

Dear {{FirstName or 'Friend'}},

This week was the start of the first full week of Session; our office was busy! I had several bill presentations this week in committees and I am excited that all of my bills this week had positive movement through committee.

I hope you and your family have a wonderful Martin Luther King Jr. weekend.

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

2025 Session Begins, Again

This week was the first full week of Session and we hit the ground running with several bill presentations in committee and meeting with constituents and advocates.

First Bill Passes Committee



January 15, 2025 - General Laws and Technology - SR B (306) - 30...

SB 1210, unanimously passed out of committee this week. Some of the new neighborhoods located in the 36th District are located very close to Dulles International Airport. As Dulles Airport continues to expand operations, the bill will help prospective homebuyers in Loudoun and Fairfax Counties set expectations and understand that there will likely be an increase in aircraft noise occurring in established noise overlay zones.

SB 1210

SENATE OF VIRGINIA

General Laws and Technology

2:56 PM

SB 1210: Virginia Residential Property Disclosure Act; required disclosures for buyer to beware; aircraft noise.

Patron: Stella G. Pekarsky

Motion: Report with substitute

YEAS: 15

- Yea Aird
- Yea P Carroll Foy
- Yea P Craig
- Yea Ebbin
- Yea French
- Yea Head
- Yea P Jordan
- Yea Locke

NAYS: 0

ABS: 0

- Yea McPike
- Yea Pillion
- Yea Reeves
- Yea Roem
- Yea Rouse
- Yea VanValkenburg
- Yea P Williams Graves

Education Bills Reports Out of Public Education Sub-Committee



Three bills reported out of Public Education Sub-Committee on Thursday:

- **SB 738** allows school boards to develop and implement policy for restricting cell phone use in the classroom during regular school hours. Last year, Governor Youngkin announced Executive Order 33, which began the discussion on cell phone use in schools and offered non-binding recommendations on how schools can deal with this issue. This bill differs from the Governor's policy in four key aspects:
 - This bill contains **explicit protections for students with Individualized Education Plans, Section 504 Plans, and other situations** as determined appropriate by the school board, allowing for cell phone use to monitor or address health concerns, or serve as assistive technology.
 - This bill also **explicitly prohibits the suspension or expulsion of a student who violates the cell phone possession policy** as removing a child from the classroom resulting in a loss of learning time is

contradictory to the purpose of creating a distraction-free environment.

- The bill **places the responsibility of enforcement on the administration**, so as to not overburden teachers and cut into their instruction time.
 - Finally, the bill **requires every school board to have a policy, which they will craft with the input of their parents and community**, giving them the flexibility to implement policies that best fit their system.
 - **SB 1030** revises the existing code **requiring middle school students to receive a physical exam in the preceding 12 months before participating in athletic competition by expanding it to include elementary and secondary school students, as well as extending the time frame to the preceding 14 months**. Many constituents, including parents and doctors, have reported to our office that this time frame is difficult for them. The current VHSL policy accepts physicals completed from May 1st of the current year through June 30th of the succeeding year. This creates a serious bottleneck at pediatricians' offices in the summer and results in parents seeking appointments with practitioners who aren't familiar with patients and are missing critical vaccination schedules. By extending the time frame in this code section and applying it to all students, families will have much more flexibility regarding when they complete their physicals.
 - **SB 1034** mandates that **teachers will be trained on instructing students who need or use Augmentative and Alternative communication** device before the start of the school year so they can adequately work with the student. This means any form of communication other than oral speech, including gestures, facial expressions, writing, or speech-generating devices.
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SB 1035 Reports Out of Health Professions Sub-Committee



January 17, 2025 - Education and Health: Health Professions - SR...

Today, SB 1035 reported out of Health Professions Sub-Committee. The bill revises the section of the Drug Control Act related to professional use by practitioners to add “or other opioid antagonists” following each mention of naloxone, a widely used opioid antagonist.

