

Dear {{FirstName or 'Friend'}},

This week was a whirlwind! I had my first bills pass the Senate successfully. I am proud that these bills help protect Virginia homebuyers, increase healthcare access by streamlining the preauthorization process, and recognize the important contributions of our Special Education teachers. I had several bill presentations this week in committees, and twelve of my bills were reported.

I am excited to share with all of you these important updates.



Sen. Pekarsky in the News

Several of Sen. Pekarsky's bills received press coverage this week. Stay up to date with the latest news:

- SB 1031 | [WTVR CBS 6](#), [WVTF Virginia Public Radio](#)
- SB 1212 | [WVTF Virginia Public Radio](#)
- SB 1215 | [Legacy News](#)
- SB 1216 | [Cardinal News](#)
- SB 1262 | [Virginia Mercury](#), [WRIC ABC 8](#)

Bills on the Move

First Bills Pass the Senate

THE SENATE OF VIRGINIA

BLOC
SB768, SB787, SB807, SB808, SB841, SB843,
SB846, SB885, SB888, SB892, SB913, SB9...

Passage **R**

YEA Aird	YEA Ebbin	YEA McDougale	YEA Rouse
YEA Bagby	YEA Favola	YEA McPike	YEA Salim
YEA Boysko	YEA French	YEA Mulchi	YEA Srinivasan
YEA Carroll Foy	YEA Hackworth	YEA Obenshain	YEA Stanley
YEA Cifers	YEA Hashmi	YEA Peake	YEA Stuart
YEA Craig	YEA Head	YEA Pekarsky	YEA Sturtevant
YEA Deeds	YEA Jordan	YEA Perry	YEA Suetterlein
YEA DeSteph	YEA Locke	YEA Pillion	YEA Surovell
YEA Diggs	YEA Lucas	YEA Reeves	YEA VanValkenburg
YEA Durant	YEA Marsden	YEA Roem	YEA Williams Graves

Three bills unanimously passed the Senate this week:

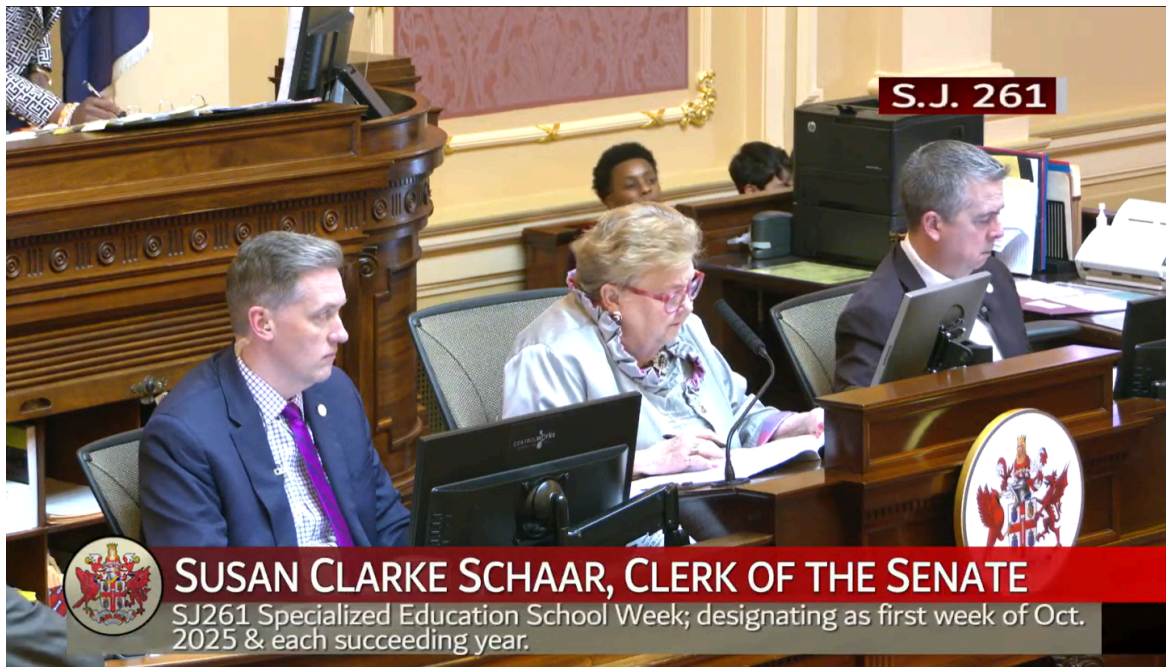
SB 1210: Some of the new neighborhoods in the 36th District are very close to Dulles International Airport. As Dulles Airport continues to expand operations, the bill will help prospective homebuyers in Loudoun and Fairfax Counties set expectations and understand that there will likely be an increase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

SB 1215: Prior authorization (PA) requirements are increasing in Virginia and nationwide, leading to delays in patient care and excessive administrative costs and burdens for healthcare providers. Providers and patients report struggling to find updated and clear information about PA requirements. The burdensome and lengthy administrative process can delay necessary patient care and treatment. In some cases, it can lead to patients abandoning a care plan entirely. All of these factors have negative impacts on patients' health outcomes.

