

Governor Spanberger Vetoes Collective Bargaining Legislation Following Widespread Local Government Concerns



Virginia Association of Counties

RICHMOND (May 15, 2026) – The Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) thanked Governor Abigail Spanberger for [vetoing](#) HB 1263 and SB 378, legislation that would have imposed a statewide collective bargaining framework on local governments across the Commonwealth.

VACo Executive Director Dean Lynch praised the Governor’s leadership and willingness to respond to the significant concerns raised by counties throughout Virginia.

“Governor Spanberger demonstrated thoughtful leadership by recognizing the serious [concerns](#) local governments expressed regarding this legislation,” Lynch said. “More than 70 percent of Virginia counties took formal public positions opposing these bills, reflecting broad bipartisan concern about preserving local decision-making authority, protecting fiscal flexibility, and ensuring counties can continue meeting the service needs of their communities.”

The legislation, as returned to the Governor following the General Assembly’s rejection of her amendments, would have established a statewide Public Employee Relations Board with broad authority over local labor relations and imposed a one-

size-fits-all framework on counties regardless of local circumstances. VACo and counties across Virginia consistently expressed concern that the bills would significantly impact local budgets, administrative operations, and local governing authority.

VACo noted that Governor Spanberger had previously attempted to address many of these concerns through amendments that would have delayed implementation and provided localities additional time to prepare, though those amendments were ultimately rejected by the General Assembly.

“We appreciate the Governor’s willingness to carefully consider the practical impacts this legislation would have had on counties and taxpayers across the Commonwealth,” Lynch said. “Local governments are best positioned to make workforce decisions that reflect the unique needs, fiscal conditions, and operational realities of their communities.”

VACo also voiced its commitment to continuing discussions on public sector workforce policy in partnership with state leaders.

“We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with Governor Spanberger and members of the General Assembly on issues affecting local governments and public employees,” Lynch said. “Counties remain committed to maintaining strong workplaces, supporting employees, and delivering essential services effectively and responsibly.”

VACo exists to support county officials and to effectively represent, promote and protect the interests of counties to better serve the people of Virginia.

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Virginia Counties Recognized for Model Programs



RICHMOND (May 15, 2026)—The Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) is pleased to announce the 40 recipients of the 2026 Achievement Awards, which recognize excellence in local government programs. VACo received 103 submissions.

Winning entries focused on addressing issues of public safety, community development, and health, as well as finding solutions to challenges that counties encounter daily.

[Winning Achievement Award Submissions](#)

[All 2026 Achievement Awards Entries](#)

“Virginia’s counties continue to demonstrate that local government is where innovation meets action,” VACo Executive Director **Dean Lynch** said. “This year’s submissions reflect the creativity, leadership, and commitment county officials bring every day to solving real challenges and improving the quality of life for residents across the Commonwealth. Congratulations to all winners and thank you to all who participated.”

This year’s judges were **Charles Hartgrove**, ICMA-CM, Managing Director of the Virginia Institute of Government; **Dr. Sheryl Bailey**, Visiting Professor of Practice at Virginia Tech, and former Chesterfield County Deputy County Administrator; and **Penny Gross**, former longtime Fairfax County Supervisor.

[More on Next Page](#)

Henrico County and its *Combating Ageism Amongst Emergency Service Providers* won this year's **Best Achievement Award**.

“Henrico County’s program stood out for tackling an issue that often goes unrecognized but has a direct impact on workforce culture, service delivery, and public trust,” Hartgrove said. “By addressing ageism within emergency services, Henrico has created a model that strengthens both its employees and the communities they serve.”

The judges also selected winners for **Best Small County Achievement Award** (population 70,000 or less) and **Best Large County Achievement Award**. **Greene County’s** *Employee Cross-Training Program* earned top honors among small counties, while **Prince William County’s** *Crisis Receiving Center Complex* received the large county award.

“Programs like Greene County’s Employee Cross-Training initiative show that innovation is not defined by population size or budget—it’s driven by leadership, adaptability, and a commitment to investing in people,” Bailey said. “Counties like Greene routinely develop solutions that strengthen organizations from the inside out.”

Gross praised Prince William County for its innovative program. “Prince William County’s Crisis Receiving Center Complex represents the kind of bold, collaborative leadership communities need today,” Gross said. “It addresses critical public needs while bringing together partners, resources, and long-term vision in a way that will make a lasting difference for residents.”

Chesterfield County tops the all-time Achievement Awards list with 63. Chesterfield County has won an award in each year of the 24-year history of the program. **Henrico County** is second on the list with 53 Achievement Awards while **Loudoun County** is third with 37.

The VACo Achievement Awards program is a competitive program open to local government members of the association.

[Winning Achievement Award Submissions](#) | [Achievement Awards Website 2026](#)
[Achievement Awards Entries](#) | [Past Winners](#) | [Past Judges](#)

VA 250

Celebrating Virginia's History: Wilton House



Wilton House was headquarters for the Marquis de Lafayette after the Battle of Richmond in 1781. Built for William Randolph III, the Wilton House stood as a symbol of Randolph-family power for over 100 years. The Georgian-style mansion was the seat of a 2,000 acre plantation powered by tobacco and enslaved labor. In 1959, mired in the debt of her ancestors, Catherine Randolph sold off the remains of the plantation and dilapidated house. Wilton saw a series of successive owners over the next 73 years. In 1932, after surviving two wars and several bankruptcies, Wilton was dismantled and moved 15 miles upriver where it was reassembled and opened as the Wilton House Museum.

