities. 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 Local

Government Day. Then visit the Capitol to meet with your legislators and observe committee meetings. Later join us for a reception.

Date: Thursday, February 5, 2026

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

Who should attend: ALL local elected officials 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 Local 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 [**2026 Legislative Program**](#). We will distribute the Local Government Day Bulletin before the event.

VACo Contact: [**Valerie Russell**](#)