

VACo COUNTY OFFICIALS' SUMMIT

Thursday, August 13, 2026

[Omni Richmond Hotel](#) | [Agenda](#)

Confirmed Speakers Lineup



**The
Honorable
David L.
Bulova**

Secretary of
Natural
Resources

Session 1
9-945am



**The
Honorable
Josephus
Allmond**

Chief
Energy
Officer

Session 1
9-945am



**The
Honorable
Dr. Jeffrey O.
Smith**

Secretary of
Education

Session 2
945-1030am



**The
Honorable
Mark D.
Sickles**

Secretary of
Finance

Session 2
945-1030am



**The
Honorable
Katie K.
Frazier**

Secretary of
Agriculture and
Forestry

Session 3
1045-1130am



**The
Honorable
Carrie H.
Cheney**

Secretary of
Commerce and
Trade

Session 3
1045-1130am

We have a powerhouse lineup confirmed for the County Officials Summit featuring several of Governor Spanberger's cabinet members. They will talk about their vision for counties.

REGISTER
TODAY!

VACo DRPT Webinar: Virginia Transit & Rail Update: Funding, Policy, and What's Ahead

Why Rail and Public Transportation are Important



200,000 households in Virginia are without access to a car

1 million Virginians have a disability that make transportation difficult

35 hours of time spent in traffic per year, on average, nationwide

45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by using transit

75% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by switching to freight rail

On June 24, VACo hosted a webinar with DRPT Director Mariia Zimmerman covering the state of rail and public transportation in Virginia and what it means for counties.

The webinar covered many topics including:

- **Why counties matter to transit.** Local land use decisions, infrastructure, planning, and funding all shape how transit works on the ground.
- **DRPT's role.** An overview of the agency's mission, its FY26-31 funding responsibilities, and how it works alongside VDOT and the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRRA).
- **The case for investment.** Data on Virginians without car access, the disability population relying on transit, and the economic and emissions benefits of rail and public transportation.
- **Virginia's transit and rail network.** A snapshot of the state's 41 transit systems, human service providers, MPOs, railroads, Virginia Railway Express, Amtrak, and the Virginia Breeze intercity bus service.
- **Funding programs.** An overview of the newly approved FY27-32 Six-Year Improvement Program (\$7.4 billion), the Commonwealth Rail Fund, Rail Preservation and FREIGHT grant programs, the Rail Industrial Access grant, and the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund.
- **Support for vulnerable populations.** Human service transportation grants, the Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP), and the Rural Transit Assistance Program.
- **Getting transit started locally.** How counties can use MERIT Demonstration grants to pilot new or expanded transit service.

What's ahead. General Assembly-directed studies, the [Statewide Rail Plan update](#), and upcoming changes to the statewide transit operating formula (MERIT), with CTB recommendations expected in September 2026.

The slides presented during the meeting can be found [here](#). The full webinar is available to watch [here](#).

VACo Contact: [James Hutzler](#)

Joint Subcommittee Considering Consolidation of Virginia Elections into Federal Cycle Resumes Work



A legislative study group charged with examining the effects of moving elections in Virginia to even-numbered years has begun the second year of its work, holding meetings on July 16 and July 21 ahead of a planned final meeting on August 3. The Joint Subcommittee to Study the Consolidation and Scheduling of General Elections was created through legislation enacted in the 2025 General Assembly session and directed to undertake a two-year study of the effects of consolidating state and/or local elections with the federal election cycle. The legislation directing the study charges the group with examining the effects on voter turnout and campaign costs, implications for campaign finance rules, and potential cost savings, among other elements, and requires recommendations to include specific proposals for how such consolidation would be accomplished, such as extending or shortening the terms of certain offices to coincide with a different election cycle, and any statutory and Constitutional changes that may be necessary. Chesterfield County Supervisor Jessica Schneider serves on the Joint Subcommittee.

The Joint Subcommittee's meetings in 2025 featured briefings on the history of Virginia's "off-year" elections; the Constitutional and statutory changes that would be necessary to transition to holding elections in even-numbered years; differences in federal and state campaign finance laws; perspectives from local governments and general registrars on the effects of holding fewer elections on local budgets and local election administration; and the interaction of Virginia's gubernatorial election schedule with the state's biennial budget cycle.

[More ELECTIONS on Next Page](#)

Subcommittee members discussed a wide range of issues during the four meetings held last year, including the national interest in Virginia's statewide elections under the current schedule and whether Virginia elections would be more or less nationalized if they were held concurrently with federal elections; whether such a change would benefit one party or the other; whether consolidating elections would promote voter turnout and a more representative electorate; whether consolidating elections would lead to federal laws and regulations for the conduct of federal elections overshadowing Virginia-specific laws; and whether consolidating elections would reduce or increase the influence of money in Virginia politics. VACo reported on these meetings in previous editions of *County Connections* (recap articles may be found at [this link](#) and [this link](#)).

Joint Subcommittee meetings this year are intended to be focused on discussing specific measures to implement consolidation. At the July 16 meeting, representatives from the Karsh Institute of Democracy at the University of Virginia [presented findings from their research](#) on a variety of issues associated with consolidation. The researchers found that consolidating elections would lead to greater voter turnout, particularly among young adults, minorities, and low-income voters, and reported that a majority of respondents to a survey conducted by the researchers supported consolidation. On the other hand, the report notes that consolidation could also encourage nationalization of state and local elections by "dilut[ing] focus and attention on local issues." Stakeholders interviewed by the researchers held varying views on the merits of consolidation, but consistently stressed the importance of outreach to voters if consolidation moved forward.