SOURCE: VA250.org



V A C O 2 0 2 6 R E G I O N A L M E E T I N G S

- REGION 2 | May 27 | York County
- REGIONS 6&7 | June 17 | Greene County
- REGION 1 | June 22 | New Kent County
- REGION 5 | June | Nelson County
- REGION 8 | July | Fairfax County
- REGION 4 | July | Greenville County
- REGION 10 | July | Campbell County
- REGION 3 | August 18 | Chesterfield County
- REGION 9 | August | Alleghany County
- REGIONS 11&12 | September | Montgomery County
- REGIONS 12&13 | September | Russell County



VACo Premier Partner Spotlight - Virginia American Water

VACo is proud to call Virginia American Water a Premier Partner. Watch how Virginia American Water can impact your locality. We asked VACo President Victor Angry to host since he has experienced first-hand how Virginia American Water has helped his community in Prince William County.



Thank you to our three guests...

- **J.R. Fidler** | Principal of Business Development
- **Rachel Lancaster** | Director of Business Development
- **J.W. Walker** | Principal of Business Development

[Watch the Premier Partner Spotlight Video on Virginia American Water](#)

Learn more at www.amwater.com | VACo Contact: [Karie Walker, CAE](#)

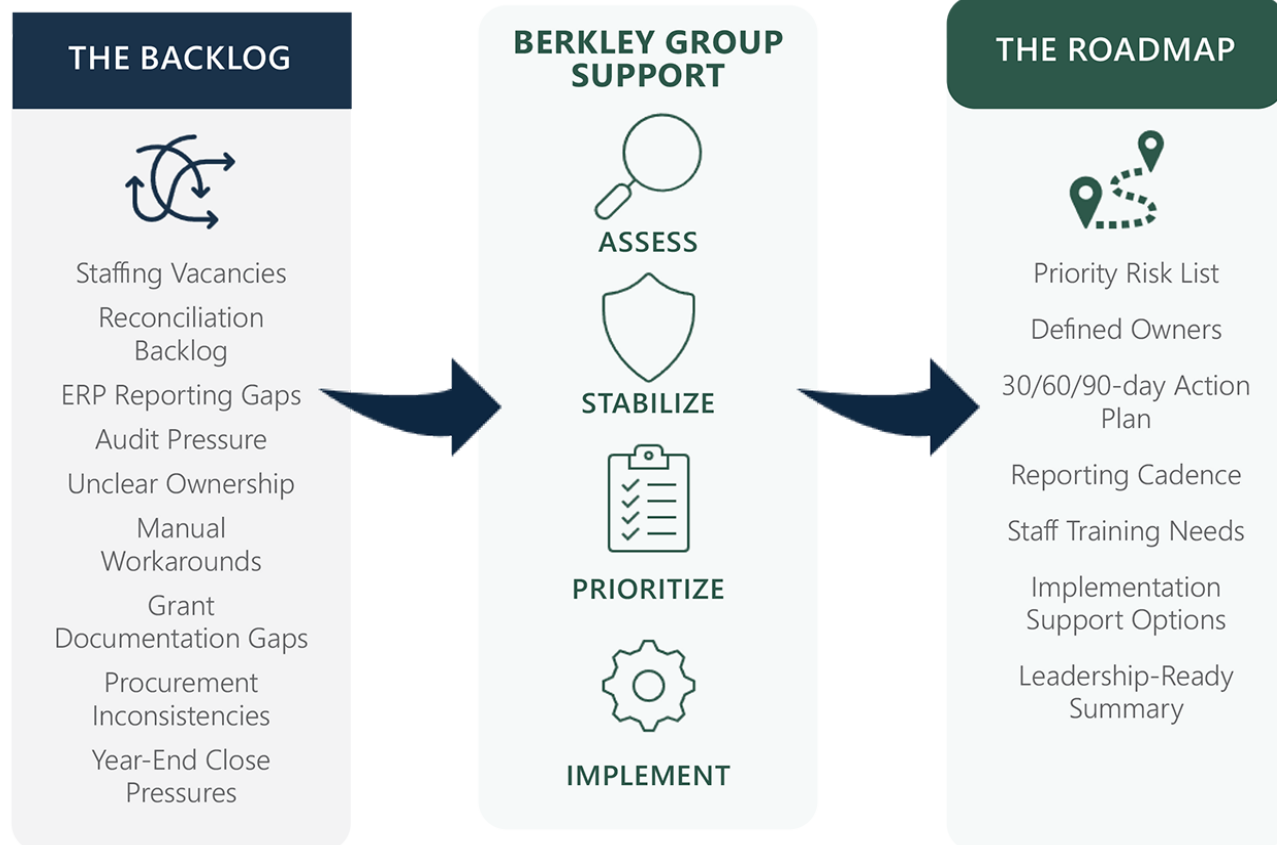


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HEALTH | COMMUNICATIONS | RETIREMENT | INVESTMENT | REWARDS | TALENT



Let's talk about the challenge your county is facing.

Jackson Baynard Named Henrico's Deputy County Manager for Public Safety



Jackson P.F. Baynard has been appointed to be Henrico County's deputy county manager for Public Safety.

He has served as Henrico's fire chief since 2023, having joined the Division of Fire as a firefighter in 2003 and rising through its leadership ranks. In addition, he served as Henrico's emergency manager in 2020 and 2021, helping to lead the county's initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic. His appointment as deputy county manager will be effective when a new fire chief is installed.

