



**Draft Legislative Agenda
2026 General Assembly Session**

City of Richmond, Virginia



Virginia's Capitol City

The City of Richmond is a proud, historic city with a rich cultural heritage. As the Capital of the Commonwealth, Richmond leads the region in high-quality business and residential growth. Richmond's unique neighborhoods and districts, both historical and new, support a diversity of uses, the equitable accommodation of all phases of life, and the efficient use of land to promote sustainable and healthy lifestyles. Richmond is proud to host legislators from all corners of Virginia during the General Assembly session in our downtown core.

Richmond is proud to be a leader in historic preservation, with approximately one-third of all City real estate located in a historic district, while also developing new residential neighborhoods and business centers. Because of this, residents of Richmond have a strong sense of community and civic engagement. Each of Richmond's unique neighborhoods contributes to the rich tapestry that make the city a place people can call home. Thoughtful redevelopment in Richmond is an opportunity to redesign the city around the needs, assets, and aspirations of valuable yet historically overlooked communities, while also remedying historical injustices around racial segregation and discriminatory development practices.

Richmond has a thriving, diverse economy - home to everything from technology companies, financial institutions, academia, creative firms, researchers, restaurants, energy companies, non-profits, and more. Richmond also values tourism and recreation. The beautiful James River provides top-notch outdoor activity from paddling, hiking, and cycling, to just enjoying time at the waterfront. As the historic, vibrant, capital of the Commonwealth, Richmond strives to model a welcoming, innovative, and equitable city with flourishing neighborhoods, a growing economy, and a high quality of life for all.

Richmond's General Assembly Delegation

Senate of Virginia

Senator Ghazala Hashmi (D) - 15th District

senatorhashmi@senate.virginia.gov

Office: 804-698-7515

Committee Assignments:

Education & Health (Chair)

Finance and Appropriations

Agriculture, Conservation & Natural Resources

Transportation

Rules

Senator Lamont Bagby (D) - 14th District

senatorbagby@senate.virginia.gov

Office: 804-698-7514

Committee Assignments:

Transportation (Chair)

Courts of Justice

Commerce and Labor

Education & Health

Rules

House of Delegates

Delegate Betsy B Carr (D) - House District 69

delegatebcarr@house.virginia.gov

Office: 804-698-1069

Committee Assignments:

Appropriations

General Laws

Transportation

Delegate Rae Cousins (D) House District 7

delegatercousins@house.virginia.gov

Office: 804-698-1079

Committee Assignments:

Education

Courts of Justice

Public Safety

Delegate Michael Jones (D) House District 77

delegatemjones@house.virginia.gov

Office: 804-698-1077

Committee Assignments:

Counties, Cities, and Towns

Communications, Technology and Innovation

Labor and Commerce

LEGISLATIVE and BUDGETARY REQUESTS

Legislative

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)

Richmond requests a revision in the State's Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program to match the updated federal LIHTC program regulations to more effectively support Richmond's lower income households.

Long-term Owner Occupancy Program (LOOP):

Richmond advocates for the completion of the study outlined in the 2025 Appropriations Act to ensure recommendations for a Long-term Owner Occupancy Program (LOOP) are delivered in 2026 including feasibility, eligibility criteria, strategies for implementation, and best practices from other states.

Sales Tax for School Construction

Richmond joins Virginia First Cities (VFC) and the Virginia Municipal League (VML) to request authority to raise the sales tax by up to 1% through a local voter-approved referendum for the sole purpose of funding public school construction and modernization, giving communities a local tool to fund urgently needed school improvements while maintaining voter oversight and accountability.

Budgetary

Water Treatment Plant

Since the water crisis in January 2025, the city has worked diligently on a 10-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Richmond Waterworks to upgrade aging infrastructure to improve resiliency and reliability of drinking water for Central Virginia. The full cost of the CIP is estimated at \$1.3B over the decade. **The City requests \$40M in state assistance for both FY27 and FY28 to jumpstart these critical drinking water infrastructure improvements.**

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)

The cost of the CSO Final Plan as approved by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on August 8, 2024 was \$565 million, which the City believes can be reduced to a \$533.5million total. Rate payers in Richmond are already paying some of the highest rates in Virginia. The city will need \$400 million in state funds set-aside for the project by FY29 in order to initiate contracts to meet the 2035 deadline mandated by the General Assembly. To date, the General Assembly has appropriated \$250 million in State grant funds and ARPA funding in total, of which \$119.5 has been dedicated to the CSO Final Plan. **Richmond requests \$100 million in FY27 and \$100 million in FY28 to support the implementation of the city's Final Plan.**

POLICY POSITIONS

Thriving Neighborhoods

Richmond strives to meet the housing needs of a growing city, so that residents across different income levels can access affordable housing in safe neighborhoods with strong public amenities.

