



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

Government Relations

Virginia School Boards Association Take Your Legislator to School Month November 2022

Participation in VSBA initiatives and observances is optional. School boards in Virginia have the discretion on whether to participate locally. Any related materials from the Association are shared as suggested ideas for implementation for any board that may choose to do so.

Dear School Board Members,

November is VSBA “Take Your Legislator to School” month! Building a closer relationship between public education and lawmakers serving in the Virginia General Assembly is essential to the well-being of our students. The Virginia School Boards Association urges each school division in the state to invite at least one of their state legislators to virtually visit their schools during the month of November.

The benefits from participating in the *VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month* provide an opportunity for developing closer relationships between school divisions, local communities, and our elected officials. A successful legislative visit can spur further dialogue providing education and political leaders the platform to work together to ensure that we provide the best possible education for our students.

What Types of Activities Can We Implement?

There are a variety of activities that your division can do when hosting legislators. These include, luncheons/breakfasts, speaking to civics classes, reading to younger students, discussing the Virginia legislative process, etc. The precise format for each visit should be negotiated between the division or school and the legislator, but we recommend each visit include a tour of school facilities conducted by a board member or other division officials. Use this opportunity to raise awareness of division successes, showcase a program that a legislator helped fund, or highlight division needs that have gone unmet.

Promote & Celebrate Your Visit

- After you have issued your invitation and planned the visit, distribute a media alert (sample enclosed) and invite the media to cover the virtual visit.
- Present the visit in “real time” by using Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube. Be sure to tag the elected official in your posts if they have social media accounts.
- Take pictures/video and include a story about the meeting in your division newsletter, as well as on division social media accounts, and division web site. If your division has a school-based media class/club with student reporters, this is a good way to involve students in providing news coverage that can be used by the division in promoting the meeting.
- Have participating students send handwritten thank you letters to the legislator.
- Notify the VSBA of your activities. We may attend your event or promote them in the VSBA Daily News and social media feeds.



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

Government Relations

We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to strengthen the already solid bond between public education and the Virginia General Assembly. These activities will aid VSBA as it lobbies on your behalf on education issues. Thank you for all that you do as a leader, advocate, and supporter of public education. Relations Specialist, J.T. Kessler, at jason@vsba.org or (434) 295-8722 if you have any questions or need assistance in setting up meetings with your legislators.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Teddy D. Martin II".

Teddy D. Martin, II
President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gina G. Patterson".

Gina G. Patterson
Executive Director

The VSBA Executive Director and lobbyists are in daily contact discussing legislation and policies that drive the Association's lobbying efforts, including the decision to send action alerts to the membership. The Association's lobbying efforts are based on positions contained in the VSBA Legislative Positions Handbook that is approved each year by the VSBA Delegate Assembly. Local school boards are not bound to this handbook and can adopt local positions on legislation and policy.

Participation in VSBA initiatives and observances is optional. School boards in Virginia have the discretion on whether to participate locally. Any related materials from the Association are shared as suggested ideas for implementation for any board that may choose to do so.

QUICK TIPS & SUGGESTIONS

- Discuss what your division or school would like to get out of a virtual visit by a state legislator and phrase your invitation accordingly.
- Thank the legislator for his or her past support for public education.
- Help the legislator decide which activities and topics would be appropriate for what age groups. Legislators may have received some suggestions from the clerks, but school staff might help them plan others.
- Be sensitive to the fact that every school and division has at least two representatives in the legislature, a senator and delegate. School divisions may have multiple senators and delegates serving in the legislature.
- Invite each of your legislators. While some may not respond to your invitation, others might feel slighted at not receiving one.
- Obtain the legislator's biography from his or her office or web site for use in introductions and news releases.
- Be alert to promising opportunities for photos. Sometimes that alone will be enough to attract newspaper or TV media coverage.
- Use Hashtag #VALeg2school when posting on social media.
- Apprise the VSBA of your activities, past and planned, to help us promote this event this year and in future years.
- VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month should be just one part of ongoing year-round communication that takes place between your division and members of the Virginia General Assembly.