As deputy county manager for Public Safety, Baynard will provide leadership on a wide variety of public safety issues, including the development of a 60-bed recovery center at the Eastern Government Center campus for individuals struggling with addiction and the county's implementation of a modern emergency communications system for the region. He succeeds Michael Y. Feinmel, who served the post for four years and returned this month to service with the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office as its deputy commonwealth's attorney.

Baynard joins an executive staff of County Manager John A. Vithoukias that includes Deputy County Manager for Administration W. Brandon Hinton, Deputy County Manager for Community Affairs Monica Smith-Callahan and Deputy County Manager for Operations Steven J. Yob.

Baynard earned a bachelor's degree in health science from James Madison University and a master's degree in human resource management from the University of Richmond.

Goochland County Promotes Elizabeth McDonald to Deputy County Administrator

Elizabeth McDonald Deputy County Administrator for Operations



[Elizabeth McDonald](#) began her role as Deputy County Administrator for Operations in May 2026 after joining Goochland County in September 2025 as Director of Public Utilities.

During her time with the County, she has quickly established herself as a collaborative and forward-thinking leader committed to delivering reliable, high-quality services to residents.

A Michigan native, McDonald brings experience spanning utility operations, engineering, and public administration. She has broad municipal and county government experience developed through service in six localities across four states. In her role as Deputy County Administrator for operations, she supports countywide operations and strategic initiatives while overseeing several departments, including Information Technology, Parks & Recreation, Animal Protection, Human Services, and the Assessor's Office.

Jim Barbour Named Albemarle County Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation

Albemarle County is pleased to announce that Jim Barbour, CPSI, has been named Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation.

Jim brings more than 32 years of dedicated service to the department, guided by a strong commitment to public service and a deep understanding of our community's needs. He is passionate about delivering high-quality Parks and Recreation programs and services for all residents. Most recently, Jim has served as Superintendent of Parks since 2021.

Throughout his career, Jim has successfully managed complex park projects, led emergency response efforts, and advanced key strategic initiatives that support both departmental and County goals.

His extensive institutional knowledge, collaborative approach, and strong relationships across departments and within the community make him a trusted leader and problem solver. Jim's steady leadership and community-focused mindset will continue to strengthen our Parks and Recreation team.

Albemarle County is excited to welcome Jim into this new role and look forward to the experience and leadership he will bring. Please join us in congratulating Jim Barbour.



VACo LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY



2026 First Edition
May 22, 2026

www.vaco.org

VACo Releases 2026 Legislative Summary (First Edition)

The [Legislative Summary](#) details the actions of the 2025 General Assembly. It also includes information on legislation of interest to counties.

This edition contains links to bills through the General Assembly's Legislative Information System and includes studies and statistics of importance to counties.

[Read VACo's 2026 Legislative Summary](#)

VACo Contact: [Legislative Team](#)

Virginia Moves Toward Autonomous Vehicle Framework as Work Group Convenes



The first meeting of the Autonomous Driving Workgroup, of which VACo is a member, was held April 24. This meeting brought together state transportation officials, researchers, and stakeholders to assess the 2026 legislative session's outcomes, look at the current landscape regarding autonomous vehicles (AV) and chart a path forward for AV governance in the Commonwealth.

The work group, established under 2025 Va. Acts ch. 498 ([HB2627 Glass](#)), is tasked with identifying the operational, technical, and legal issues posed by autonomous driving systems and developing draft legislation to govern them. The group is required to complete its meetings by September 1 and deliver a final report by November 1 of this year.

2026 Legislative Session Updates

The 2026 session saw considerable activity on autonomous vehicles, but bills creating a general legal framework for commercial AV operations ([SB 670 Salim](#) / [HB 1125 Reid](#)) did not cross the finish line.

The General Assembly passed and the Governor signed [HB 1124 \(Clark\)](#) that will expand the work group's scope to include an assessment of the labor and workforce impacts of autonomous vehicles, including an overview of job losses and gains. The bill also requires the group to identify and engage stakeholders from the auto manufacturing industry and from passenger and product carrier businesses.

Where Virginia Stands Nationally

Staff with the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), presented a review of the automated vehicle legislative and regulatory landscape across the country.

Virginia currently has no specific legislation or regulation governing AV testing, permitting or deployment. That means AVs are not expressly prohibited, but there is also no defined framework for how they should operate, who oversees them, what insurance they need to carry, or how law enforcement should interact with them.

Most other states expressly permit AV deployment and have determined questions such as which agency has oversight, whether a licensed driver must be present, what liability coverage is required, and whether a law enforcement interaction plan (LEIP) is required. Virginia has none of these answers yet. The work group's job between now and September 2026 is to fill that gap.

Autonomous Vehicle Safety

Staff from the Virginia Transportation Research Council's (VTRC) delivered a data-driven safety assessment of automated driving systems (ADS).

The bottom line on overall safety is promising, but inconclusive. There is growing evidence that AVs crash less often per mile than human drivers, but the technology has not yet been deployed broadly enough across the full range of conditions human drivers encounter to draw firm conclusions.

There are many challenges of comparing ADS data to human benchmarks including: mileage data is self-reported and inconsistent across manufacturers; crash thresholds vary between jurisdictions; and injury statistics are inherently skewed because ADS vehicles often operate without passengers. Research on Waymo's performance at 56.7 million miles showed statistically significant reductions in certain airbag-level crash types, particularly intersection and single-vehicle crashes, though other crash categories showed no statistically significant difference.