At the Subcommittee's July 21 meeting, members discussed two proposed approaches to Constitutional amendment language that would start the process of consolidation. After discussing the merits and drawbacks of including more detailed language in the Constitution or relying more heavily on statutory changes, members opted to advance [the more detailed proposed language](#) as a basis for discussion at the Subcommittee's next meeting on August 3, which will also feature discussion about proposed statutory changes. The draft that will be discussed further on August 3 would require elections for the governing body of any county, city, or town to be held in November of even-numbered years. It would also set out a timeline for transitioning the House of Delegates, state Senate, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, and certain Constitutional offices to even-year elections, which will require shortening or lengthening terms by one year. Whether to propose shortening or lengthening terms, and how to address the variety of local governing body structures in adjusting terms, will be topics of discussion for the August 3 meeting.

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)

VA250

Celebrating Virginia's History: Aldie Mill/NOVA Parks

Visit Loudoun County!



Discover a part of Northern Virginia's industrial heritage - the restored gristmill at Aldie Mill Historic Park, in Aldie. Built between 1807 and 1809, the Aldie Gristmill was once the largest factory of its kind in Loudoun County. The mill's metal waterwheels are operational, and visitors can watch grinding demonstrations. Tours and demonstrations are available during weekends between April and November.

SOURCE: VA250.org

VACo 2026 REGIONAL MEETINGS

- **REGION 2** | May 27 | York County
- **REGIONS 6&7** | June 17 | Greene County
- **REGION 1** | June 22 | New Kent County
- **REGION 10** | July 9 | Henry County
- **REGION 8** | July 15 | Fairfax County
- **REGION 4** | July 28 | Greenville County
- **REGION 9** | August 5 | Alleghany County
- **REGION 3** | August 18 | Chesterfield County
- **REGIONS 11&12** | September | Montgomery County
- **REGIONS 12&13** | September | Russell County
- **REGION 5** | TBA

Thank you to the Virginia Association of Counties for supporting local leaders and advocating for Virginia's communities in service to the people of the Commonwealth.

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Sarah Grammer, Wortie Ferrell, Massie Valentine, Will Valentine, Stacey Berkley

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Cumberland County Board of Supervisors Hires New County Administrator

CUMBERLAND, VIRGINIA (July 15, 2026) – The Cumberland County Board of Supervisors is pleased to announce the execution of an employment contract with Summer Medina, who will serve as the County's next County Administrator. The Board formally approved the agreement during its regular meeting on July 14, 2026.

Mrs. Medina will officially begin her duties with Cumberland County on Monday, August 3, 2026.

"We are excited to welcome Summer Medina to Cumberland County," said the Cumberland County Administrative Staff. "Following a thorough recruitment process, the Board is confident that her experience, leadership, and commitment to public service make her an excellent choice to lead our organization. We look forward to working alongside her as we continue serving the citizens of Cumberland County."



Mrs. Medina brings experience in local government administration and planning to Cumberland County. Prior to accepting this position, she served as the Assistant Town Manager for the Town of New Market and most recently worked as a Planner for Goochland County. She earned both her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Public Administration degrees from James Madison University, proudly referring to herself as a "Double Duke."

A native of neighboring Powhatan County, Mrs. Medina has longstanding ties to the region.

"I grew up on a farm on the western edge of Powhatan and have spent a lot of time in Cumberland County over the years, so I'm excited to have the opportunity to serve a community that has always felt close to home," said Medina.

She added, "I chose a career in local government because it provides the opportunity to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the communities and people we serve. I'm excited to become part of the Cumberland community and look forward to getting to know its residents, businesses, and organizations."

The Board of Supervisors extends their appreciation to County staff for their continued professionalism and dedication throughout the leadership transition and looks forward to working with Mrs. Medina as she begins serving the citizens of Cumberland County.

Statewide Interoperability Committee Begins Work on SB 525 Review and Recommendations



The Virginia Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee ([SIEC](#)) met on July 22 to begin work on [SB 525 \(Stuart\)](#), legislation continued to the 2027 General Assembly Session with a letter from the Chair of the Senate Local Government Committee asking SIEC to evaluate the proposal. The intent of the legislation was to strengthen interoperability among public safety agencies by requiring localities participating in certain mutual aid agreements to provide the technical information necessary to program public safety radio equipment, including radio frequencies, encryption keys, and other programming data needed for emergency responses. The committee dedicated a work session to discussing implementation of the new law alongside broader interoperability initiatives.

The letter also requested that the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, in consultation with the SIEC, to evaluate Virginia's public safety communications infrastructure and future funding needs, underscoring the Commonwealth's continued focus on strengthening emergency communications statewide. A subcommittee of the committee was created to draft a letter on the issue for final review by the full SIEC.

Beyond the SB 525 work session, committee members discussed updates to Virginia's Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan ([SCIP](#)), planning for the 2026 Emerging Technology Conference, radio encryption coordination and encryption key (CKR) deconfliction efforts, and received roundtable updates from stakeholders across the Commonwealth. These discussions continue the committee's work to improve interoperability, coordinate emerging technologies, and support reliable communications for Virginia's first responders.

