



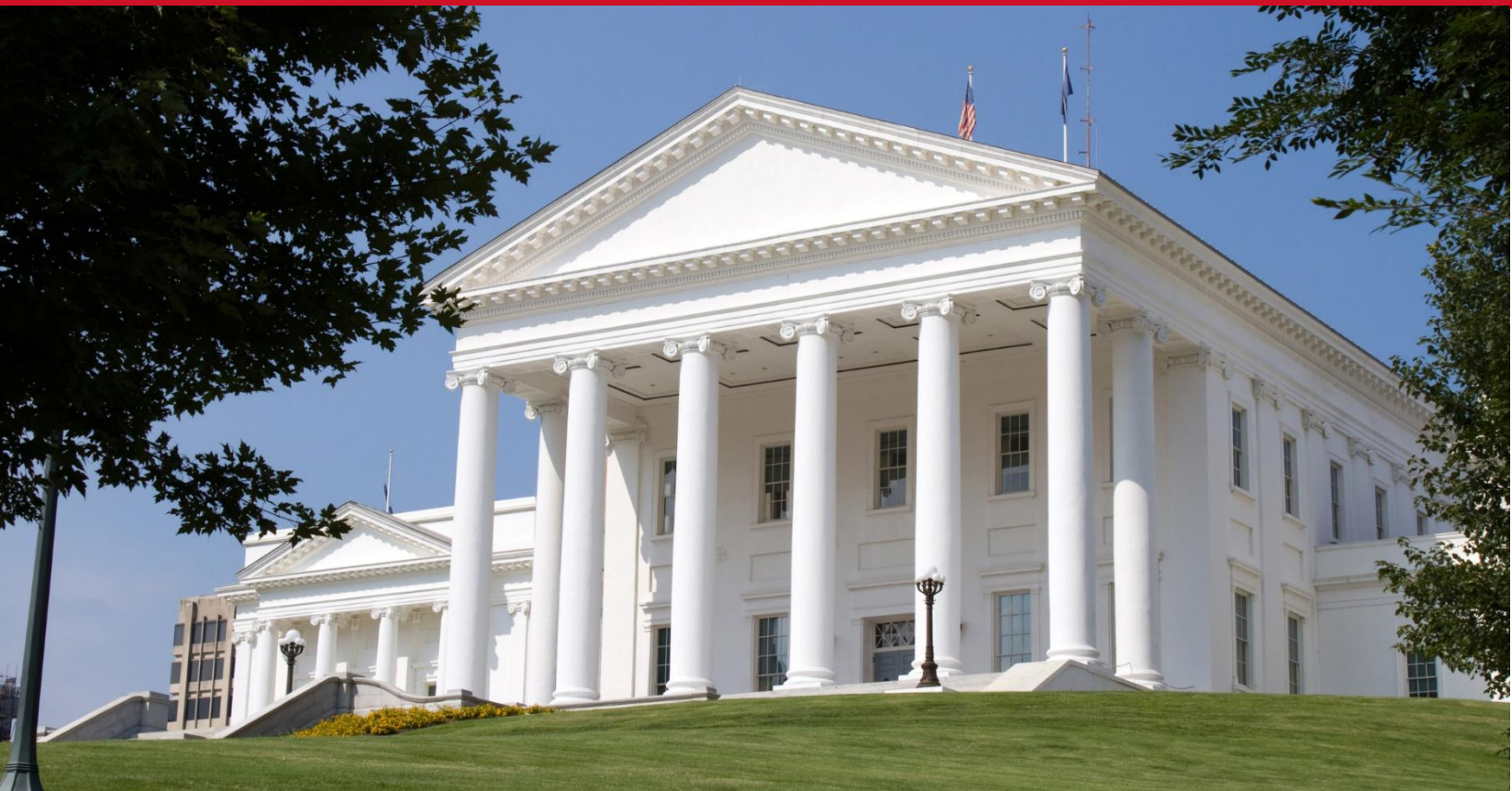
VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association®

Government Relations

Take Your Legislator to School Month Toolkit

November 2026



Participation in VSBA initiatives and observances is optional. VSBA member 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 member board that may choose to do so.

VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month

November 2026

November is VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month

Building relationships between public education and state and federal lawmakers is critical for students in the Commonwealth. The Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) urges each school division to invite at least one of their legislators to visit their schools during the month of November.