Known Problem Areas with this Technology

Beyond aggregate crash rates, several specific operational challenges have emerged as AVs have been deployed in other states:

Passing school buses - Waymo is under investigation by both NHTSA and the NTSB for multiple incidents in which its vehicles passed stopped school buses with stop arms deployed.

Remote operations staffing - When ADS vehicles encounter situations they cannot navigate autonomously, they rely on remote assistants. Staffing these operations at scale has proven difficult. A 2025 San Francisco power outage knocked out 7,000 traffic signals and left Waymo vehicles frozen at intersections due to a shortage of available remote assistants.

First responder interactions - No standardized protocols exist for law enforcement to interact with AVs at crash scenes or traffic stops. Officers cannot shut down an ADS without physically entering a locked vehicle, and AVs have shown persistent difficulty yielding to emergency vehicles.

Unsafe stopping - AVs in California were struck from behind at nearly 5x the national average. These vehicles tend to stop abruptly in unfamiliar situations, sometimes in dangerous locations.

Environmental challenges - Glare and fog impair camera-based systems; dust and debris affect lidar, which is the vehicle's navigation technology. Wrong-way driving incidents have been recorded, and snow remains an open challenge.

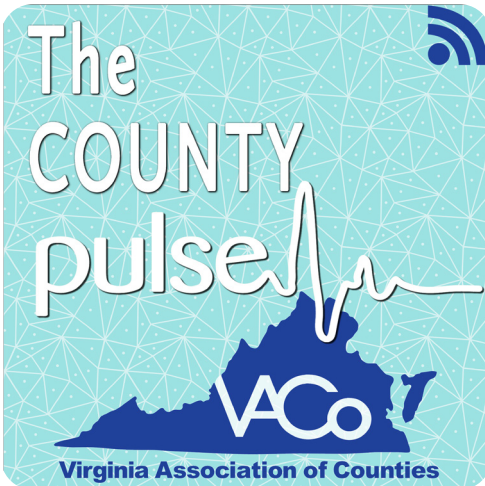
Commercial vehicles - Safety data for autonomous commercial trucks is even sparser than for passenger AVs, since most testing occurs on private facilities. These vehicles may provide other problems; for example a loaded truck at 65 mph may require 10 seconds of braking to stop. This means the software must account for and predict positions of other vehicles 10 seconds into the future, which is significantly more difficult than for passenger cars.

What's Next

The work group will continue monthly public meetings through August 2026. VDOT is actively seeking stakeholder input on an ongoing basis and encourages any parties not yet engaged to make contact. Written comments can be submitted at publicinput.com/autonomousdriving, and future meetings will be livestreamed on YouTube.

County leaders, if you have any input to share regarding local priorities as this regulatory and legislative framework is being discussed, feel free to contact VACo staff. To view all of the presentations referenced, click [here](#).

VACo Contact: [James Hutzler](#)



Energy Landscape of Virginia Series with Joe Lerch

Episode 26 | Dark Sky Parks and Reducing Light Pollution



[Listen to the Podcast.](#)

We visit two dark sky certified parks to learn how these places take advantage of a neglected and diminishing natural resource, to provide recreational and educational opportunities to the public. We also explore how communities can reduce light pollution to preserve the night sky and improve the health of natural and human built environments. The first part is an interview with Austin Peightel, Staunton River State Park manager, and Jayme Hanzak, president of the Chapel Hill Astronomical and Observational Society, to hear the story of how Virginia landed its first dark sky park. In the second part we hear from community leaders Becky Burr and Torney Van Acker to learn about Rappahannock County Park, Virginia's third, and only County, dark-sky designated park.

Where to find out more about topics covered in this episode

- [Dark Sky International | Protecting the night skies for present and future generations](#)
- [Virginia Chapter of Dark Sky International](#)
- [Virginia State Parks' International Dark Sky Parks](#)
- [Home - Chapel Hill Astronomical and Observing Society](#)
- [The New World Atlas of Artificial Sky Brightness | CIRES](#)
- [Rappahannock County Park](#)
- [Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection](#)
- [Rappahannock County International Dark Sky Park Silver Tier Application](#)
- [Photo 1](#) | [Photo 2](#)

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

Coastal Resilience Master Plan Released



A draft of the [Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan, Phase II](#) is now available for review and comment.

The public comment period is open from May 4-June 3. To provide comment on the draft of the Phase II plan, please visit the [Virginia Town Hall](#).

The final CRMP will be released in the Fall of 2026 following the review and consideration of public comments.

What's in the plan?

The CRMP is designed to provide data, tools, and information to help Virginia's governments make more informed decisions for flood resilience. Through a PDF plan and the [Coastal Resilience Web Explorer](#), it provides the Commonwealth with a comprehensive and unified baseline analysis of the threat of increasing flood exposure and impacts. The CRMP Phase II will include anticipated impacts from coastal, riverine, and rainfall-driven flooding.

In addition, the plan identifies opportunities to prioritize impactful flood resilience solutions. This includes:

- An inventory of government-led or supported projects and initiatives across the coastal region, which can be viewed via the Coastal Resilience Web Explorer.
- Information about financing flood resilience, including an inventory of funding opportunities which can be viewed via the Coastal Resilience Web Explorer.
- Recommendations for next steps to address flood resilience developed by the Coastal Resilience Technical Advisory Committee.

