

WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

Virginia Chamber of Commerce General Assembly Update

February 2, 2024

Legislative Update

The Virginia Chamber continues to track legislation of interest to the business community. As of today, 2,594 bills and resolutions have been introduced this session. Out of that number, 329 bills have been defeated or failed to pass, with the remaining bills still making their way through committee and awaiting final action in their chamber of origin.

On Tuesday, the Virginia Chamber was pleased to present to members of the Senate Finance and Appropriations Education subcommittee. The presentation focused on the business case for internships and the importance of these work-based learning (WBL) opportunities on the development of the Commonwealth's workforce. We were excited to share more about why internships and WBL are important in helping employers build their talent pipelines and our V-TOP partnership focused on engaging more employers to create or expand their internship program.

In addition to action on bills and resolutions, members of the General Assembly have submitted amendments to Governor Youngkin's introduced budget. Currently, these amendments are being reviewed and considered by each chamber's money committees. The following is a summary of bills of interest to the business community and budget amendments submitted by members of the General Assembly.

Member News

[Access to Quality, Affordable Child Care is Essential to Virginia's Current and Future Workforce and the Businesses that Employ Them](#)

[Appointment of Ashley Magargee to Chief Executive Officer Genentech](#)

[Averett Celebrates Founders' Day and 165th Anniversary](#)

[Breeden Construction Announces Construction Completion of](#)

Business Climate

House Bill 1, a bill to increase the minimum wage in Virginia, passed the House 51-49 today. The Senate companion, **Senate Bill 1** is pending final action in the Senate.

Senate Bill 185, which would require employers to enroll every newly hired employee working in the Commonwealth in the E-Verify program, was defeated in Senate Commerce and Labor earlier this week.

House Bill 14, was rereferred to House Appropriations this week. The bill, as amended, will make changes to the unemployment claim process. The bill previously waived an employer's right to claim after the first failure to respond. The amended version now provides employers with a warning after the first failure to respond and a fine after the second failure to respond. The employer waives its rights to the claim after the third failure to respond. An employer has not waived its right to the claims, if good cause can be shown. This bill has a delayed enactment of January 1, 2025. The bill's companion, **Senate Bill 381**, will likely be heard in full Senate Commerce and Labor next Monday and includes the same amendments.

House Bill 894, which amends the number of all-virtual public meetings that public bodies may convene to no more than two meetings in a calendar year or 50 percent of the meetings held per calendar year, passed out of the House. The legislation also expands the ability of members of public bodies to participate in meetings electronically for the purposes of a quorum. Its companion, **Senate Bill 734**, was heard in Senate General Laws and Technology and reported.

Senate Bill 143 and **House Bill 385** reported from the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee and the House Labor and Commerce Committee, respectively, this week. The legislation, as amended, prohibits railroad companies from moving freight unless a train, locomotive, or light engine has a crew of two or more qualified individuals.

Senate Bill 393 passed in the Senate on Monday. Its companion, **House Bill 212**, was reported from the House Labor and Commerce Committee and referred to the House

[High Street Apartments in Williamsburg, Virginia](#)

[Business Leaders Join Danville Pittsylvania Chamber Board of Directors](#)

[Leah Kinder Promoted to Community Engagement Manager at Branch](#)

[Mary Washington Healthcare Expands Imaging Services to Harrison Crossing](#)

[Strongwell Welcomes Work-Based Learning Students for Spring 2024 Semester](#)

[The Future of Grants Management](#)

[Virginia's Leading Independent Higher Ed Advocates Unite to Launch a Landmark Marketing Campaign](#)

Committee on Appropriations. The legislation would require the Major Employment and Investment (MEI) Commission to consider the gender and racial diversity of a company's board of directors prior to recommending approval of any MEI project.

House Bill 655 was recommended by a House Counties, Cities and Towns subcommittee to be tabled. Its companion, **Senate Bill 645**, was amended on Monday by the Senate Committee on Local Government and subsequently passed by for the week to be considered again on February 5th. The legislation would establish a procedure for determining when localities are in fiscal distress and would further establish a procedure for restoring sustainable fiscal health to a fiscally distressed locality.

Education and Workforce

Senate Bill 682, as substituted, creates a work group to review universal licensure recognition for all regulated health care professions in the Commonwealth and make recommendations on necessary statutory or regulatory changes to accomplish such recognition by October 1, 2024. This legislation is aimed at helping the critical workforce shortage related to the healthcare industry. With this substitute, it was recommended to report from the Senate Health Professions subcommittee.

House Bill 1216, as substituted, creates the Employee Child Care Assistance Pilot Program. The Program will utilize matching funds in order to incentivize employers to contribute to the child care costs of their employees. The employer will make child care contributions to the eligible mixed-delivery provider on behalf of the employee and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation will administer the program. The bill reported from the House Appropriations Elementary and Secondary Education subcommittee.

House Bill 145, which would have established the Virginia Teacher Residency Training Corps with the purpose of attracting and retaining public elementary and secondary school teachers, was defeated in House Appropriations Elementary and Secondary Education subcommittee. The bill would have provided scholarships with the stipulation that these teachers would fill teaching positions at a high-need school.

House Bill 582 will require school boards to employ a career coach in each public high school to provide students with information and assist with securing internships, externships, and credentialing opportunities, apprenticeships, and other career opportunities. The bill was reported and referred to House Appropriations.

House Bill 1405 and **House Bill 1061** requires the Department of Corrections to establish a procedure for assisting incarcerated individuals with securing a government-issued ID card, birth certificate, or Social Security card, which the Department of Motor Vehicles must expedite. The Department of Corrections must review the current process, identify the obstacles encountered, and report such findings. House Bill 1061 was incorporated into House Bill 1405, which was reported by the full committee.