Have Questions?

Contact VSBA Government Relations Specialist, J.T. Kessler, at jason@vsba.org or 434-295-8722.

SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER

Dear Delegate/Senator _____:

On behalf of the school board of __, we would like to invite you to virtually visit our schools as part of *VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month*, which is being observed in November.

Coordinated by the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA), the goal of *VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month* is to build a stronger relationship between schools and legislators. The event gives legislators an opportunity to observe what is going on in Virginia schools, and provides Virginia's students the opportunity to meet and interact with an elected official.

There are many exciting and innovative things happening each day in _____ schools, and several members of our school board would like to provide you an update on our progress. Our teachers are implementing new, research-based instructional strategies, and our students are using a variety of new technology methods such as _____. We are open to your ideas on how to make this time with your young constituents most productive.

We plan to invite the local media to attend your virtual visit, which we think communicates the high degree of interest that state and local leaders have in public education.

If your schedule permits you to accept this invitation, please contact us at _____ with some dates and times and we can discuss the details of your visit.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Cordially,

School Board Chair

Division Superintendent

SAMPLE MEDIA ALERT

Media Alert For Immediate Release

Senator/Delegate <INSERT NAME> to Visit <INSERT SCHOOL
NAME> for VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month

Who: Senator/Delegate <INSERT NAME>, School Board Chair <INSERT NAME>, Superintendent <INSERT NAME>, <INSERT OTHER KEY PARTICIPANTS>

What: As part of VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month, Senator/Delegate <INSERT NAME> will be visiting <INSERT SCHOOL NAME> to lead discussions and conduct other activities designed to show students how the democratic process works and to heighten awareness of citizen rights and responsibilities.

Why: November is VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month. It was created by the Virginia School Boards Association to build stronger relationships between public education and the Virginia General Assembly. VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month gives legislators an opportunity to observe what is going on in Virginia schools, and provides Virginia's students the chance to meet and interact with an elected official.

When: <INSERT DATE AND TIME; IF THERE IS A SPECIFIC SCHEDULE, INSERT HERE>

<TIME>	Arrival
<TIME>	Tour of school
<TIME>	Facilities or visit to
<TIME>	Delegate/Senator Departure

Where: <INSERT LOCATION>

Contact: <INSERT SCHOOL DIVISION CONTACT>

###

A Few Tips for Media Alerts

- Distribute the media alert via email, social media, or fax anywhere from 1-2 weeks prior to the event, depending on the deadline of the media outlet, how quickly you have the necessary information, and how fast the opportunity has come up.
- Take photos/videos/screen shots during the legislator's visit and send a press release to your local media following the conclusion of the event (let them know that photos/video is available). This content will allow media outlets to create a story, even if they were unable to attend the event.

SAMPLE IMAGES & SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS



Social Media Posts: Generating awareness is a powerful tool for creating positive social engagement:

- **Share the resolution adopted by the school board.**
- Share images from the in-person or virtual visits.
- Share a post of gratitude for the support of the Legislator(s).
- Share the bios of your Legislator(s) showcasing the ways they have supported your division.
- Share any student created coverage of the in person or virtual visit.

Social Media to Follow:

- #VALeg2school
- VSBA Facebook: [facebook.com/VirginiaSchoolBoardsAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaSchoolBoardsAssociation)
- VSBA Twitter: [@VASchoolBoards](https://twitter.com/VASchoolBoards)

Ideas for taking your events online:

- Host Virtual Meetings with Legislators. Legislators can join virtually to visit or check in with various classes/buildings. Schedule a day of short virtual visits. o Legislator could read to elementary students via zoom (or similar platform)
- Legislator could meet with students to hear about a new program/ initiative
- Legislator could take a virtual tour of a new facility led by school board members and or student representatives. o Student Media could conduct a virtual interview or provide coverage of the virtual visit.
- Host a virtual panel or meeting with your legislator and student representatives.