How is the plan developed?

Development of the CRMP Phase II is a collaborative process led by DCR which involves consulting teams, the Coastal Resilience Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and other external stakeholders. DCR has contracted with consulting teams led by Dewberry and Stantec to develop the CRMP Phase II, including for modeling future flooding, identifying flooding impacts, and identifying flood resilience opportunities.

What's different from Phase 1?

The [Coastal Resilience Master Plan Phase I](#) was released in 2021. The plan presented information about the future of coastal flooding in Virginia, including sea level rise, storm surge, and the resulting change in floodplains. However, it did not include other flood sources, like rainfall-driven flooding and riverine flooding. Phase II updates are primarily focused on including additional sources of flooding.

In addition, other elements of the Phase II plan, including the projects and initiatives inventory, financing and funding information, and TAC subcommittee recommendations, have been updated.

VACo Contact: [James Hutzler](#)

VDEM Announces Application Period for FY2024 Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Amendment



Virginia Department of Emergency Management

FEMA has announced the release of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) for the FY24 Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Amendment grant funding opportunity which includes a total of \$600M in funding for this nationally competitive program. This NOFO was amended by FEMA on April 30, 2026, opening the application period for a second time.

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) is currently accepting pre-applications and applications for this funding cycle. VDEM will provide additional details in the upcoming webinars listed below.

Any applications that were previously submitted will need to be resubmitted to FEMA. EM Grants has the functionality to copy previous applications, however we encourage you to please contact your grant administrator to discuss the resubmission process and provide any updated documentation that may be required.

VDEM Application Open Date: April 30, 2026

VDEM Application Close Date: June 30, 2026

The Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) grant program makes federal funds available for hazard mitigation activities with the goal of eliminating the risk of repetitive flood damage to buildings and structures insured under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in participating communities. FMA funds a variety of flood mitigation activities that are designed to reduce flood risk to policyholders in an effort to reduce the NFIP's financial exposure.

Application Submission

All project applications, and supporting documentation, must be submitted through [VDEM EM Grants](#). If you do not have a VDEM EM Grants account, please register for an account [here](#) and indicate the reason as FMA application, and the program category as Hazard Mitigation Assistance. VDEM staff will review and approve your account request, at which point you can begin the pre-application and application process in the EM Grants system.

Please do not attempt to submit your application in FEMA GO.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)



VAPDC FINDING FUNDING for the FUTURE

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- Wytheville, June 17, 9am-3pm | [REGISTER HERE for the JUNE Workshop](#)
- Fredericksburg, July 15, 9am-3pm | [REGISTER HERE for the JULY Workshop](#)
- Farmville, August 12, 9am-3pm | [REGISTER HERE for the AUGUST Workshop](#)

[Stay Tuned for More Details](#)

Registration is closed for the May Workshop!
Hotel 24 South, Staunton, VA



AGENDA

subject to change

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| • 9:00 – 10:00 AM | Registration, Coffee & Networking |
| • 10:00 – 11:45 AM | Session 1 — Aviation Panel |
| • 11:45 AM | Networking Break |
| • 12:00 – 1:00 PM | Lunch Plenary — Virginia Resources Authority |
| • 1:00 PM | Networking Break |
| • 1:30 – 3:00 PM | Session 2 — Housing Panel |

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)



Your Project, Your Procurement Path: A Guide to Selecting the Best Delivery Model

This guide walks **Virginia leaders** through the key considerations that influence procurement decisions. Start with the first question at the top and follow the yes/no path. Your responses will lead you to the delivery method that best aligns with your project goals—Performance Contracting, Design-Build, or Low-Bid Procurement.

Do I have the funding for my project?



NO



Evaluate Guaranteed Energy Savings Performance Contracting

- Has my district done a performance contract in the last 15 years?
- Has an ESCO told me I am not a good candidate for performance contracting in the past 3 years?



If **YES TO EITHER** of these, ask Schneider Electric about **Grant Programs for Your Project**



If **NO TO BOTH**, explore increasing capital funding through **Guaranteed Energy Savings Performance Contracting**



YES



Consider these “I” statements:

- Want a fixed price with no change orders
- Don't have the staff bandwidth to manage a designer, general contractor and subcontractors
- Have brand or equipment preferences
- Want the project completed faster than traditional low-bid construction
- Have had poor experiences with low-bid construction
- Want a single point of accountability
- Want to focus on lowest lifecycle cost, not the cheapest upfront cost
- Want help navigating DPI reviews and federal paperwork



If you answer **YES TO ANY** of these statements, utilize **Design-Build Delivery Method**



If you answer **NO TO ALL** of these, utilize **Low-Bid Procurement**

Let's discuss your options

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Located in Farmville, NC, Lonnie and Wanda’s children, Lonnie and Patricia, retain the positive reputation that their parents built. Pierce Insurance continues to provide benefit plans and administration services to public sector employers. Seventy years later, Pierce Insurance now services over 800,000 in-force policies. Our employer group range is from 75 to 340,000 employees/retirees.

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We focus on a collaborative partnership with our clients. We have the experience, knowledge, and long history of carrier and product selection, implementation, communication & benefits education, enrollment services, and a dedicated account management team. In addition, our back-office support includes simplified consolidated billing and reconciliation.