Energy and Environment

Two bills which would have negatively affected the supply and availability of natural gas in Virginia failed to advance in their respective committees this week. **House Bill 524** was continued to 2025 by the Chesapeake Subcommittee of the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake, and Natural Resources. The bill would require additional permit requirements for natural gas projects using transmission pipes with diameters of at least 24 inches. **Senate Bill 486** was defeated by the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Natural Resources. The bill would have prohibited the expansion of natural gas pipeline capacity in Planning District 19.

House Bill 109 was recommended to be reported by Subcommittee #3 of the House Labor and Commerce Committee. The bill would require electric utilities which are members of a regional transmission organization (RTO) to report annually to the State Corporation Commission on all recorded votes taken by the utility and any of its affiliates within the RTO and include in such report statements explaining why the votes taken were in the public interest. The bill will be considered by the full committee on Tuesday, February 6th.

Two bills concerning water withdrawal permits in Virginia, **Senate Bill 337** and **Senate Bill 673**, were considered by

the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Natural Resources on Tuesday and were subsequently reported and referred to the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations. Senate Bill 337 directs the State Water Control Board to waive the expiration of any ground water withdrawal permit for any well serving exclusively residential customers located in the Eastern Virginia Groundwater Management Area north of the Occoquan River and located within five miles of any commercial or industrial permitted ground water withdrawal. Senate Bill 673 directs the Department of Environmental Quality and the State Water Control Board to prioritize the preservation of drinking water in all permitting and regulatory processes related to groundwater and surface water resources.

Health Care and Life Sciences

Senate Bill 186, a bill to establish a wholesale prescription drug importation program, was heard in sub-committee this week where it was amended to become a study. The bill will next go to the full committee and, if it passes the full committee, will go to the Senate floor for a vote.

Bills to grow the health care workforce are still pending action in sub-committee. Those include **HB1285**, **HB1289**, and **HB1499**. The Chamber continues to monitor those and other bills that will help address the healthcare workforce shortage in Virginia.

Senate Bill 274 and **House Bill 570** create a Prescription Drug Affordability Board. HB570 was heard in committee late yesterday where it was reported and referred to the House Appropriations committee by a vote of 12-10. SB274 will be heard in committee early next week.

Infrastructure

House Bill 1125 was recommended to be reported and referred to the House Committee on Appropriations by the Professions/Occupations and Administrative Process Subcommittee of the House Committee on General Laws. The legislation establishes the Virginia Business Ready Expedited Permitting Program to help expedite the permitting process for a limited number of especially impactful business sites and projects. Its companion,

Senate Bill 217, awaits consideration by the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations.

Innovation and Technology

This week, **House Bill 707** unanimously reported from House Labor and Commerce with a substitute. The bill establishes protections for children relating to the collection of children's data and the sale of such personal data. **Senate Bill 361** was rereferred to Senate General Laws and Technology, and we anticipate it will be heard next week.

Senate Bill 487, as substituted, incorporates **Senate Bill 621** creating the Commission on Artificial Intelligence (AI) to advise the Governor and General Assembly, study the impacts of AI on the workforce, and assess potential options for an AI Bill of Rights among other duties. The legislation also prohibits, effective July 1, 2025, public bodies from implementing any system that employs AI unless it meets certain enumerated requirements. The substitute bill unanimously reported from Senate General Laws and Technology.

Military and Veterans Affairs

Senate Bill 702 exempts child care programs from licensure that serves only dependent children of military personnel and is located on a military base or on federal property or certified as a family child care provided by a branch of the Armed Forces. The bill was heard in the Senate Education and Health Public Education subcommittee and reported to the full committee.

House Bill 160 directs the Department of Labor and Industry, in consultation with the Department of Veterans Services, to create a poster describing the benefits and services available to veterans and allows employers to request and display such posted in the workplace. The poster shall include resources on DVS programs, substance abuse and mental health treatment resources, education and workforce training resources, and tax benefits among other items. The bill passed the House and is pending action in Senate committee.

Budget

Member budget amendments to Governor Youngkin's introduced budget for FY2024-2026 are now posted **online**. There are over 1,700 combined amendments in the bills - **HB29, HB30, SB29, SB30**. Each chamber's money committee will now work through those amendments and decide which ones will be included in their committee reports to be released on February 18.

The Virginia Permit Transparency Website Launches

This week, Governor Youngkin **announced** the release of the Virginia Permit Transparency (VPT) **website**. The website is intended to provide a centralized platform to track the status and timeline of permits issued by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The website currently includes permit information from three state agencies: the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the Virginia Department of Energy, and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. Additional state agencies will be added to the website soon.



Virginia Intern Day is an opportunity to recognize employers who have provided robust internship programs that benefit our future leaders and highlight interns' contributions to our workforce. V-TOP is now accepting nominations for the 2024 Top Virginia Employers for Virginia. Complete and submit the nomination for by March 1, 2024 to be considered for this distinction.

Thank You

VIRGINIA EMPLOYERS!

The Commonwealth seeks to recognize the "Top Virginia Employers for Interns" and their role in providing work-based learning opportunities to students!



Please complete and submit the following nomination form (one per employer) by March 1, 2024, so that your business or organization can be considered for this distinction.

State-level recognition and award notification will take place on April 1, 2024 and regional events will occur the week of April 8. The 2024 recipients will also be recognized during a special event on Virginia Intern Day (July 25, 2024).

All employers offering internships, regardless of size and sector, are encouraged to submit a nomination form. The nomination form should take 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

2024 Top Virginia Employers for Interns Awards



[Visit the Virginia TOP Website](#)

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