SIEC was honored by the attendance of Senator Danny Diggs and Public Safety Deputy Secretary Dillon Taylor, Esq.

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

Update on FOIA Council July Meetings



Three subcommittees of the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory [Council](#) met July 21-22 to review draft legislation and hear testimony on topics that could directly impact all public bodies, including local governments. The [subcommittees](#) did not act on any proposals and will meet again in August to continue their discussions.

Meetings Subcommittee

The Meetings Subcommittee reviewed a [draft bill](#) from Sen. Bennett-Parker that would further specify the time and place for posting proposed meeting agendas. VACo suggested that posting requirements for agendas should mirror the existing requirements for posting meeting notices.

The subcommittee also discussed [HB463 \(Cohen\)](#), which would amend the definition of “meeting” to allow more than two members of a public body to gather without triggering open meeting requirements. Testimony from Fairfax County Public Schools focused on how the current definition places greater restrictions on larger public bodies than on smaller ones. HB463 would also ease quorum requirements when members are participating electronically by allowing virtual

participants to be counted toward a quorum under certain circumstances. Subcommittee members noted that current law already permits more than two members to gather for information-sharing purposes, provided no public business is conducted. The discussion also explored alternative approaches to defining a meeting, including using a quorum, a percentage of members, or a fixed number of members as the threshold.

Records Subcommittee

The Records Subcommittee considered [HB313 \(Wachsmann\)](#), which raises the question of whether Virginia's FOIA rights should extend to property owners who are not Virginia citizens. Members were provided with the example of a North Carolina resident who owns property in Virginia but is not currently eligible to submit a FOIA request related to that property. The proposed legislation, however, would not be limited to property records. The subcommittee suggested any change should be limited to owners of real property, and expressed concern as to how FOIA officers would verify whether a requester is a property owner.

Other testimony presented to the subcommittee included the growing impact of AI-generated FOIA requests and significant differences in the costs estimated by local governments to fulfill similar records requests from a local reporter.

Remedies Subcommittee

The Remedies Subcommittee focused on enforcement of FOIA rights, including assessment of civil penalties and notice requirements. [HB160 \(Simon\)](#) would add reliance on advice from a public body's legal counsel to the list of mitigating factors a court may consider when assessing penalties. VACo testified in support of this provision. The bill would also require that proceedings be brought against officers, employees, and members of public bodies in their individual capacities in order to seek penalties.

VACo testified in opposition to [HB159 \(Simon\)](#), which would eliminate the requirement to provide formal notice before a hearing to enforce FOIA rights.

The Council's subcommittee meeting materials and livestream information are available through the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council website [here](#).

VACo Contact: [Julie Whitlock, Esq.](#)

VDEM Highlights Hurricane Readiness, Local Coordination Ahead of Peak Storm Season



The Virginia Department of Emergency Management ([VDEM](#)) is reminding local officials that it only takes one storm to have a significant impact on the Commonwealth. During the 2026 Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST) Hurricane Readiness [Briefing](#), state officials emphasized that Virginia's emergency preparedness efforts remain fully engaged and urged local governments to continue planning and coordination efforts as the season enters its most active months.

Meteorologists noted there is a 97 percent chance that El Niño conditions will persist through spring 2027. While El Niño typically suppresses Atlantic hurricane activity by increasing wind shear, officials cautioned that Virginia has experienced several significant storms during previous El Niño years, including Hurricanes Fran, Bonnie, Joaquin, and Florence. The message to local governments was clear: preparedness remains essential regardless of seasonal forecasts.

Throughout the briefing, VDEM reinforced a guiding principle of emergency management: all disasters are local disasters. Response begins at the local level, is regionally coordinated, managed by the Commonwealth, and supported by federal partners when necessary. [Emergency managers](#) serve primarily as coordinators, bringing together agencies and resources to support local response and recovery efforts.

[More HURRICANE on Next Page](#)

State officials also reviewed the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan ([COVEOP](#)), which provides the framework for coordinating disaster response across state agencies while supporting local governments, businesses, and residents. The plan establishes responsibilities for executive branch agencies and includes a dedicated Hurricane and Tropical Storm Annex outlining decision points before, during, and after storm landfall.

For local governments, hurricane planning extends well beyond coastal communities. Officials stressed the importance of evacuation planning, public communication, continuity of operations, insurance preparedness, and public education through Virginia's Know Your Zone program. The briefing also highlighted the complexities of evacuation decisions, including traffic management, contraflow operations, sheltering, and re-entry planning, all of which require close coordination between localities and state agencies.

Representatives from VDOT, the Virginia Department of Health, Virginia State Police, the Department of Military Affairs, the Department of Social Services, and VDEM outlined their respective hurricane preparedness and response responsibilities. Topics included traffic management, public health coordination, debris removal, mass care and shelter operations, damage assessments, resource requests, and emergency communications, illustrating the whole-of-government approach Virginia employs during major disasters.

The briefing also showcased several tools available to support local preparedness, including the Virginia Flood Monitoring System, enhanced statewide 9-1-1 support capabilities, enterprise GIS mapping resources, and VDEM's Partners in Preparedness program, which works with local governments and community organizations to improve outreach and disaster readiness across the Commonwealth.