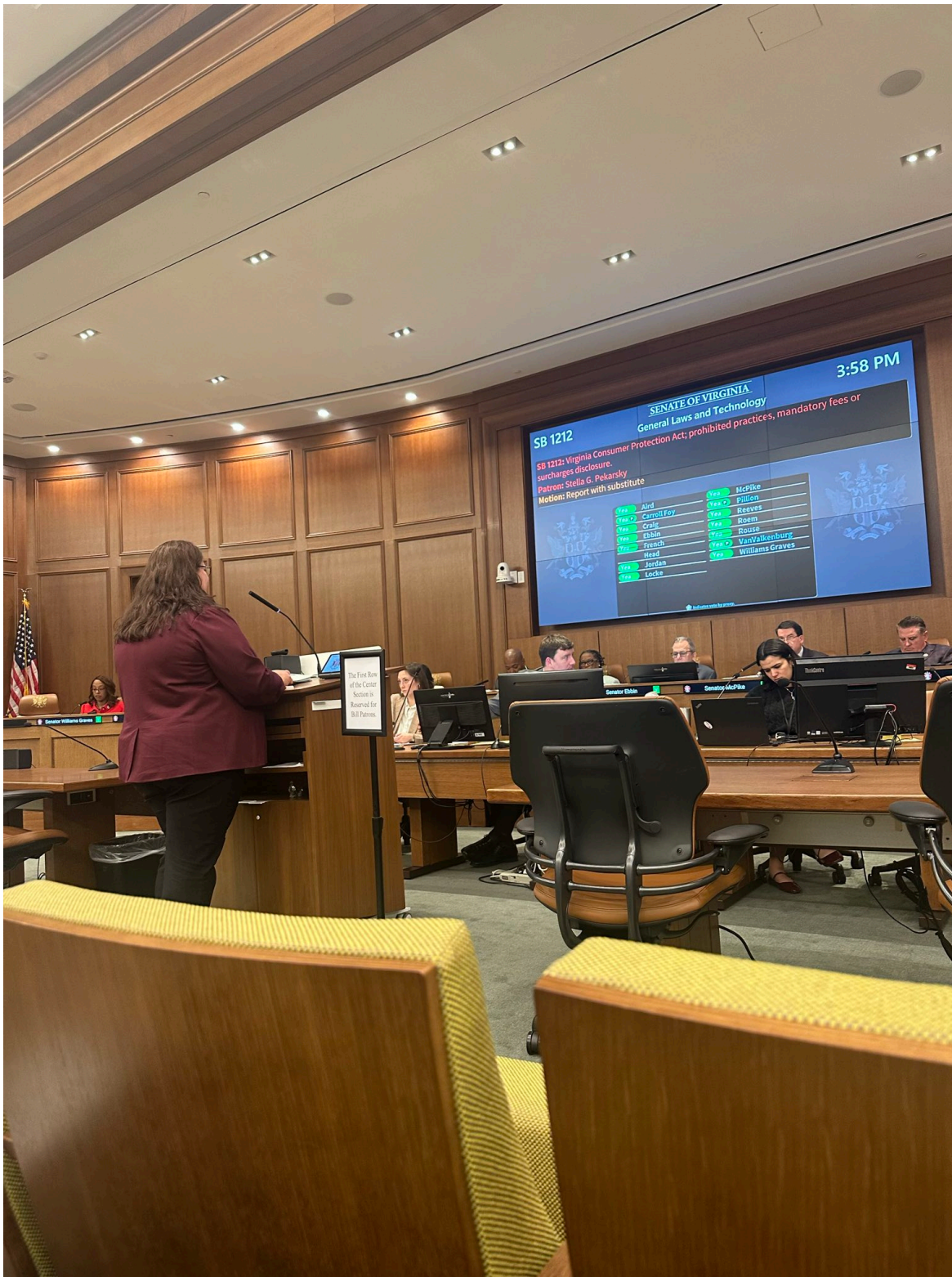
- The bill requires insurance providers to communicate whether a prior authorization request is approved, denied, or requires supplementation in a reasonable 72 hours window after the request is submitted, for expedited requests and seven calendar days for a regular request. If supplementation is required, the same time frame applies for expedited and regular requests.