Participating in the VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month provides opportunities 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 discussed 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 representatives. 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 visit.
- ☐ Take pictures/video and include a story about the meeting in your division newsletter, as well as on division social media accounts, and the division website. 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(s).
- ☐ Notify the VSBA of your activities. We may attend your events or share photos after the visit on VSBA social media. Please send photos to communications@vsba.org and use #VALeg2School when posting to social media.

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.

If you have any questions, please contact VSBA Government Relations Specialist, Sofia Pineda, at sofia@vsba.org or (434) 295-8722 ext. 116

Grassroots Advocacy

What is Grassroots Advocacy?

Grassroots advocacy is the process of individuals and communities using their experiences, knowledge, and voices to inform policymakers and influence decisions that affect the people they represent. For school boards, grassroots advocacy means sharing the successes, challenges, and needs of your local school division with legislators and other policymakers so they can better understand how public policy decisions impact students, families, and communities.

Grassroots advocacy is especially powerful because school board members bring a local perspective and firsthand knowledge of public education. By building relationships with legislators, sharing personal stories and local data, and inviting policymakers to see your schools and communities firsthand, you help ensure that the voices of students and public education are represented in the policymaking process.

Grassroots Advocacy and Local School Boards

School board members play a critical role in advocating for their local school division. The advocacy efforts of school board members not only impact the outcomes of students and teachers within your division but also are vital to preserving local control of school division operations in the Commonwealth.

The advocacy you undertake within your local school division greatly assists the efforts of the Virginia School Boards Association Government Relations team. It is often mentioned by legislators to the team when they have heard from a member of their local school board or when a member visits them in Richmond or Washington D.C. The information you share with legislators is invaluable as not every Senator or Delegate is an expert on K-12 education. If they do not hear from you, they will hear from someone else, it is imperative to share your stories.

Your Role as a Grassroots Advocate

Grassroots advocacy is described as any advocacy activity that takes place at the local or community level. Grassroots advocacy involves identifying, adopting, and promoting a cause that shapes public perception or influences public policy; it is a process by which stakeholders (school board members) make their voices heard.

Grassroots advocacy is very effective for associations as school board members have tremendous power to generate change within the public policy sphere. Grassroots advocacy is different from lobbying as it involves school board members, rather than professional lobbyists, educating their legislators and other government officials on how legislation and regulations will impact the school division and community. Examples of grassroots advocacy include meeting with and educating a member of the Virginia General Assembly, a member of Congress, or other policy makers on the impact of a specific policy matters.

As school board members, it is up to each of you to advocate for quality public education for all Virginia's students. Using a collective voice helps policy makers understand the issues that matter to school board members across the Commonwealth. It is important that policy makers hear from school board members so they can create and implement legislation that supports public education, families, and the communities each of you represent.

The possibilities are endless when it involves bringing legislators to your schools. Do not be afraid to be creative and think outside the box. Your legislators want to know what is happening in your school division.

In all of your interactions with policymakers and staff, remember these key points:

- ❑ Stay positive and nonpartisan. It is important not to alienate your legislator because you may need their support on later issues. Keep the focus on public education.
- ❑ Be personal. Visits to schools where you can share your division's positives and concerns during a visit will lead to a more successful event because the legislator will have a visual takeaway from what they saw.
- ❑ Have a physical one-page document that highlights your visit for the legislator or staff to take with them after the visit.
- ❑ Be patient when getting to know legislators, especially if they are new to their role. Building relationships with your legislative delegation can require multiple interactions.
- ❑ Stay on message. Focus your visit on one or two issues.
- ❑ Avoid providing inaccurate information. It is far better to tell a legislator, "I don't know, but I will find out and get back to you." Your credibility (and the legislator's if they use your information) is at stake. Make sure to follow up with the complete information.
- ❑ Have fun! Having your legislative delegation visit your school(s) is a great opportunity for all parties involved.



Buckingham County Public Schools hosted Senator Luther Cifers in 2025.

Quick Tips & Suggestions

The following tips and suggestions can help your school division plan a meaningful and successful visit with your legislators. From inviting the full legislative delegation to highlighting your schools and students, thoughtful planning can help create a positive experience for everyone involved. These visits are also an opportunity to build lasting relationships, share the successes and needs of your school division, and keep the lines of communication open with policymakers throughout the year.