As hurricane season progresses toward its historical peak, VDEM encouraged local officials to review emergency plans, strengthen partnerships with state agencies, and ensure residents are familiar with available preparedness resources. Hurricane evacuation guides, inland impacts guides, and additional planning materials are available through VDEM to assist communities in preparing before storms threaten Virginia.

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

Penny Rounding Workgroup Holds First Meeting



The Department of Taxation convened a stakeholder group on July 23 to assist in developing a uniform procedure for localities to adjust bills and account balances for payments made in cash to address shortages of pennies. Since the United States Mint ceased production of penny coins last year, local offices have experienced problems in securing pennies to make exact change for taxpayers who pay bills in cash; to address these issues, House Finance Chair Vivian Watts introduced HB 954 at the request of the Treasurers Association of Virginia and with the support of VACo. As introduced, the bill provided broad authority for local governing bodies to set out procedures for the adjustment of bills and account balances for taxes and other charges due to the locality, which could include rounding to the nearest five-cent increment or the write-down or write-off of sums due that are less than five cents. The bill was amended in the Senate to provide that this authority would expire July 1, 2027; in the meantime, the Department of Taxation was directed to evaluate options and recommend a uniform procedure for localities to address making change for cash payments. Henrico County's Treasury Director, Jennifer Casanova, is serving as a subject matter expert on the workgroup.

At the July 23 meeting, staff at the Department of Taxation shared findings from their research on how other states and other countries have addressed the elimination of the penny coin or equivalent denomination. In general, there is consensus among other countries that taxes should be calculated on the exact, pre-rounding amount of the tax base; rounding is performed only on the final payment and only for cash payments, not electronic transactions. Few states have taken action on this topic, with only Indiana and Kentucky passing legislation to govern rounding in cash transactions. Indiana requires the state and localities to round down when collecting cash payments, while Kentucky provides for symmetric rounding (rounding up or down as appropriate) to the nearest five-cent increment for local government collections. Legislation has been proposed in Pennsylvania and Ohio, but not enacted.

Department staff raised a series of questions for stakeholders to consider, including whether symmetric rounding or always rounding down would be the more workable approach; whether local financial systems would be able to accommodate rounding or would require a transition period; and whether writing off small balances of less than five cents or carrying them forward would be operationally feasible. Subject matter experts noted that localities collect cash payments for transactions other than taxes, including utility bills, library fines, and other fees. There was also discussion about how state agencies handle cash transactions. The Department plans to conduct a survey of localities to compile answers to these questions and will solicit written comment on its draft report. A final report is due to the General Assembly by November 1.

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)

VACo Hits the Road for the 2026 Regional Meetings Season



Thank you York County for hosting the VACo Region 2 Meeting on May 27.

VACo staff have been on the road this spring and summer visiting counties across the Commonwealth for its annual Regional Meetings. Regional Meetings allow local elected officials, county administrators and legislators an opportunity to discuss challenges and offer solutions. These meetings help steer VACo in the development of its legislative program. Below is a recap of the meetings held in May and June.

VACo Region 2 – York County

VACo held its Region 2 Meeting on May 27 in York County at the Freight Shed. VACo was pleased to be joined by Delegate Thornton, who highlighted legislation he sponsored last session and expressed appreciation for the chance to hear county priorities firsthand. Staff from Congressman Wittman's office also attended the event.

Preserving local authority was a central theme, with counties continuing to emphasize support for local control over housing decisions, solar siting, and by-right development. Localities in the region discussed their opposition to unfunded mandates and the cost of collective bargaining requirements. Veterans' tax exemptions drew significant attention given the scale of foregone revenue they represent for several counties, and counties also raised interest in vaping tax authority, excess clerks' fees, and better reflecting the true cost of operating constitutional offices.

[More REGIONAL on Next Page](#)

Fire and EMS remained a pressing concern, with several counties still relying on volunteer departments unable to afford a transition to paid staff. Housing affordability was widely discussed, particularly the challenge of keeping younger residents and workers in their home counties, along with calls for stronger incentives and tools to support development. Education priorities included support for the 1% sales tax option for school capital, workforce and career/technical education programs, and continued K-12 funding. Infrastructure needs, including broadband, water/wastewater capacity limiting land development, and the power/water demands of data centers were also raised. County leaders discussed the need for regional collaboration and the need to work together to shift the narrative around local governments being obstructionist.

VACo is grateful to the members, legislators, staff, and business partners who participated, and extends its appreciation to York County and staff at the Freight Shed for their hospitality.

VACo Regions 6 and 7 – Greene County

VACo held its Regions 6 and 7 Meeting on June 17 in Greene County at Guildford Farm. VACo was pleased to be joined by staff from the office of Delegate Karen Hamilton.

Opposition to a collective bargaining mandate was a dominant theme, with counties stressing that any such requirement should remain subject to the budgetary discretion of local Boards of Supervisors. Members highlighted concerns about the bonuses for state-supported local employees (such as employees of Constitutional offices and staff in local departments of social services) that were included in the state's caboose budget enacted earlier this year; because the state funding only covers positions recognized by the state, counties have had to decide whether to use local dollars to provide comparable bonuses to locally funded employees to maintain internal pay equity.

Preserving local land use authority was another shared priority, with counties emphasizing that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work across the Commonwealth. Several localities voiced their support for impact fees regarding residential development and rezoning.

