

Spring 2018 VRTA

**WHERE HAVE WE BEEN? WHERE ARE WE GOING?
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?**

What Was Different About the GA in 2018?

- 19 new delegates were seated in the House of Delegates.
- 12 of the new delegates were women.
- 16 of these new delegates were Democrats.
- 8 of 15 appointees to the Governor's cabinet are women. (One has resigned and has been replaced by her male deputy.)
- Delegate Kirk Cox became the Speaker of the House.
- The delegates' offices were relocated to the Pocahontas Building.
- The House subcommittee votes were recorded.
- The House voted to expand Medicaid.
- Ralph Northam served as the Governor of Virginia.
- Justin Fairfax, who is the ~~first~~ ^{2nd} African-American to hold the office, served as Lt. Governor of Virginia.
- For the first time in a number of years, the GA failed to balance the budget during the regular session.

What Is on the Horizon?

- The Employee Retirement Security & Pension Reform Commission, funded for four years to study compensation and retirement issues, is not scheduled to meet again in 2018. There was a bill to remove the Speaker of the House as a permanent member and increase the number of delegates appointed by the speaker from 3 to 4. A Senate amendment to change the number of the commission members from 21 to 22, include 12 legislative members instead of 11, and include 4 instead of 3 members of the Senate was not agreed to by the House. A conference committee was appointed, but no further action was taken. The bill failed to pass. What conclusions may be drawn from this?
- Del. Delores McQuinn will again introduce legislation to grant the health insurance credit to all school employees.
- We are studying whether the time is right to introduce legislation in 2019 to change the qualifying date of the enhanced retirement benefit from 1980 to 1990. It would be interesting to know how many members in each unit would be affected by this change.
- The school safety issue demands attention. Speaker Cox has appointed a Select Committee on School Safety to review state and local policies relating to school security and protection and to make policy recommendations for consideration by December 15, 2018, for the 2019 Session. The scope of the work will be limited to strengthening emergency preparedness, hardening school security infrastructure, implementing security best practices, deploying additional security

personnel, providing additional behavioral health resources for students and developing prevention protocols at primary and secondary institutions across the Commonwealth. (No gun regulations will be considered.) The Committee will be comprised of the following 22 members: Kirk Cox (chair), Danny Marshall (vice chair), Steve Landes, Chris Jones, Tommy Wright, Rob Bell, Todd Gilbert, Chris Peace, Barry Knight, Roxann Robinson, Israel O'Quinn, Nick Rush, Vivian Watts, Mark Sickles, David Toscano, Charniele Herring, Luke Torian, Paul Krizek, Steve Heretick, Mike Mullin, Jeff Bourne, Schuyler VanValkenburg.

- More attention is given to school safety. The Democratic caucus has announced the creation of Safe Virginia Initiative, a task force that will focus on gun control and school safety. Co-chairs are Del. Kathleen Murphy and Del. Eileen Filler-Corn. Invitations have been extended to Republicans be a part of the task force. Between May and October, the task force will hold public meetings for public input. The following are the four regional chairs: Del. Delores McQuinn (Richmond) – Richmond, Del. Marcia Price (Newport News) – Hampton Roads, Del. John Bell (Loudoun) – Northern Virginia, and Del. Chris Hurst (Montgomery) – Southwest Virginia.
- Gun legislation will likely be introduced in 2019. Seventy gun-related bills were introduced in 2018. All were killed in committee except SB 669(Deeds) which passed. It would treat minors 14 or older similarly to adults in regard to purchasing firearms after receiving mental health treatment. Presently, state law prohibits minors as well as adults who have been committed or detained for mental health treatment from purchasing a firearm. Such adults would not be able to purchase until certified mentally competent, while currently a juvenile who had been previously detained could buy a gun when of legal age.
- VRTA is proposing that the General Assembly prohibit the arming of school staff.
- Sen. Bill Stanley, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Local Government, is appointing a subcommittee on Facility Modernization to address concerns about “obsolete” school buildings across the state. He will chair this bipartisan committee, and co-chairs will be Sen. Glen Sturtevant (R) and Sen. Dave Marsden (D). Political consultant Paul Goldman has been named special counsel and policy adviser. Committee members include Senators Jennifer McClellan, Siobhan Dunnavant, and Barbara Favola.
- One Virginia 2021 is still working to end gerrymandering by passing a Constitutional amendment to establish a fair redistricting process after the 2020 census. Go to onevirginia2021.org for more information on their work. SJ 25 (Hanger) would have established a seven-member redistricting commission to redraw congressional and GA district boundaries after each census. It was continued to 2019 in the Privileges and Elections Committee.