- ☐ Discuss what your division or school would like to get out of a visit by a legislator and phrase your invitation accordingly.
- ☐ Thank the legislator for their past support for public education.
- ☐ Help the legislator decide which activities and topics would be appropriate for specific age groups. Legislators may have received some suggestions from the school board 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 their office or website for use in introductions and news releases.
- ☐ Be on the lookout for photo opportunities. Sometimes that alone will be enough to attract newspaper or TV media coverage.
- ☐ Use #VALeg2School when posting on social media.
- ☐ Apprise VSBA of your activities, past and planned, so that we may potentially attend or share photos of the event afterwards.
- ☐ VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month should be just one part of ongoing year-round communication that takes place between your division and your legislators.



Petersburg City Public Schools hosted Congresswoman Jennifer McClellan in 2025.

Planning a Successful Visit

Divisions can use the below checklist to guide your efforts in planning an event with your legislator. These steps will help ensure your event runs smoothly and leaves a lasting impression on attending legislators.

Checklist for Planners

- ☐ Discuss possible dates for your event.
- ☐ Invite legislators. Have staff send “Save the Date” letters in advance.
- ☐ Identify a key member of your school administration with excellent organizational skills to lead this effort.
- ☐ Inform media of event through a press release.
- ☐ Call the legislative office at least ten days prior to the event to confirm details.
- ☐ Create a “Day of the Event” schedule. Share with legislators in advance.
- ☐ Plan for follow-ups including press releases, thank you notes, etc.
- ☐ Contact legislators who expressed interest in attending, but had scheduling conflicts, and schedule a visit to your school.

Sample Schedule

10:00 a.m. – Legislators arrive, receive name tags, and are met by a staff member.

10:00 a.m. to 10:40 a.m. – Legislators visit students in classrooms.

10:45 a.m. – Legislators return to the school’s auditorium.

10:50 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. – A 4–5-minute talk by school board chair (be sure to acknowledge and thank all legislators and staff in attendance). Followed by a school division presentation of legislative agenda, priorities, etc.

11:20 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. – Questions and Answers.

11:30 a.m. to End of Event – Provide legislators with a “take away” document and a small remembrance from the event.

11:40 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. – Optional lunch with legislators.

Sample Invitation Letter

Dear [INSERT LEGISLATOR TITLE AND LAST NAME]:

On behalf of the [INSERT SCHOOL DIVISION NAME] School Board, we are pleased to invite you to visit our schools as part of *VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month*, observed each November.

Coordinated by the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA), *Take Your Legislator to School Month* provides an opportunity for school board members and school divisions to strengthen relationships with their legislators and highlight the many ways public schools are preparing students for success. A visit to one of our schools offers you the opportunity to see firsthand the innovative programs, dedicated educators, and engaging learning experiences that make a difference in the lives of our students each day.

There are many exciting things happening across [INSERT SCHOOL DIVISION NAME], and we would welcome the opportunity to showcase [INSERT SCHOOL OR PROGRAM NAME] and share some of the ways our division is working to support student success. During your visit, you may have the opportunity to [INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THE LEGISLATOR WILL SEE OR EXPERIENCE, SUCH AS VISITING CLASSROOMS, TOURING A FACILITY, MEETING WITH STUDENTS AND STAFF, OR LEARNING ABOUT SPECIFIC PROGRAMS.] We are also happy to hear your ideas about how we can make your visit with our students and school community as meaningful and engaging as possible.

We would also like to invite members of our local media to attend your visit, as we believe it is important to highlight the strong partnership between our schools, elected officials, and the communities we serve.

If your schedule permits you to accept our invitation, please contact [INSERT CONTACT NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION] with some dates and times that may work for you. We would be happy to work with you to coordinate the details of your visit.

We look forward to the opportunity to welcome you to [INSERT SCHOOL DIVISION NAME] and to share the outstanding work taking place in our schools.

Cordially,

School Board Chair

Division Superintendent

Sample Press Release

News Release

For Immediate Release

[INSERT DATE]

Division Contact

[INSERT NAME, TITLE]

[INSERT PHONE NUMBER, E-MAIL]

[INSERT LEGISLATOR TITLE AND LAST NAME] to Visit [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] for VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month

[INSERT CITY/COUNTY NAME], Va – [INSERT LEGISLATOR TITLE AND LAST NAME] will visit [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] on [INSERT DATE] as part of VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month, an annual initiative of the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) that encourages school divisions and legislators to build stronger relationships and connect around the importance of public education.