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| Vision | Critical Illness | Legal Plans |
| Short Term Disability | Life Insurance | Wellness |
| Long Term Disability | Hospital Indemnity | Pet Insurance |


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VIRGINIA ENERGY SENSE

VALUE YOUR POWER






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Learning simple energy-saving habits can help reduce power use and lower utility bills. One easy step as temperatures rise is setting your ceiling fan to rotate counterclockwise, which improves airflow and creates a cooling effect.

Both renters and homeowners can usually locate a switch on the fan to adjust the blade direction, helping maximize the circulation of cool air.

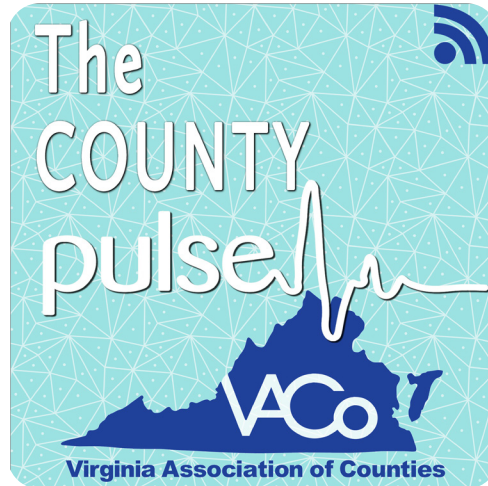
[Virginia Energy Sense \(VES\)](#) is the Commonwealth's statewide energy education initiative, managed by the State Corporation Commission. The program provides practical guidance and accessible resources to help Virginians understand energy use, conserve resources, and reduce everyday utility costs. Key services and resources include:

-  Easy-to-use online tools for tracking and reducing energy consumption, such as a [DIY Home Energy Audit](#)
-  Educational materials that explain energy efficiency and cost savings
-  In-person outreach and community education programs

VES equips individuals, families, schools, businesses, non-profits, local organizations and governments, and communities across the Commonwealth with reliable information to make informed energy decisions that support comfort, health, and financial stability while promoting long-term sustainability across the state. Through these efforts, VES helps Virginians save money, lower energy use, and support responsible environmental stewardship.

Visit www.virginiaenergysense.org to view our full library of resources. Connect with us directly via email at EnergySense@sc.virginia.gov. Or call 804-371-9141 to learn more about collaboration opportunities.

Together, we can help Virginians save energy and money. Let's connect.



Energy Landscape of Virginia Series with Joe Lerch

Episode 25 | Purchasing electricity for local governments from Dominion Energy: overview of the Virginia Energy Purchasing Governmental Association (VEPGA)



[Listen to the Podcast.](#)

In a conversation with Stephen Burr, Energy Manager for Arlington County, and John Lord, Energy Management Coordinator for Fairfax County Public Schools, we learn about the special contractual relationship localities have with Dominion Energy to purchase electricity through the Virginia Energy Purchasing Governmental Association (VEPGA). In addition to understanding the benefits accrued to counties by being members of VEPGA, we discuss an expected increase in electricity rates beginning July 1, 2026, that counties will need to prepare for.

Where to find out more about topics covered in this episode

- [Virginia Energy Purchasing Governmental Association \(VEPGA\)](#) - homepage
- [List of VEPGA Members as of May, 2025](#)

For more information (including password for certain website access for VEPGA members and to attend the April 15th membership meeting), contact VEPGA Secretary and Treasurer Sandra Harrington at sharrington@vml.org and 804.523.8524.

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

2026 Virginia Recovery Conference

Dear Colleague,

I am pleased to share an important opportunity for professionals working in Virginia's state and local government agencies – including county government officials, Community Services Boards, behavioral health authorities, regional jails, law enforcement, social services, public health organizations, and other public bodies supporting our communities.

The **2026 Virginia Recovery Conference**, hosted by the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority's non-profit foundation, will take place June 15-17, 2026, at the historic Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center in Roanoke, Virginia. This inaugural statewide gathering will highlight best practices in substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery. Featuring four general sessions and 20 breakout sessions, this event showcases real-world examples of how Virginia communities are putting opioid settlement funds to work to save lives and strengthen families.



Because interest in this conference is exceptionally high, attendance is capped at 400 participants, and it is expected to sell out quickly. We strongly encourage you to register as early as possible to secure your spot.

Special Benefits for 2026 Attendees:

- Opportunities for statewide networking and collaboration with leaders in prevention, treatment, recovery, and community partnerships as well as vendors and suppliers from across the Commonwealth.
- Access to practical tools and innovations communities are using to address the opioid epidemic.
- A complimentary professional portrait/headshot, taken onsite and provided at no additional cost.

Use of Opioid Settlement Funds:

Conference registration fees, hotel lodging, meals, and related travel expenses qualify as an allowable use of opioid settlement funds, as the event directly supports capacity-building, training, and knowledge-sharing related to substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery initiatives statewide.

Event & Registration Details:

- Dates: June 15-17, 2026
- Location: Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center, Roanoke, VA
- Capacity: 400 attendees (expected to sell out)
- Conference Details & Registration: <https://virginiarecovers.com/2026-virginia-recovery-conference/>

Sincerely,

[Tony McDowell](#) | Executive Director

Is Your County Ready to Explore AI? UVA Can Help



UVA

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The University of Virginia's School of Data Science is offering no-cost AI Innovation Sprints to Virginia local governments. These structured, two-hour workshops help county teams identify practical, low-risk AI applications tailored to their operations – no technical background required.