Affordable Housing

- Richmond supports additional tools from the General Assembly to help increase the number of quality affordable housing units, encourage first-time home buyers, incentivize housing density and a variety of quality housing, including granting localities the authority to adopt mandatory inclusionary zoning programs.
- Richmond still faces some of the highest eviction rates in the Commonwealth. The City requests the state invest in additional resources to continue the Virginia Eviction Reduction Pilot (VERP) and additional resources to ensure access to legal counsel to support residents facing eviction.
- In addressing the issues of blighted and vacant properties, Richmond supports more tools to gain the compliance of absentee or uninvolved real estate owners who fail to maintain their property, with the goal of restoring these properties for future purchase or rent.
- Richmond supports the *Yes In God's Backyard* legislation that would authorize local governments to streamline the permitting process for religious organizations to build multi-family affordable housing on their land.
- Richmond supports anti-rent gouging legislation that gives localities the authority to establish, by city ordinance, a program to limit abusive rent increases.
- The city supports tools that keep authority for housing development as the responsibility of localities and does not have the state override local ordinances.
- Richmond opposes actions that would preempt local control of land use policies, including recently enacted City legislation that (1) allows accessory dwelling units (ADUs) by-right and (2) maintains the primary residency requirement for short-term rentals in residential areas.

Public Safety

- Richmond joins its local government partners, Virginia First Cities and the Virginia Municipal League, to request an increase in HB 599 funding, Aid to Local Police. The state created a program of financial assistance to local police departments (HB 599) when it imposed an annexation moratorium on cities more than 30 years ago. For a city that is not able to grow in geographic footprint, state support for local police departments is crucial to improving public safety.
- Richmond supports holistic, community-based strategies that address the root causes and

conditions of community violence including continued funding for the Safer Communities Program to support.

- Richmond supports state funding to increase the salaries and benefits of the city's public defenders to ensure equitable judicial outcomes for all residents, regardless of income or ability to pay. Increasing salaries and benefits of public defenders also helps ensure the city can retain quality public defenders.
- Richmond supports additional authority to regulate and impose penalties on unpermitted vape shops as well as tools to help address issues of blight, dilapidated and/or vacant buildings that can attract criminal activity and reduce the quality of life for residents.
- Richmond supports resources to reduce the opioid crisis without further criminalization of addiction
- Richmond supports strengthening evidence-based laws that can reduce gun violence and requests additional tools to reduce gun violence and encourage safe gun ownership.

Thriving Families

Richmond supports the education, health, and development of children and families — in and out of the classroom — so that students graduate from Richmond Public Schools well-prepared for success and connected to opportunities for further learning and career development.

High Quality Education for All

- Richmond supports modernizing the state funding formula for public education. The 2023 JLARC report on Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula, found that Virginia underfunds K-12 education by over \$3 billion annually and recommended transitioning to a student-based funding model. The current funding formula does not adequately address the needs of Richmond Public Schools as the current Local Composite Index (LCI) formula does not account for fiscal stress that Richmond faces. Richmond supports the JLARC recommendation to modify the formula to use a multi-year average of income, property, and sales data to smooth volatility and better reflect fiscal reality, or replace it with another formula like the Local Fiscal Stress Index.
- Richmond supports continued reform and greater investment in the state's funding stream that supports economically disadvantaged students, the At-Risk Add-On Program.
- Richmond supports consistent, annual funding for school construction, modernization, and other needs through per-pupil infrastructure allocations or other competitive grant programs.
- Richmond requests the state maintain the practice of allocating hold harmless funding if the city is at risk of receiving less state funding for Basic Aid than in the previous biennium.
- Richmond supports funding for out-of-school and after school programs, including ones run by

the city, by city partners, and by non-governmental organizations.

- Richmond supports funding and resources to provide affordable, high-quality full-day, full-year early childhood childcare and education options in all areas of the city, including:
 - Fully restoring the Virginia Pre-school Initiative; and
 - Fully funding the Child Care Subsidy Program, including maintaining current co-payment rates, to ensure affordability for working families.