During the visit, [INSERT LEGISLATOR TITLE AND LAST NAME] will have the opportunity to see firsthand the innovative programs and learning experiences taking place at [INSERT SCHOOL NAME]. The visit will include [INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE VISIT, SUCH AS CLASSROOM VISITS, A SCHOOL TOUR, MEETINGS WITH STUDENT AND STAFF, OR A SPECIFIC PROGRAM OR ACTIVITY]. [INSERT ONE OR TWO SENTENCES HIGHLIGHTING A UNIQUE PROGRAM, INITIATIVE, OR SUCCESS THAT WILL BE FEATURED DURING THE VISIT].

The visit will also provide students with an opportunity to meet and interact with an elected official and learn more about the role of state/federal government and the legislative process.

WHO:

[INSERT LEGISLATOR TITLE AND NAME]

[INSERT SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR NAME AND TITLE]

[INSERT SUPERINTENDENT NAME AND TITLE]

[INSERT OTHER KEY PARTICIPANTS]

WHAT:

Visit to [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] as part of VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month. The visit will include [INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES, PROGRAMS, OR CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES].

WHEN:

[INSERT DATE]

[INSERT TIME] – Arrival

[INSERT SCHOOL ADDRESS]

[INSERT CITY/COUNTY NAME], Virginia

WHY:

VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month, observed each November, provides an opportunity for school divisions to strengthen relationships with legislators and showcase the important work taking place in Virginia's public schools. These visits allow legislators to see firsthand how schools are preparing students for success while giving students the opportunity to engage with elected officials and learn more about civic participation and government.

CONTACT:

For more information about the visit, contact [INSERT CONTACT NAME AND TITLE] at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] or [INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS].

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Sample Text for Board Proclamation

WHEREAS, it is critical that all students have the opportunity to receive a high-quality education through their local public schools; and

WHEREAS, a strong and effective public school system is essential to the economic prosperity of the Commonwealth and helps ensure continued social, technological, and scientific advancement; and

WHEREAS, school boards and legislators share a responsibility to work together to promote high academic standards, state-of-the-art facilities, and supportive resources that help students become productive, engaged, and successful members of their communities; and

WHEREAS, local school boards play a critical role in fostering strong relationships between public schools and legislators to strengthen and improve public education; and

WHEREAS, the support and engagement of legislators contribute significantly to the success and achievements of public schools and the students they serve; and

WHEREAS, Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) Take Your Legislator to School Month provides an opportunity for school divisions and their local legislators to build meaningful relationships, strengthen communication, and highlight the important work taking place in public schools; and

WHEREAS, VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month provides an opportunity for legislators to visit local schools, engage with students and educators, and gain a firsthand understanding of the successes, opportunities, and challenges facing public education; and

WHEREAS, VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month also provides an opportunity to recognize the dedication of school board members, educators, administrators, staff, students, families, and community members who work together to strengthen Virginia's public schools and support student success.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the **[INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME]** hereby recognizes VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month and encourages members of the school community to engage with their state and congressional legislators, invite them to visit local schools, and work together to strengthen public education and support the students, families, and communities they serve.

Sample Advocacy Calendar



- ☐ Virginia General Assembly Legislative Session begins on the second Wednesday of the month.
- ☐ Attend VSBA Capital Conference.
- ☐ Hold meetings with local delegation on Capitol Square.
- ☐ Respond to VSBA Legislative Action Alerts.
- ☐ Review VSBA Legislative Update Blog.
- ☐ Attend weekly virtual VSBA legislative updates on Friday afternoons during session.

- ☐ Respond to VSBA Legislative Action Alerts.
- ☐ Attend weekly virtual VSBA legislative updates on Friday afternoons during session.
- ☐ Connect with local legislative delegation urging support for VSBA Legislative Priorities.
- ☐ Review VSBA Legislative Update Blog.



- ☐ 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 Meeting.

- ☐ Virginia General Assembly returns for Reconvened Session to consider amendments to legislation by the Governor.
- ☐ Attend local VSBA Regional Meeting.



- ☐ 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 Award from local school boards.



- ☐ Attend VSBA School Law Conference.
- ☐ Proposed new or amended legislative positions from local school boards for consideration by the Legislative Positions Committee due on the 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.

- ☐ 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.



- ☐ Attend VSBA Legislative Advocacy Conference to prepare for the upcoming legislative session.

- ☐ Adopt local legislative priorities to be shared with local legislative delegation during November Take Your Legislator to School Month activities.