County staff face rising constituent expectations, tighter budgets, and rapid technology changes. AI has real potential to help, but most local government teams don't have a clear starting point. The AI Innovation Sprint provides one.

Through a facilitated process developed by UVA researchers, your team will work through a real challenge area – whether that's permitting, transportation, constituent services, or something else – and walk away with a prioritized list of AI use-case ideas evaluated for feasibility, value, and risk. Your team also receives a reusable innovation toolkit to apply to future challenges independently.

The commitment is light: one 30-minute planning call and two 2-hour workshop sessions with 8–12 participants from your county. Any role or level of technical expertise is welcome.

Interested? Contact Siri Russell, Associate Dean for Community and Government Partnerships, at the UVA School of Data Science: sds_caal@virginia.edu.



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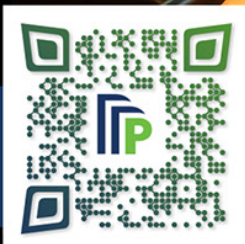
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You are VAcorp

You are not merely a customer of VAcorp; you **are** VAcorp! We are both owned and governed by you – our members! VAcorp is created under 15.2-2700 of the local government code where all assets and surplus belong to the members. In addition, VAcorp is controlled by a Supervisory Board that is elected from and by our members. The Board determines and approves all major risk pool decisions, and as a voting member, you have a voice in the decisions that matter most.

Know Who You Are

Because you are VAcorp itself, we think it is critical that you understand exactly what VAcorp is and why it exists. Many simply think of us as their “insurance carrier” – writing customized coverages and handling claims when they occur – but we are so much more!

Our History

The Birth of Risk Pools

VAcorp is not an insurance company, but rather a Risk Pool.

Unstable economic conditions in the mid-1980s led to a commercial insurance crisis with ballooning premiums and widespread policy cancellations. As a result, Risk Pools began to form as an alternative to volatile traditional carriers, allowing Pool members to exert more control over their coverages and costs. Today, almost all public sector entities throughout the country get their coverage from Risk Pools rather than from commercial insurance companies.

VAcorp’s Origin

VAcorp was founded by a handful of Virginia counties in 1993. The ultimate goals of the program were to provide **cost stability**, the most **comprehensive coverages** possible, and **custom services** tailored specifically to the unique needs of our members. While we are pleased by how well our prices compare against the competition, our goal was never to guarantee the lowest cost. Instead, we promised to avoid the wild price swings that we’ve seen in other providers and provide stable pricing year after year, and that is exactly what we have delivered. VAcorp rates are actually **lower today in 2024 than they were in 1993!**

VAcorp’s Growth

Today, VAcorp is the **largest self-insurance risk pool** for public sector entities in the Commonwealth with a membership retention rate of better than 98%. Over the years, we have expanded beyond counties to include municipalities, school divisions, authorities, volunteer fire & rescue companies, state agencies, and non-profits funded by taxpayer dollars. **Over 560 members** have joined VAcorp, including 8 of the 10 largest counties, 8 of the 10 largest cities, and 8 of the 10 largest school divisions. We believe that the extraordinary success of the program can be attributed to our unwavering commitment to our founding principles.

VAcorp Exists to Serve You

VAcorp was created solely to serve Virginia's public sector entities, and from day one until now, we have never lost sight of that purpose. Because we answer only to our members, every decision is designed to benefit the group over the long haul.

VAcorp advocates for local government through a myriad of partnerships with affiliated associations including: VACo, VSBA, VLGMA, VASS, VFGOA, VASBO, LGA, Regional Jail Association, PDC, etc. While there is a cost associated with these partnerships, they add value to the group by aiding in our ability to lobby the General Assembly on behalf of our members.

You may not always see the immediate payoff, but every VAcorp decision is made in alignment with our vision to serve our members and promote the health and longevity of your program.

Take a look at a few of VAcorp's milestones over the years:

- **1993** - VAcorp is established with 12 founding members and less than \$700,000 in annual contribution.
- **1998** - VAcorp terminates service contract with claims administration vendor and hires staff to promote more control and efficiency.
- **1999** - VAcorp offers coverage to K-12 Public Schools across the Commonwealth.
- **2001** - VAcorp begins offering Public Officials Liability coverage in response to VARisk offering limited coverage.
- **2004** - VAcorp begins providing Environmental Liability coverage to all members at no additional cost. Even in 2024, VAcorp is the only provider offering this coverage with a low \$25,000 deductible. Other providers offer this coverage with a \$250,000 deductible.
- **2008** - VAcorp responded to the great recession by freezing rates and providing financial relief with over \$8,000,000 in dividends to members.
- **2011** - VAcorp introduces Line of Duty Act (LODA) coverage, creates the only LODA trust in the state, and absorbs existing LODA losses in response to the state pushing this cost to the local level. VAcorp paid all of its members' 2010 past liability for over \$1,000,000.
- **2013** - VAcorp merges with the VSBA Self-Insurance Group and assumes their liabilities to prevent School Boards from being assessed. This action saves Local Governments in excess of \$5,000,000.
- **2013** - VAcorp becomes the first to offer Cyber Risk coverage in Virginia offering the broadest coverage available to local governments anywhere in the US.
- **2016** - VAcorp offers Student Accident and Catastrophic Accident coverage in order to fill VHSL coverage gaps.
- **2020** - VAcorp provides over \$5,000,000 in rate credits during the COVID pandemic to assist members.
- **2023** - VAcorp includes security risk management coverage (active shooter) for all members (coverage has been included for Schools since 2013).