Health and Human Services

- Given the cuts in funding federal programs, Richmond requests that the state prioritize resources for vital services that protect children and the most vulnerable in our community, such as SNAP, Medicaid, and Virginia Food Access Grants. Richmond requests the Commonwealth invest in technology upgrades while holding localities harmless.
- Richmond supports additional state funding for our local CSBs and other crisis community supports, like Marcus Alert.
- Richmond supports additional state programs and resources that continue to support high-value, evidence-based practices that aim to improve maternal health outcomes.
- Richmond supports holistic state-wide programs that help adults access health providers, pharmacies, addiction treatment programs, and mental health resources without criminalizing health and mental health struggles.
- Richmond supports efforts to create a commercial marketplace for adult-use cannabis, to discourage illegal sales, protect consumers, prevent children from accessing the drug, and capture tax revenue for needed public services. Richmond urges legislators to dedicate tax revenue from cannabis sales to increased funding for early childhood care and education, social equity initiatives, public health programs, and directly to the local governments that allow sales in their jurisdictions.
- The city requests that localities have discretion in placement and permitting of cannabis stores and vape stores in proximity to schools, preschools, day care centers, addiction treatment centers, and other similar locations.
- Richmond supports continued resources for the critical Lead Service Line Replacement program, as well as efforts toward the reduction of greenhouse gasses to improve air quality.

Thriving Economy

Support small and minority-owned businesses and employers providing quality, living-wage job opportunities. Create pathways for disadvantaged residents to move from poverty to stability to wealth building, and direct investments to historically neglected neighborhoods.

Economic Development

- Richmond supports expanded authority and tools to upzone and increase zoning density, particularly around transportation, housing, and critical care services.
- Richmond requests that affordable housing be included as a commercial activity for which Economic Development Authorities can issue bonds and offer low-interest rate loans to affordable housing developers.
- Richmond supports the expansion of historic rehabilitation tax credits to allow for investment in the quality and character of Richmond's neighborhoods.
- Richmond opposes any legislation that weakens local authority to regulate land use, which is a key local responsibility.
- Richmond supports programs and tools that support Richmond's vibrant and growing tourism industry, including the Governor's Motion Picture Opportunity Fund and the Governor's Motion Picture Tax Credit Fund, which drives resources, jobs, and unique creative opportunities to Richmond, while promoting Virginia's history, culture and architecture.
- Richmond supports efforts to allow a deeper partnership between the city and the Commonwealth as it relates to off-hours use of state-owned parking decks, particularly for weekends and large events.

Transportation

- Richmond supports expanded authority to use speed cameras near designated children's day care programs and expanded hours speed cameras may be used in school zones.
- Richmond supports funding for installation and maintenance of public electric vehicle charging stations.
- Richmond requests a focus of additional resources on multimodal transportation options to prevent regional traffic congestion and improve accessibility for all residents.
- Richmond supports fully funding findings from JLARC's 2021 *Transportation Infrastructure and Funding* study and increasing the availability of street maintenance funding because Richmond serves as the seat of government for the Commonwealth and the regional hub of jobs, entertainment, and cultural institutions in Central Virginia.

Administration of Government

- Richmond supports the fair market evaluation and continuation of Payments In Lieu of Taxes

(PILOT) to offset losses in property taxes due to the existence of a high number of nontaxable state-controlled properties within City limits.

- Richmond supports legislation to provide additional financing and bonding authority for the maintenance and construction of public facilities and entertainment related venues. Beginning in 1991, Richmond had the authority to retain sales and use tax revenue generated at public facilities, including convention centers and hotels, to repay bonds issued for those projects. That local power, authorized by §58.1-608.3, sunset on July 1, 2024. Richmond supports the re-establishment of this program for specified localities.
- Richmond requests greater authority in permitting and placement of cannabis stores, vape stores, and skill games to limit proximity to schools, preschools, day care centers, addiction treatment centers, and other similar locations.
- Richmond supports the preservation of our local authority and autonomy in matters of local concern.
- Richmond opposes unfunded mandates that further tie the hands of city government from addressing concerns locally and supports sufficient time and tools for localities to budget to meet their obligations.

Regional Partners

- Richmond supports the legislative agendas of our community partners, including:
 - Richmond Public Schools
 - PlanRVA
 - Virginia Municipal League (VML)
 - Virginia First Cities (VFC)
 - Greater Richmond Safety Net Collaborative