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

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



Understanding Virginia's Government

The Virginia General Assembly

The [Virginia General Assembly](#) is composed of two chambers – the Senate of Virginia and the Virginia House of Delegates. Each chamber has its own committee structure and elected leadership.

The Senate of Virginia consists of 40 members that are elected to serve four-year terms. The Virginia House of Delegates has 100 members that are elected to serve two-year terms. Members of the General Assembly may not hold any other elected public office during their term as a Senator or Delegate.

Pursuant to the Constitution, the General Assembly convenes for a Regular Session on the second Wednesday of January. In even-numbered years, the legislature meets for 60 calendar days and in odd-numbered years meets for 30 calendar days but is customarily extended to 45 calendar days. Occasionally, the legislature must extend beyond their projected ending date. In either an even-numbered or odd-numbered year, the legislature may not extend beyond an additional 30 calendar days. The legislature may be called into Special Session by the Governor at any time and may call itself into Special Session if two-thirds of the members elected to each house petition for a Special Session to be convened.

Since 1980, legislature has constitutionally been required to convene a Reconvened Session on the sixth Wednesday after adjournment of any Session (Regular or Special). The purpose of the Reconvened Session is to consider any Governor's amendments or vetoes to legislation communicated to them for action. The Reconvened Session typically lasts one day; however, the Session may last three days and can be extended to an additional seven days.

One of the primary responsibilities of the General Assembly during a legislative session is to enact a balanced budget. In even-numbered years, the General Assembly adopts a two-year or biennial budget. After the Governor, as the chief planning and budget officer, prepares the biennial budget; the General Assembly then modifies the budget accordingly. The General Assembly also increases or decreases proposed funding levels. In odd numbered years, the House and Senate address unexpected increases or decreases in revenue and modifies the budget accordingly.

The Constitution of Virginia and the Rules for procedure that each Chamber of the Virginia General Assembly adopt for session outline the process for which legislation can become law. Any member of the General Assembly can propose legislation. To assist in the process, proposed legislation generally begins with the Senator or Delegate meeting with the Division of Legislative Services where a staff attorney checks existing law and reviews the proposed legislation for any potential issues over its constitutionality. After this review, the proposed legislation is drafted by legislative services and upon completion, the Senator or Delegate signs their name to the legislation and files it with the Clerk of the respective chamber in which they serve.

The legislation is then referred by the Senate Clerk or the Speaker of the House to a Standing Committee. In the House of Delegates, there are 14 Standing Committees, while the Senate of Virginia has 11 Standing Committees.

The committee structure is an essential component of the legislative process because it is where the bulk of the General Assembly's work is done. While in Committee, the public has opportunity to provide testimony on the merits of the legislation. It is during the testimony and "mark-up" process that legislation is most easily amended prior to a full vote by the Standing Committee. The Standing

Committee can vote to “approve” the legislation with or without amendments. If the legislation is approved by the Standing Committee, it heads to the floor for debate by the entire Senate or House chamber.

During session, the daily meetings, floor calendars, and legislation being considered can be accessed on the [Legislative Information System](#) website.

The Executive Branch

Virginia has three state-wide Constitutional offices, [Governor](#), [Lieutenant Governor](#), and [Attorney General](#). Each are elected to four-year terms and are charged with specific duties found in the Constitution of Virginia. The Governor is barred from serving consecutive four-year terms but can serve multiple terms in office. The Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General can serve consecutive terms with no limits.

Executive branch leaders enforce and implement laws passed by the Virginia General Assembly. The enforcement and implementation of laws is typically done through executive branch departments, agencies, boards, and commissions.

Executive branch departments, agencies, boards and commissions are authorized to issue regulations based on the legislative directive found in laws passed by the General Assembly. During this process, stakeholders are often consulted and asked to weigh in on a variety of proposed regulations.

After a regulation is proposed, it is published on the [Virginia Town Hall website](#) with an opportunity for public input by a certain deadline. The regulation may be the subject of multiple revisions and one or more administrative hearings. School board member input during this comment process is just as important as during the legislative process. Once the final version is published, the regulation is implemented. At any time, a department, agency, board, or commission may also subsequently update, revise, or rescind a regulation or any part of it, during which this comment process repeats.

Rules governing the regulatory process are found in [Virginia’s Administrative Process Act](#).

Understanding Virginia's Government

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

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

[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](#)

[Virginia Department of Education](#)



Fairfax County Public Schools hosted Senator Saddam Salim, Delegate Holly Seibold, and Delegate David Bulova in 2025.



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