

Dear {{FirstName or 'Friend'}},

This week, we gaveled in to start the 2025 Session, although we did not start the way we anticipated. After the winter storm, the City of Richmond suffered from a water treatment plant failure that disrupted water service for the city. Since we did not have running water on Wednesday, we recessed session until this Monday.

Many of you were negatively impacted by the winter storm that hit Fairfax. My office has been working all week to assist constituents. Please stay safe as VDOT continues to work after the smaller winter storm last night.

I am excited to share with you the bills I have introduced in this session. The majority of my bills focus on ensuring we have high standards in our public schools, protecting working Virginia families, and expanding healthcare.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'E. L. ...', written in a cursive style.

Winter Weather

WHAT DOES "PASSABLE" MEAN?

- ◆ In neighborhoods, an 8'-to-10' path for emergency vehicle access.
- ◆ Drivable with extreme caution, but is snow-packed and not curb-to-curb or to bare pavement.
- ◆ Crews will sand hills, curves and intersections to help with traction.



NORTHERN VIRGINIA DISTRICT



Last week, Fairfax was impacted by what VDOT classified as a level 5 winter event. We have heard from many constituents that they were experiencing issues reporting plowing and road treatment needs. Our office coordinated with VDOT to direct services to several communities that requested assistance. Yesterday, Sen. Pekarsky met with VDOT officials to relay constituent feedback on the snow removal rollout during this past winter event. We thank everyone who contacted our office to let us know about these issues and hope they will be addressed.

VDOT classified last night's winter event as a level 2, which will mobilize 1,500 trucks, with 50 dedicated to subdivisions. VDOT is mandated to make sure all roads are passable. Thankfully, we anticipate warmer temperatures by Monday.

Snow Removal Tips

[Fairfax County has prepared a helpful guide for snow removal](#) where you can learn about where to shovel, health tips for shoveling, and smart salting. Be sure to check out Fairfax County's [Guide to Snow](#) which has the latest snowfall forecast, [VDOT's plowing map](#), and tips on how to best shovel your driveway.



Report Plowing Needs to VDOT



SNOW REMOVAL REPORTING

CALL 1-800-FOR-ROAD (367-7623), TTY 711

2025 Session Begins

On Wednesday, Sen. Pekarsky was present in Richmond to begin the 2025 Session. After gaveling in, session was recessed until Monday, January 13, because of the water issues plaguing the City of Richmond. Water service has been restored in the city, ensuring that the General Assembly will be conducting business this week.

Sen. Pekarsky Files Bills for 2025 Session

Introduced Legislation

SB 738 Cell Phones in Schools Directs school boards to develop and implement age-appropriate policies relating to the use of cell phones.

SB 1030 Sports Physicals Changes the timeframe requirement for student athletes to have had a physical from 12 to 14 months.

SB 1031 Religious Exemption Amends the provisions permitting children an exemption from school attendance based on religious beliefs and to conform with existing homeschooling requirements.

SB 1032 Teacher Contract Continuation requires that only the teacher needs to provide written notice of noncontinuation of a continuing contract.

SB 1033 School Board Arbitration Permits school boards to submit any existing controversy to binding arbitration.

SB 1034 Student AAC Requires school divisions to document the IEP of a student with a disability who needs or uses augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

SB 1035 Opioid Antagonist Language Allows authorized practitioners to administrate other opioid antagonists.

SB 1036 Seizure Rescue Permits a prescriber to authorize a school employee to administrate seizure medication.

SB 1037 School Telehealth for Students Directs each school board to consider participating in telehealth services on school property during regular school hours with parental consent.

SB 1038 Telehealth Directs the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to develop best practice educational training for healthcare providers on how to conduct telehealth visits for patients with disabilities.

SB 1039 Telehealth for inmates Requires the Department of Corrections and the State Board of Local and Regional Jails to develop policies for the accommodation in correctional facilities of inmate participation in telehealth appointments.

SB 1048 Safe Storage Requires school boards to annually notify parents on safe storage of prescription drugs and the parent's legal responsibility to safely store any firearms.