Transportation and infrastructure needs were widely discussed, including secondary road funding and the widening of I-81. Water infrastructure was also a significant concern, with counties raising concerns over PFAS contamination and the need to test biosolids, as well as the financial strain of rising private water/wastewater and energy rates. Fire, EMS, and mental health support remained pressing issues. Other priorities included school funding and veterans' tax exemptions straining local budgets.

VACo is grateful to the members, legislators, staff, and business partners who participated, and extends its appreciation to Greene County and staff at Guildford Farm for their hospitality.

New Kent County Hosts VACo Region 1 Meeting at Colonial Downs

VACo held its Region 1 Meeting on June 22 in New Kent County. VACo was pleased to be joined by representatives from the offices of State Senator Aird and Congresswoman McClellan.

Preserving local land use authority was a top priority region-wide, with counties opposing state-imposed growth targets and pushing to retain local control over zoning. Local authority particularly



Thank you New Kent County for hosting the VACo Region 1 Meeting on June 22.

for data centers, utility scale solar, and battery storage was specifically mentioned. Counties also raised concerns over the cost of collective bargaining mandates and unfunded mandates more broadly, favoring incentive-based approaches over penalties on issues like housing.

Infrastructure needs including water, sewer, broadband were discussed as were many varying transportation needs. Counties also pointed to regional partnerships like the Central Virginia Transportation Authority as valuable tools for tackling transportation needs collectively. Housing and workforce challenges were widely discussed, including out-of-state salary competition drawing workers away from the region and the need for more housing and childcare support. Education funding and local taxing authority remained top concerns, along with support for the space industry and Wallops Island, farmland preservation, and tourism and economic development.

VACo is grateful to the members, legislators, staff, and business partners who participated, and extends its appreciation to New Kent County and staff at Colonial Downs for their hospitality.

VACo Contact: [James Hutzler](#)



VACo Analysis of 2026-2028 Biennium Budget

The process of developing a new biennium budget concluded on Monday, June 29, with the General Assembly adopting 14 amendments proposed by Governor Spanberger to the budget approved by the legislature on June 22. A compromise proposal on the tax treatment of data centers broke a months-long impasse; additional revenue from a new electricity consumption tax on data center operators, as well as a revenue reforecast commissioned by the Governor and unveiled in early June, provided additional revenues to support a variety of spending items included in the budget.

An analysis of budget items of importance to local governments follows below. Other resources that may be useful to local governments include the Compensation Board's memorandum outlining provisions of interest to Constitutional officers (available at [this link](#)), approved Compensation Board budgets for individual offices (available at [this link](#)), and the Department of Education's calculation tool for distributions to school divisions (available at [this link](#)).

[READ THE ANALYSIS](#)

VACo LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY



2026 Second Edition
July 8, 2026

www.vaco.org

VACo Releases 2026 Legislative Summary (Second Edition)

The [Legislative Summary](#) details the actions of the 2026 General Assembly. It also includes information on legislation of interest to counties. This Second Edition includes a budget summary.

This edition also 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 Association of Planning District Commissions Honors President's Award Winner

The Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) has announced Ms. Lou Ann Jessee Wallace as the recipient of its 2026 President's Award. The award was presented at a recent private event in St. Paul, Virginia. The VAPDC President's Award recognizes an individual who has been involved directly in planning district commission activities and who has contributed significantly to promoting regional planning and VAPDC activities.

Lou Ann is the Immediate Past President of VAPDC. She has

served on the VAPDC Board of Directors since 2018, including two years as President in 2023 and 2024, while also serving on the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission. She has served in elected office since 2003, when she first won a Director seat on the Clinch Valley Soil and Water Conservation District Clinch Valley. She was President of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and since 2016, she has been the District II Supervisor on the Russell County Board of Supervisors.

"Lou Ann has been a strong advocate for many causes over the years," said 2025-2026 VAPDC President Dwayne Tuggle in presenting the award. "Her passion, determination and hard work show up in whatever she touches, whether it be advocating for a cleaner environment, regionalism, good local government or stronger communities."

Lou Ann also has worked over the years to strengthen communities throughout Southwest Virginia, and has owned and operated an advertising business for over 30 years.

Planning District Commissions were enabled by state legislation in 1968 and most were established the following year. There are 21 PDCs and Regional Commissions in Virginia made up of elected officials and citizens appointed by local governments. The purpose of Planning District Commissions is to encourage and facilitate regional solutions to problems of area-wide significance. This is done by promoting the efficient development of the physical, social, and economic policies of all districts by assisting local governments to plan for the future. The PDCs of Virginia joined together to create the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions in 1987 to share best practices and further regionalism across the Commonwealth.



Pictured (L – R): Dwayne Tuggle, VAPDC President; Lou Ann Wallace, VAPDC BOD Member & Past President.



2026 VACo County Officials' Summit

Thursday, August 13, 2026 | Omni Richmond Hotel

With elections around the corner – the VACo County Officials' Summit provides political banter that entertains and leaves attendees thinking.

Join us this year as we convene for the County Officials' Summit on Thursday, August 13. We look forward to having a great Summit!

Contact Valerie Russell at vrussell@vaco.org with questions about registration.

REGISTER TODAY

Congratulations!