- It also prohibits health insurance carriers from revoking prior authorization after approval unless there is evidence that authorization was obtained based on fraud or if federal or manufacturer action removes that healthcare service from the market.
- This bill also includes several provisions for online transparency requirements, including requiring carriers to include a list of services and codes that require pre-authorization, request forms accepted by the carrier, and dates on which the carrier began requiring prior authorization on the carrier's website.

SJ 261: Designates the first week of October, in 2025 and each succeeding year, as **Specialized Education School Week** to honor and recognize the important role that Specialized Education plays in Virginia. They deserve our recognition and thanks, as do the families and students who benefit from the services they receive.



Junk Fees Bill Reports out of General Laws and Technology



SB 1212: This week, SB 1212, which bans undisclosed mandatory fees, also known as “junk fees,” unanimously reported out of the General Laws and Technology Committee. Virginia’s economy has become overrun with “junk fees.” Across industries and products, consumers pay billions each year in unnecessary, unavoidable, or surprise charges that inflate prices while adding little to no value, the “fees” that get

added to your cart at checkout. Consumer Reports estimates that junk fees cost the average family of four more than \$3,200 annually. This is a heavy economic burden for many Virginia families.

Education Bills Report Out of Education and Health Committee



Several bills reported out of the Education and Health Committee and soon will be voted on by the full Senate:

- **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 1032:** Ensures a teacher with a continuing contract has the right to a salary and benefits between school years. Teachers who have earned continuing contract status, including those with decades of dedicated service, are vulnerable to termination at the end of the school year without any due process. Teachers can still be terminated through the dismissal procedures outlined in the Virginia Code. This change ensures fairness and due process, financial security for our teachers, and improves retention and morale among teachers. Veteran teachers often educate

generations of students, and Virginia will lose them to neighboring states unless it provides job security through continuing contracts.

- **SB 1034:** Mandates that teachers must be trained in instructing students who need or use Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices 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. This bill requires schools to document the individualized education program of a student with a disability who uses AAC, before providing instruction to that student, the AAC, and the communication access needs of that student. Our public schools must be ready to educate students who communicate differently from others.
- **SB 1035:** 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.
- **SB 1048:** Requires schools to send parents a reminder of the importance of safe storage for both prescription drugs and firearms. Ensuring that children have a safe environment to learn and grow both inside and outside of the classroom is essential to achieving academic excellence.

According to the Safe Kids Worldwide 2019 report, nearly 52,000 children under the age of six were treated in emergency rooms for medicine poisonings across the United States in 2017. According to the CDC, the firearm suicide rate among children and teens has increased by 66% over the past decade. In 2019, The U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center found that 76% of school shooters acquired their firearm from the home of a parent or close

relative. This reminder will be an important step in preventing unintentional deaths in children.

Bills Report from Committees and Rereferred to Finance and Appropriations



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
SENATE FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

- **SB 1033:** Virginia Code grants school boards the authority to enter into collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). However, it does not expressly authorize local governing bodies to submit to binding arbitration for alleged violations of a CBA. Virginia is a Dillion Rule state; the General Assembly must grant such authority. This bill clarifies that school boards can submit CBA disputes to binding arbitration if they choose to do so.
- **SB 1037:** There is a mental health crisis in our schools, and this bill would allow school boards to permit the offering of telehealth services during regular school hours for students with parental consent. The bill requires the policies to designate a location in each school for students to use for such telehealth appointments and for that location to ensure privacy and internet access.
- **SB 1188:** Many foreign-born professionals are interested in working in Virginia. Building upon the concept of Universal License Recognition, which handles state-to-state transfer, this bill directs the regulatory boards at the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation to develop regulations creating a licensure pathway for qualified international professionals by giving credit for documentable and verifiable international training and/or certification.
- **SB 1262:** Establishes a two-year pilot restorative discipline program for qualifying school districts. Out-of-school suspension is a major contributor to the school-to-prison pipeline. Removing a student from instruction for extended periods of time is extremely damaging to their intellectual and

socio-emotional development. When students are continuously removed from class for non-serious offenses, it often leads to poor academic performance, school dropout, substance abuse, and criminal activity. Working with students with nonviolent behavioral issues and providing support to their teachers ensures we are investing in our future.