This language had already been adopted in other subsections of the law, and this code section simply had not yet been updated to add the language. Making this update will bring much needed clarity to our current law and make it easier for medical professionals to use every tool at their disposal to reverse overdoses.

SJ 261 Passes Rules Committee

SJ 261 passed the Rules Committee today. The bill designates the first week in October as Special Education School Week in Virginia. This will be another way that we honor and recognize the important role that Specialized Education plays in our Commonwealth.

Budget Amendment Requests

On Thursday, I presented my priority budget amendment requests to the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee. These priorities include:

- **Covering the Costs of Vagus Nerve Stimulators:** The Medicaid payment for Vagus Nerve Therapy does not cover the cost of the VNS device and procedure. Therefore, Medicaid patients with drug-resistant epilepsy do not have access to the device and procedure. This results in more attempts at different medications or joining a waitlist at another hospital that offers them.
- **Restorative Schools in Virginia Pilot Program:** A budget amendment for \$1,990,000 in the second year from the general fund is filed to support the program's implementation. The funding includes \$960,000 to hire 1-2 restorative practice specialists in each eligible district, \$480,000 to support stipends for staff members adopting additional responsibility within schools, \$400,000 to support training and technical assistance, and \$150,000 for a contractor hired by the VDOE to support data collection. This will help support teachers and administrators dealing with some of the increased behavioral challenges we have seen in schools.
- **Establish the Virginia Climate Office at George Mason University:** Sen. Pekarsky requested approval for GMU to host the Virginia Climate Office, formerly run by UVA, to develop and deliver data, analysis, assessments and expertise about Virginia's weather and climate-related impacts, risks, and risk management options to state and local government agencies, businesses, and communities of place or practice in the Commonwealth.

2025 Resolution Nominations

A graphic with a white background and a dark blue border. On the left, there is a blue and white megaphone icon. The main text is in a dark blue serif font. A blue rectangular box contains white text. Below that, more dark blue text is centered. At the bottom, a blue email address is centered. The background of the graphic has a faint, light blue sunburst pattern.

Resolution Nominations

Do you know a business, organization who has served our community well? Do you want to honor a community member or loved one who has passed?

Submit their information to be considered for a commending or memorial resolution

SenatorPekarsky@Senate.Virginia.Gov

Our office is currently accepting commending and memorial resolution nominations ahead of the upcoming 2025 legislative session.

The Virginia Senate and House have the opportunity to acknowledge and commend individuals and organizations that serve our community, in the official record. We also do memorial resolutions for people who have a lasting impact, who have passed.

Resolution proposals are voted on by the entire body to acknowledge significant community members' achievements. **Do you or someone you know have a proposal for a resolution?**

Please let us know at SenatorPekarsky@Senate.Virginia.Gov.

Meet My Staff



Kat Thames, Chief of Staff
Caitlin Bennett, District Director
Alex Kellum Legislative Aide
Conner McNulty, Legislative Intern
Katya Mayer, Legislative Intern
Amelia Stoner, Legislative Intern
Colleen Dee Administrative Assistant

I am so excited to get to work with my incredible team!

Meeting with Constituents



Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE)



The Medical Society of Virginia

This week, our office met with constituents and several organizations including the Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE), the Virginia Interfaith Center, SAARA of VA, the Medical Society of Virginia, the Virginia Dental Association, and Potomac Conservancy. These organizations advocated for numerous solutions that addresses many issues including healthcare accessibility, housing needs, and environmental protections.