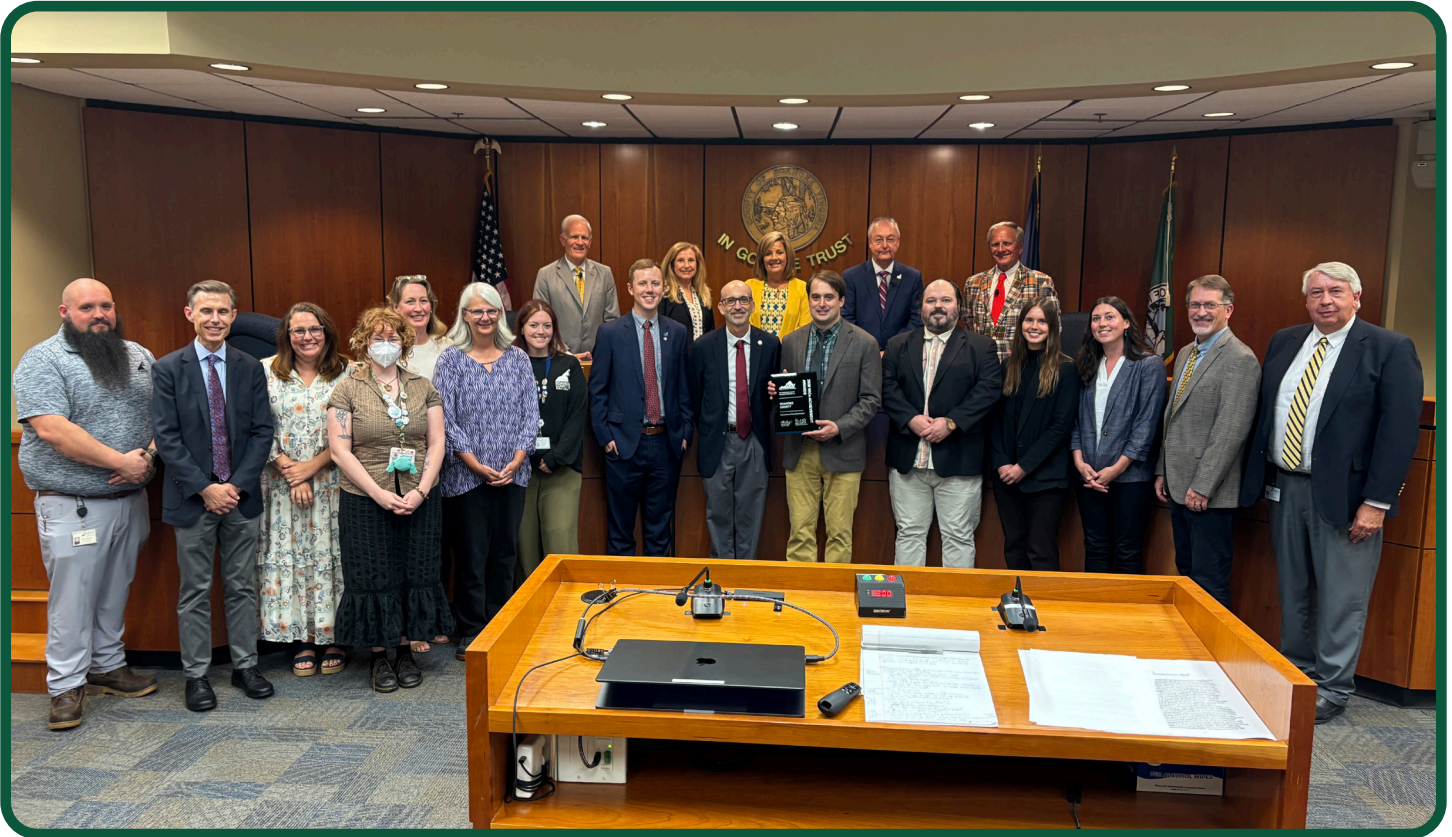
We love presenting Achievement Awards
at Board of Supervisors Meetings



We will share photos of our Achievement Awards presentations at Board of Supervisors Meetings in the next several newsletters. Congratulations to all the winners!

Congratulations!

We love presenting Achievement Awards
at Board of Supervisors Meetings



Congratulations Roanoke County!

This is Roanoke County's 21st Achievement Award, which ranks No. 6 on the all-time list.

Roanoke County won the Best Large County Achievement Award in 2019. Roanoke County has won an award in 8 of the last 9 years.

Congratulations!

We love presenting Achievement Awards
at Board of Supervisors Meetings



Congratulations Clarke County!

This is Clarke County's first Achievement Award. Clarke County's submission is titled, "Clarke County - Reengaging, Reconnecting, and Educating."

The program sought to not only reengage and reconnect with citizens following a prolonged period of isolation for many, but also wanted to educate and inform citizens on how local government works. To achieve these goals, the County implemented a multi-year and multipronged strategic and coordinated approach to creating plentiful communication channels to educate and inform its citizens.

Congratulations!

We love presenting Achievement Awards
at Board of Supervisors Meetings



Congratulations Dinwiddie County!

This is the 11th time Dinwiddie County has won an Achievement Award, which places Dinwiddie County tied for 12th place on the all-time list.

Dinwiddie County has won the Best Small County award three times since its VACo began giving out the Best Small Achievement Award in 2010. In fact - Dinwiddie County won it three times in six years.

No other county has won the Best Small County Award more than once.