EXAMPLES FROM SCHOOL DIVISIONS

To promote a closer relationship between public education federal, state, and local policy makers, VSBA urged each school division to invite their elected officials to visit schools during the month. The participation by local school divisions in this event was outstanding and we were thrilled with all the pictures shared of legislators interacting with students, school board members, and school administrators that were shared with us. We have included a selection of the successful visits and meetings from last year's event that board members had with their legislators.

Cumberland County Public Schools



Cumberland County Public Schools invited Delegate Tommy Wright to visit Cumberland Elementary School for a tour which included a luncheon discussion. Delegate Wright—who represents the 61st House of Delegates district which includes the counties of Amelia, Cumberland, Lunenburg (part), Mecklenburg, and Nottoway—visited classrooms and interacted with students. He presented third grade students with copies of the *Virginia House of Delegates Coloring Book* and each fourth grader received a copy of the *Virginia House of Delegates Activity Book*. In addition, he presented the Cumberland Elementary School Library with a copy of *PB & J Hooray*, donated by the Farm Bureau.

During lunch in the Cumberland High School/Middle School cafetorium, he discussed educational issues currently being debated in the General Assembly.

Roanoke City Public Schools

Roanoke City Public Schools hosted two events for the VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month. The first hosted Sen. John Edwards, Sen. David Suetterlein, and Del. Sam Rasoul the opportunity to visit the division's ROTEC program.

Legislators talked with Superintendent White, School Board Vice Chair Dr. Jamison, members Mr. Cathey and Ms. Watkins, and Constituent Services & Government Relations Officer Dr. Seibert; received a presentation from ROTEC Director Ms. Duncan; and toured highlighted ROTEC programs. Our guests also received breakfast and treats made by our culinary arts students!



A second event hosted by Roanoke City Public Schools allowed U.S. Rep. Ben Cline, State Sen. John Edwards' Chief of Staff Luke Priddy, members of Roanoke City Council, and members of the Roanoke City Public School to visit Woodrow Wilson Middle School to learn about the school's regional program for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Fredericksburg City Public Schools



United States Senator Tim Kaine visited Walker-Grant Center and Preschool Programs on November 8th. Senator Kaine discussed the impact of pending legislation (Build Back Better bill) on preschool programs and childcare. He also spoke on how the recently passed infrastructure legislation could potentially benefit Fredericksburg City Public Schools (FCPS). School Board members and Superintendent Marci Catlett discussed FCPS' successful history with preschool programs, division accomplishments, and needs. After the initial meeting, Senator Kaine toured preschool classrooms to meet with children and talk with teachers.

ADVOCACY: IT IS YEAR-ROUND!

JANUARY

- Virginia General Assembly Legislative Session begins on second Wednesday of the month — January 11, 2023
- Hold meetings with local delegation on Capitol Square
- Respond to VSBA Legislative Action Alerts
- Review VSBA Legislative Update Blog — vsba.org/advocacy-government-relations/legislative-update-blog
- Attend VSBA Capital Conference — January 30, 2023
- Hold meetings with local delegation on Capitol Square

FEBRUARY

- Respond to VSBA Legislative Action Alerts
- Attend weekly virtual legislative update on Friday afternoon during session
- Connect with local legislative delegation urging support for VSBA Legislative Priorities
- Celebrate School Board Appreciation Month
- Review VSBA Legislative Update Blog

MARCH

- Respond to VSBA Legislative Action Alerts
- Review End-of-Session report from VSBA Government Relations staff
- VSBA solicits proposed new and amended legislative positions from local school boards for consideration by the Legislative Positions Committee in July
- Conduct End-of-Session meetings with local legislative delegation
- Attend local VSBA Regional Meetings around the state — vsba.org/meetings-conferences/regional-spring-network-forums

ADVOCACY: IT IS YEAR-ROUND!