- **SB 1269:** The VRE is exempt from paying state taxes on any direct purchase it makes. However, in the case of procuring required surplus lines of insurance, it must make these purchases through a broker rather than making the purchase directly. These surplus line purchases through brokers are currently subject to Virginia State taxes. The cost of these taxes imposed on brokers is then passed along to the VRE. By exempting these insurance policies, the VRE will save approximately 100,000 taxpayer dollars per year.

Named Energy Choice Champion

ENERGY CHOICE CHAMPION

THANK YOU!

Sen. Pekarsky is fighting for energy customers by introducing legislation that will give Virginians a choice to enroll in affordable, 100% clean energy plans offered by competitive energy providers.

Senate Bill 1216

Virginia

My Energy Choice named Sen. Pekarsky an Energy Choice Champion for introducing **SB1216** seeks to expand access to 100% carbon-free energy from third-party suppliers in the Commonwealth. It allows customers of all classes to purchase 100% carbon-free energy from third-party suppliers, regardless of whether the monopoly utility offers a 100% renewable option. It requires these third-party suppliers to meet 100% of

participating customers' energy and capacity requirements from resources in the PJM footprint.

2025 Resolution Nominations



**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

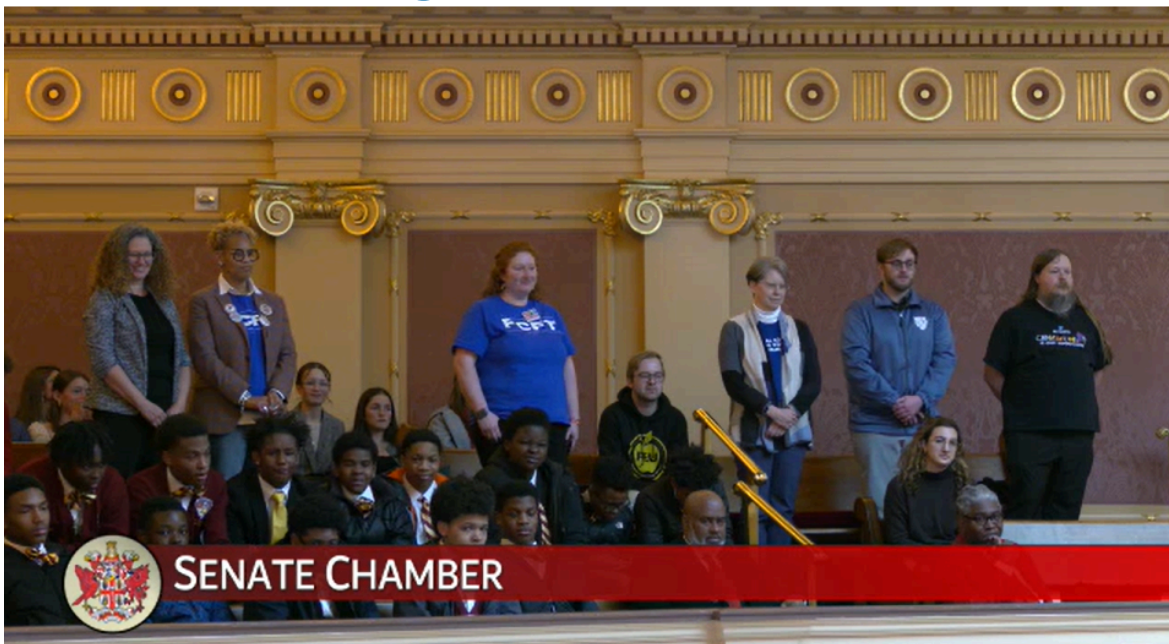
Our office is currently accepting commending and memorial resolution nominations ahead of the upcoming 2025 legislative session.

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.

Meeting with Constituents



This week, our office met with constituents and several organizations including the Planned Parenthood Advocates of Virginia (PPAV), AARP, the MOVE Business Chamber, and the American Federation of Teachers of Virginia. Sen. Pekarsky introduced the American Federation of Teachers of Virginia on the Senate floor. These teachers are members of the Fairfax County Federation of Teachers and were welcomed and honored by the Senate.



MOVE Business Chamber



AARP



Planned Parenthood Advocates of Virginia (PPAV)

Local News

Compton Road Shared-use Path



Last week, the Board of Supervisors approved a resolution to accept funding to construct a 10-foot-wide shared-use path along northbound Compton Road from the Bull Run Special Events Center Access Road to just south of the I-66 bridge, and from just north of the I-66 bridge to a connection with the existing Cub Run Trail. The project also includes installing a separate pedestrian bridge over Cub Run to accommodate the new shared-use path. Work is anticipated to start mid-2025.

You can read more about [the plan on VDOT's website](#).

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.



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

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Cheers,
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Senator, District 36

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