Premier Partner Spotlight - Savi



Federal Student Loan Changes on July 1, 2026 - Student Loan Relief Available Through National Association of Counties Program

As competition for talent continues to intensify, employee benefits that provide meaningful financial support can play an important role in both recruitment and retention. Through VACo's partnership with the National Association of Counties (NACo), Virginia counties have access to [Savi](#), a comprehensive student loan assistance program designed to help employees navigate federal student loan repayment and forgiveness opportunities.

VACo Executive Director Dean Lynch [interviews](#) Tony Raffa of Savi, who outlines all the details of this program. Providing access to [Savi](#) offers counties a valuable tool to support employees while strengthening workforce recruitment and retention efforts. To date, [Savi](#) has identified approximately \$34 million in projected student loan savings for participating Virginia employees, helping borrowers reduce debt, lower monthly payments, and pursue loan forgiveness opportunities.

[Watch the Video](#)

VACo Contact: [Karie Walker, CAE](#)

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Bolton is an independent benefits and HR consulting firm with over 40 years of experience serving public agencies, counties, nonprofits, and multi-employer plans. We work with municipalities across Virginia to help them control costs, support their workforce, and meet the fiduciary responsibilities that come with managing public employee benefits.

HEALTH

COMMUNICATIONS

RETIREMENT

INVESTMENT

REWARDS

TALENT

CHALLENGES WE'RE HELPING MUNICIPALITIES SOLVE

Paid Leave

Support your workforce through life's moments with paid leave programs that are clear, sustainable, and easier to manage for your municipality and your teams.

Advanced Primary Care

Give employees access to the care they need. Advanced primary care supports healthier employees, smoother navigation, and better use of your health dollars.

Fiduciary Compliance

Own the fiduciary responsibility your plan demands. Bolton brings the structure, transparency, and accountability that plan sponsors need.

Retirement Plan Investments

Give your employees confidence in their financial future. Bolton helps municipalities strengthen retirement plans through independent investment advice, fiduciary oversight, and strategic governance support.

YOUR BOLTON TEAM

CONTACT US



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GET STARTED

Discuss your workforce and benefits priorities.

Bolton works with groups of all sizes across Virginia.

boltonusa.com/vacosolutions@boltonusa.com

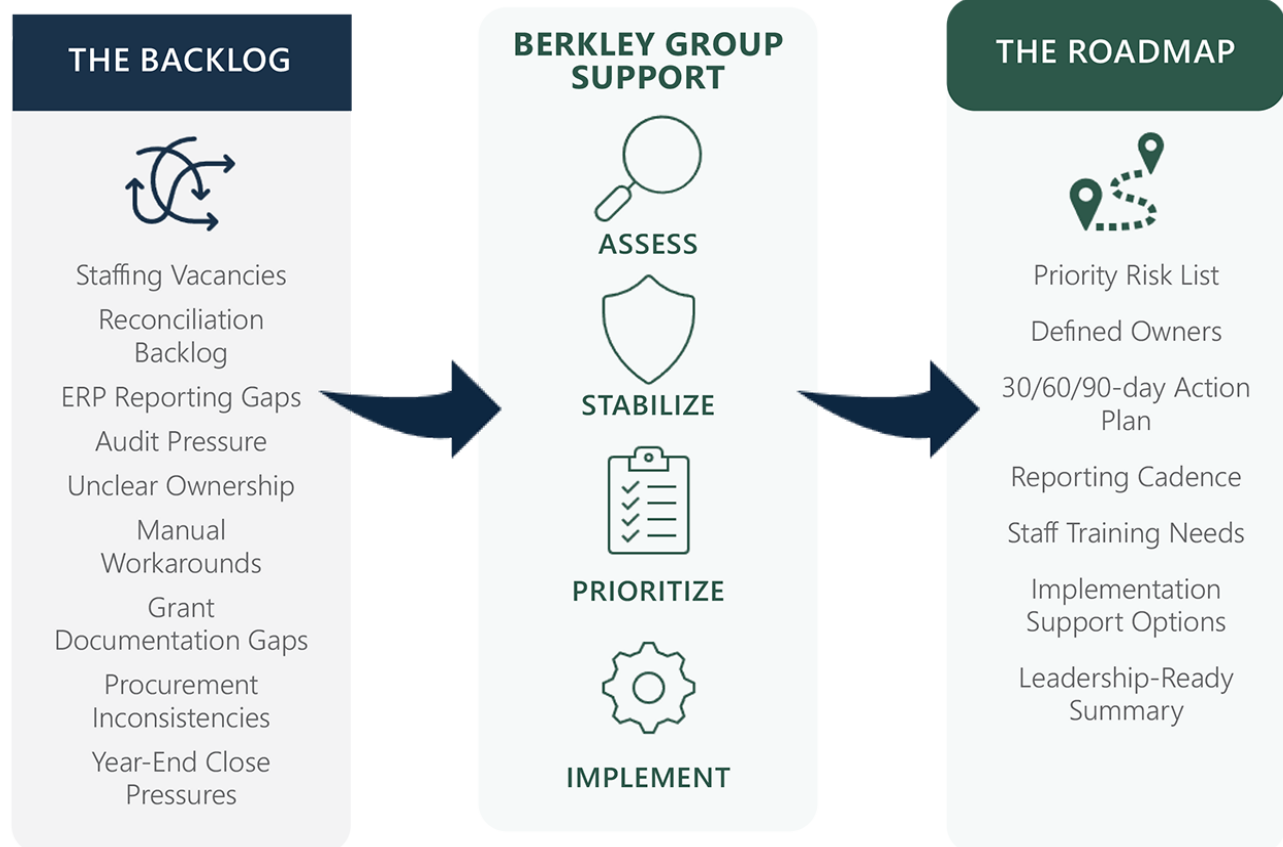


RAPID FINANCE ASSESSMENT

From Backlog to Roadmap

**STABILIZE URGENT FINANCE NEEDS.
CLARIFY PRIORITIES. BUILD A PRACTICAL PATH FORWARD.**

Finance challenges rarely come one at a time. We help local governments move from disconnected problems to a clear, prioritized plan that strengthens operations and reduces risk.