OneDigital is thrilled to be one of VACo’s Premier Partners.

What truly distinguishes OneDigital as a leading **insurance, financial services, and HR consulting advisory firm** is our holistic approach to creating environments that enable people to do their best work and live their best lives. OneDigital understands that counties face rising insurance costs while still struggling to attract/retain talent. This is why we use proprietary software to provide accurate and predictable insurance consulting projections for those core benefits that impact your bottom line and incorporate solutions to improve retention. While voluntary benefits may be the focus of other providers, OneDigital has the expertise in alternative funding strategies, best-in-class analytics, and an in-house actuarial team.

OneDigital has a track record of providing cost-saving solutions to counties. This has been achieved through creative funding strategies, rate holds, and exclusive partnerships with various carriers. One of these exclusive partnerships is through VACORP and Anthem Life. OneDigital is responsible for the inception of the Virginia Local Disability Program (VLDP) which is through the Virginia Retirement System (VRS). Our team of fierce advocates negotiated a 5-year locked rate, including short-term and long-term disability benefits. Your division may already work with us in this capacity, as we currently serve over 270 public sector entities in the VLDP program.



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- Communications

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The Virginia Association of Counties accepts employment ads in a PDF file or a link to a job site. Please include information for applying, and a link to other important information. Please do not fax your employment ad. VACo members are not charged for placing an employment ad. **The cost is \$100 per ad for non-VACo members.** VACo publishes the ad on its website and mobile app as well as the upcoming County Connections issue. If you have any questions or concerns, please email [Valerie Russell](mailto:Valerie.Russell@vacounty.org).

[PRINCIPAL PLANT OPERATOR \(NIGHT SHIFT\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 19

[DEPUTY REGISTRAR](#) | Montgomery County | Posted May 19

[DEPUTY BUILDING OFFICIAL](#) | Campbell County | Posted May 19

[LIBRARIAN – ETTRICK MATOACA LIBRARY \(FULL-TIEM\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 18

[SENIOR CLINICIAN \(CHILD & ADOLESCENT SERVICES-DETENTION SITE\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 18

[SENIOR RESIDENTIAL COUNSELOR \(IN HOME\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 18

[SENIOR CLINICIAN \(CHILD & ADOLESCENT SERVICES\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 18

[PARTS DRIVER](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 18

[RESIDENTIAL COUNSELOR \(HUNTER'S CHASE\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 18

[TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANT \(CHESTERFIELD EMPLOYMENT SERVICES\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 18

[DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIALIST \(PART C SPEECH/LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 18

[PRINCIPAL LABOR CREW CHIEF](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 18

[CARPENTER](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 18

[PLANNER/GIS TECHNICIAN](#) | Fluvanna County | Posted May 18

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[EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITES](#) | Spotsylvania County | Posted May 18

[EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR](#) | Culpeper County Human Services (DSS) | Posted May 15

[ZONING & CODE ENFORCEMENT PLANNER](#) | Roanoke County | Posted May 15

[ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR](#) | Montgomery County | Posted May 15

[ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES](#) | Loudoun County | Posted May 12

[BUILDING CODES COMBINATION INSPECTOR](#) | City of Harrisonburg | Posted May 12

[DEPUTY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR](#) | Stafford County | Posted May 12

[PRINCIPAL PLANT OPERATOR \(MAINTENANCE\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 12

[MHSS EMPLOYMNET ASSISTANT \(PART-TIME\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 11

[SENIOR ACCOUNTING TECHNICIAN](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 11

[MAINTENANCE WORKER](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 11

[EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES](#) | Spotsylvania County | Posted May 11

[CIVIL ENGINEER II](#) | Roanoke County | Posted May 11

[CIVIL ENGINEER I](#) | Roanoke County | Posted May 11

[HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR \(ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 8

[SENIOR REAL ESTATE APPRAISER](#) | City of Salem | Posted May 8

[DESK SUPPORT TECHNICIAN I](#) | Botetourt County | Posted May 7

[COUNTY ENGINEER](#) | Pulaski County | Posted May 7

[EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR](#) | Pulaski County Public Service Authority | Posted May 7

[ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER](#) | City of Charlottesville | Posted May 7

[FIRE MEDIC RECRUIT](#) | Prince George County | Posted May 7

[UTILITY WORKER I](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 6

[DEPUTY CHIEF](#) | City of Harrisonburg Fire Department | Posted May 5

[PROPERTY MAINTENANCE INSPECTOR](#) | City of Harrisonburg | Posted May 5

[STRUCTURAL BUILDING INSPECTOR](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 4

[PROPERTY MAINTENANCE INSPECTION SUPERVISOR](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 4

[MHSS EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANT \(EVENING SHIFT\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 4

[MHSS EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANT \(DAYTIME SHIFT\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 4

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[LEISURE COACH](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted May 4

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[DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT](#) | Culpeper County | Posted April 28

[BUDGET MANAGER](#) | Culpeper County | Posted April 28

[CRISIS CLINICIAN \(FULL TIME\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted April 28

[CRISIS CLINICIAN \(PART-TIME\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted April 28

[RESIDENTIAL AIDE \(WOODPECKER\)](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted April 28

[CUSTODIAN](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted April 28

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[SENIOR ENGINEER](#) | Chesterfield County | Posted April 27

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VACo exists to support county officials and to effectively represent, promote and protect the interests of counties to better serve the people of Virginia.

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