SB 1187 Transfer Accreditation (SCHEV) Prohibits any college from denying credit to transfer students based solely on the sending institution's accreditor, as long as such accreditor is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

SB 1188 International License Recognition (DPOR) Directs the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation to allow the issuance of a license or certification to any applicant who holds a comparable international license or certification issued by another country.

SB 1210 MWAAs Airport Noise Requires airport noise to be added to the list of disclosures for purchasers of a residential property provided by the Real Estate Board.

SB 1212 Junk Fees Bans undisclosed mandatory fees, also known as "junk fees."

SB 1213 SUDEP Requires the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to take certain actions upon the finding that an individual died from Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP).

SB 1215 VHHA Pre Authorization Requires insurance providers to communicate whether a prior

authorization request is approved, denied, or requires supplementation in a reasonable window after the request is submitted.

SB 1216 Clean Energy Retail Use Requires that competitive service providers ensure that 100 percent of their customers' energy is either zero-carbon electricity or matched with renewable energy certificates.

This year Sen. Pekarsky has introduced a diverse set of legislation that focuses on positively impacting the lives of Virginians.

Education: Several bills look to strengthen education in Virginia, including a comprehensive bill on cell phone policies in schools, teacher contract protections, expanding homeschooling standards to cover all children that are homeschooled, adding augmentative and alternative communication needs to a student's IEP, and expanding telehealth opportunities for students to help address the mental health needs in our schools.

Consumer protection: Two consumer protection bills that would positively impact working Virginians, one that bans undisclosed mandatory fees and another that requires an airport noise disclosure for the purchasers of residential property.

Healthcare: Several bills address healthcare needs in our community including better standards and procedures to streamline the health insurance preauthorization process, expansion of opioid antagonist options for providers, expanding the ability for schools to administer seizure medication for proscribed students, and three telehealth bills that would expand access for students, inmates, and for people with disabilities.

Thank you to the many constituents who contacted our office with issues and concerns. Many of these bills were born out of those conversations.

For a full list of bills, [please visit the Legislative Information System \(LIS\) website.](#)

Local News

Fairfax Connector Service Changes



The Fairfax County Department of Transportation will implement changes to several Fairfax Connector routes, including the addition of Route 610, from Stone Road Park & Ride in Centreville to George Mason University, effective **January 11, 2025**.

I-495: The Big Beam Weekend



Crews are preparing to install five lines of massive steel girders extending 295-feet in length across northbound I-495 (Capital Beltway) for a new express lanes ramp that will connect the Dulles Toll Road to northbound I-495. This major bridge girder operation - the Big Beam Weekend - is scheduled to occur **Friday night, January 24 through early Monday morning, January 27**, and will impact travel significantly on northbound I-

495 near Tysons and at the I-495 and Dulles Corridor interchange area.

Motorists are urged to STAY AWAY throughout the weekend as northbound I-495 will be reduced from six to two lanes near Tysons, and multiple ramps at the I-495 and Dulles Corridor interchange will be closed and detoured. In the event of inclement weather, the Big Beam Weekend will be rescheduled for the following weekend, Jan. 31 through Feb. 3.

[Click here](#) to view maps showing closures and traffic impacts.

To plan ahead and stay informed about the Big Beam Weekend, affected travelers should check VA 511 online at 511.vdot.virginia.gov, on the mobile app., or by calling 511 from any phone in Virginia. Travelers are also encouraged to sign up for email alerts at 495next.vdot.virginia.gov.

Community Resources



COVID-19 TESTING



Flu + COVID-19 Resources

It is flu and COVID-19 season again. Everyone ages 6 months and older should get a 2024–2025 COVID-19 vaccine. People who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccine have lower risk of severe illness. The Fairfax County Health Department offers [recourses for finding COVID-19 vaccine locations and information](#).

Need to find resources on COVID-19 testing? The Fairfax County Health Department has [additional information on testing and best practices](#). You can also visit the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) tool to [search for a testing site in Virginia near you](#).



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It is a pleasure to serve you in the 36th District

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**Cheers,
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