APRIL

- Virginia General Assembly returns for Reconvened Session to consider amendments to legislation by the Governor
- Attend local VSBA Regional Meeting — vsba.org/meetings-conferences/regional-spring-network-forums

MAY

- Invite local legislative delegation to attend end-of-the-year special events
- Highlight student and school division success stories and share with local legislative delegation
- VSBA solicits nominations for the annual Advocate for Education from local school boards with final Friday in July as the submission deadline

JUNE

- Attend VSBA School Law Conference — June 2, 2023
- Proposed new or amended legislative positions from local school boards for consideration by the Legislative Positions Committee due on first Monday of June
- Invite local legislative delegation to attend commencement ceremonies
- Submit names of Delegate and Alternate Delegate to attend the VSBA Delegate Assembly in November

JULY

- Invite local legislative delegation to attend end-of-the-year special events
- Highlight student and school division success stories and share with local legislative delegation
- VSBA solicits nominations for the annual Advocate for Education from local school boards with final Friday in July as the submission deadline
- Participate in Conference on Education — July 13, 2023

ADVOCACY: IT IS YEAR-ROUND!

AUGUST

- Invite local legislative delegation to Back-to-School events
- Begin planning November Take Your Legislator to School Month activities and send Save-the-Date notices to local legislative delegation
- Nominate someone for the VSBA Advocate for Education Award

SEPTEMBER

- Attend VSBA Legislative Advocacy Conference

OCTOBER

- Adopt local legislative priorities to be shared with local legislative delegation during November Take Your Legislator to School Month activities
- Promote Bullying Prevention Month

NOVEMBER

- Participate in VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month activities
- Attend the VSBA Annual Convention
- Delegates from each local school division represent their board at the VSBA Delegate Assembly

DECEMBER

- Review VSBA Legislative Positions Handbook and Legislative Priorities
- Continue meeting with local legislative delegation prior to beginning of January legislative session



PROCLAMATION VSBA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

WHEREAS, it is of paramount importance that all young people in Virginia are afforded the opportunity to receive a quality education in Virginia's public schools; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's continued student success requires an excellent understanding of what is required for excellence in the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, school boards and legislators must work together, to promote high academic standards and excellent facilities that help all of Virginia's students become productive, contributing citizens; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's school boards have been at the forefront of these endeavors to foster close relationships between schools and communities to strengthen and improve Virginia's public education system; and

WHEREAS, it is paramount to acknowledge the work and support of our state legislators and the necessary partnership between our state legislators and local school boards as we strive to make Virginia's public schools optimal learning institutions, now therefore, be it

Resolved that Now, the VSBA Board of Directors hereby recognizes the month of November in perpetuity as "**VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month**" in the Commonwealth of Virginia. We call this observance to the attention of our citizens and state legislators, and encourage community-wide calls for state legislators to visit at least one school in each of the school divisions within their legislative jurisdictions during this special month.

Virginia School Boards Association
Board of Directors

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY RESOURCES

Below are links to important resources that will assist with your advocacy efforts:

[2022 Legislative Priorities of the Virginia School Boards Association](#)
(Password: VSBAlegislative2022)

[Virginia School Boards Association Legislative Positions Handbook](#)
(Password: VSBAlegislative2022)

[Virginia School Boards Association Legislative Action Alerts](#)

[Virginia School Boards Association Legislative Update Blog](#)

[Virginia School Boards Association “How to Lobby” Video](#)

[Virginia General Assembly](#)

[The Senate of Virginia](#)

[The Virginia House of Delegates](#)

[Who’s My Legislator?](#)

[Virginia’s Legislative Information System](#)

[Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission](#)

[Code of Virginia](#)

[Legislators by VSBA Regions \(Updated November 2021\)](#)

[Virginia Department of Education](#)



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

Government Relations

*Thank you for participating in the 2022
Virginia School Boards Association
Take Your Legislator to School Month*