SAARA of VA



Virginia Dental Association



Virginia Interfaith Center

Potomac Conservancy

Local News

Fairfax Connector MLK Service Changes



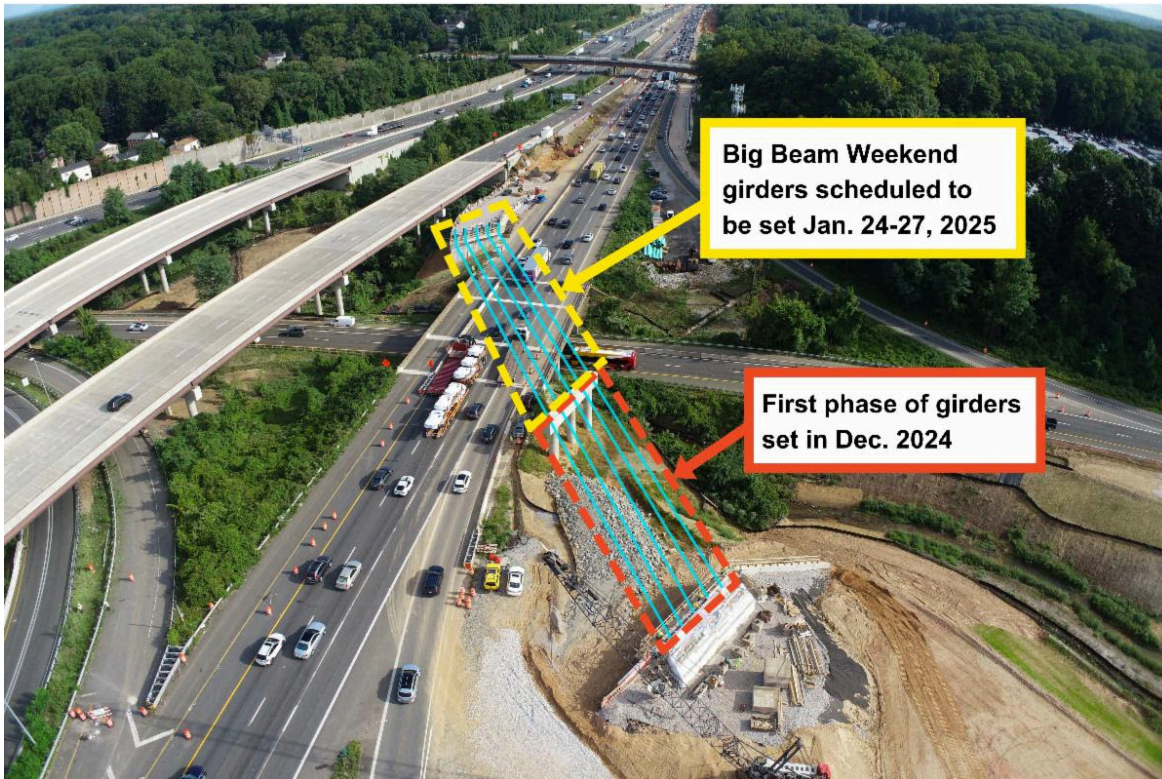
On Monday, Jan. 20, 2025, Fairfax Connector will operate on a Holiday Weekday service schedule due to Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Inauguration Day.

Routes that operate Holiday Weekday Service:

[101](#), [109](#), [151](#), [152](#), [159](#), [161](#), [162](#), [171](#), [301](#), [305](#), [306](#), [308](#), [310](#), [321](#), [322](#), [334](#), [340](#), [341](#), [350](#), [351](#), [352](#), [353](#), [371](#), [401](#), [402](#), [423](#), [427](#), [462](#), [463](#), [467](#), [507](#), [552](#), [553](#), [557](#), [558](#), [559](#), [574](#), [605](#), [610](#), [615](#), [622](#), [625](#), [630](#), [642](#), [651](#), [660](#), [662](#), [671](#), [672](#), [703](#), [721](#), [803](#), [901](#), [921](#), [924](#), [937](#), [950](#), [951](#), [952](#), [954](#), [983](#), [RIBS 1](#), [RIBS 2](#), [RIBS 3](#), [RIBS 4](#) and [RIBS 5](#).

Find information about all Fairfax Connector holiday schedules [here](#).

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.

Celebrate the Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.



Fairfax County [will host several events](#) beginning on Saturday, January 18, to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy.



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

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**Cheers,
Stella Pekarsky
Senator, District 36**

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