SCHEDULE A STRATEGY CALL TODAY!



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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Powered by NACo

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BENEFIT
SOLUTIONS
TODAY

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Projected savings of
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- Full autonomy over your county's Rx drug plan design & benefit programs
- Streamlined contracting & strong multi-year pricing guarantees to ensure budget stability

STUDENT DEBT RELIEF

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Our partnership with **Savi** puts money back in employees' pockets with more than 150 different potential options available.

Public servants can save

\$156/mo or \$28,308
in lifetime savings on average



- Calculate savings online for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) & other programs

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Demonstrate value and enrichment to employees' lives with professionally managed and flexible voluntary benefits.

80% of Workforce
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over a pay raise *SHRM

72% of Employees
report greater happiness from
better benefit packages *SHRM

- Competitive benefit pricing for America's 3.6 million county employees

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OF 3.6 MILLION PUBLIC EMPLOYEES**



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We are Pierce Insurance, a VACo Premier Partner and VACo's supplemental benefits provider. We were founded in 1955 by Lonnie and Wanda Pierce who were pioneers in employee supplemental benefit plans. After winning our first Virginia account, Henrico County Government and Schools, we realized there was a need for an improved, best-in-class product selection with local concierge account management, alongside a time-saving NO-COST benefit administration system.

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.

Simplifying the entire employee benefits lifecycle with innovative benefit solutions

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.

Our access to insurance plans and carriers is vast

Maintaining strong relationships with all the top carriers, Pierce Insurance offers an extensive array of employee benefit plans, such as...

Flexible Spending
Dental
Vision
Short Term Disability
Long Term Disability

Accident
Cancer
Critical Illness
Life Insurance
Hospital Indemnity

Long Term Care
Identity Theft Protection
Legal Plans
Wellness
Pet Insurance

By choosing Pierce Insurance, you will receive unbiased benefit recommendations as we are an independent broker/consultant with no contractual relationships with any insurance carriers/vendors.

Multitude of benefit solutions that will strengthen your employee benefit package

- ✓ **Best in Class benefits** with Guarantee Issue for all
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- ✓ **Flexible enrollment options** with **time-saving enrollment technology**
- ✓ **Tailored Micro-site** housing all educational benefits videos, forms, enrollment, and more...
- ✓ Professional, high-quality **communication materials**
- ✓ **Consolidation** of carriers and billing **including reconciliation** service
- ✓ **Dedicated Account Manager**- Liaison to insurance carriers, support HR/Finance staff & all employees

VIRGINIA ENERGY SENSE

VALUE YOUR POWER



Turn your ceiling fan blades counterclockwise during warmer months to push air downward and create a cool breeze.

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@scc.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.



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in Aggregate County Spend

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nuances of **government bidding**
& procurement.”



Megan Perry-Balonier
Director of Purchasing
Franklin County, OH



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(804) 399-1821

Single-Award Cooperative Purchasing For Public Agencies

PPP values transparency and the trust of its participating cooperative members. Contracts between the Lead Public Agency (LPA) and suppliers are single-award, competitively-bid, and scrutinized by an advisory council of procurement professionals and public sector peers.

Purchasing agents and procurement officials gain access to a cooperative uniquely designed to their needs and circumstances. Navigating the complexities of purchasing requirements and due-diligence is streamlined by registering with NACo's program.



SUPPLIER CONTRACT AWARDS



People Moving Solutions: Elevator, Escalator, Walkway and Lift Install, Maintenance, Modernization & Repair



Lead Public Agency: Maricopa County, Arizona



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Meet our team of local government advocates and public procurement experts.



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CALIFORNIA



Sean Behan
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO,
CALIFORNIA



Stephanie Brice
COBB COUNTY,
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Learn more about our contracts & suppliers at publicpromiseprocurement.org



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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SUPPORT

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Total Wellbeing
Productivity
Retirement Readiness

ENGAGE

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Education & Fiduciary
Literacy
Communications

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Operational Continuity
Cyber Security



Ritter Jonas

Senior Business Development Executive
804.393.2122 | rjonas@onedigital.com



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Virginia County Supervisors' Manual 8th Edition



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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).

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VALUE OF VACo



ADVOCACY

VACo's lobbying efforts have helped stem the tide of unfunded mandates and have saved Counties millions of dollars every year.



EDUCATION

Our educational programs offer County leaders and staff opportunities to become more effective in their communities.



MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

Some of VACo's best moments are when members convene and work to improve communities all over the Commonwealth.



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Our business development opportunities offer savings and innovative approaches to delivering services at the County level.

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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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