

Virginia State Firefighters Association Legislative Report 1-19-2026

The 2026 Virginia General Assembly convened on January 14, 2026, marking the start of what promises to be a consequential 60-day legislative session. With Democrats now holding expanded majorities in both the House and Senate and control of the executive branch following the November 2025 elections, the session opened with aggressive early action on high-profile priorities.

House and Senate members were quickly engaged: committee hearings began, and several key deadlines were set. Member budget amendment filings were due January 16, just two days after the session began. The final deadline to introduce regularly filed bills is January 23. We will continue to see any remaining legislation filed and posted over the next week. Additionally, legislators are working toward Crossover Day on February 17, 2026, the statutory deadline by which the House must act on House bills and the Senate on Senate bills if they are to continue advancing. The formal session is scheduled to adjourn March 14, 2026, with a reconvened session on April 22 to consider gubernatorial vetoes and amendments.

A centerpiece of the first week was the swift legislative approval of four constitutional amendments that will now go before Virginia voters. These amendments, which passed both chambers during the opening days of session, include protections for abortion and reproductive healthcare, automatic restoration of voting rights for people who have completed felony sentences, marriage equality, and a controversial congressional redistricting for Virginia.

Under Virginia's constitutional process, these measures must be approved in two consecutive General Assembly sessions with a House election in between, which they have now done, and then be placed on the ballot for a statewide referendum. The redistricting amendment is expected to appear in a special spring 2026 referendum, possibly as early as April. If approved by voters, it would allow the legislature to redraw congressional districts outside the normal decennial cycle.

To conclude, the first week of the 2026 session set a fast pace for lawmaking in Richmond. With major deadlines on the horizon, a reshaped political balance, and consequential policy questions headed for the ballot, lawmakers face intense pressure in the weeks ahead to translate campaign promises into enacted law.

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Bill	Catch line	Legislation Status	Chief Patron
HB7	Law-enforcement officers; restrictions on wearing of facial coverings, exceptions, civil liability.	In Subcommittee	Jones
HB11	Emergency custody orders; transportation to treatment center, etc.	In Subcommittee	McNamara
HB38	Public schools; mental health awareness training and instruction, requirements.	In Subcommittee	Henson
HB43	Suicide; abolishes common-law crime.	In Committee	Simon
HB48	Suicide prevention; VDH to convene work group to develop plan to reduce among at-risk populations.	In Committee	Reid
HB169	Va. Emergency Management Preparedness and Capabilities Grant Program and Fund; established, report.	In Subcommittee	Askew
HB204	Virginia Law Officers' Retirement System; extends membership to emergency dispatchers.	In Subcommittee	Cherry
HB205	Va. Retirement System; enhanced retirement benefits for 911 dispatchers, delayed effective date.	In Subcommittee	Cherry
HB209	Peer recovery specialists; VDH & DOC to develop guidelines for hiring.	In Subcommittee	Price
HB227	Line of Duty Act; transitional coverage.	In Subcommittee	Cornett
HB230	Motor vehicles; use of safety belt systems, certain emergency medical services personnel exempted.	In Subcommittee	McQuinn
HB233	Motor vehicles; use of safety belt systems, exempts certain emergency medical services personnel.	In Subcommittee	Wachsmann
HB240	Admission to bail; fixing terms of bail, mental health considerations.	In Committee	Gardner
HB246	Mental illness, neurocognitive disorder, etc.; affirmative defense or reduced penalty.	In Committee	Watts
HB248	Interjurisdictional law-enforcement agreements; development of behavioral health co-response teams.	In Subcommittee	Watts
HB249	Marcus alert system; external database information removal.	In Subcommittee	Watts
HB273	Law-enforcement officers; duty to render aid upon danger to life or limb, civil immunity.	In Committee	Helmer
HB289	Electric utilities; small portable solar generation devices.	In Subcommittee	Anderson
HB325	Fire Programs, Department of; development of mental health awareness training.	In Subcommittee	Sullivan
HB393	First Responders Cancer Screening Fund; created.	In Subcommittee	Askew
HB394	Fire Programs Fund; increases assessment.	In Subcommittee	Askew
HB457	Land development; solar canopies in parking areas, definition.	In Committee	Krizek
HB585	Va. Retirement System; enhanced retirement benefits for animal control officers and 911 dispatchers.	In Committee	Ballard
HB682	Fire Programs Fund; aid to localities; redistribution of funds.	In Committee	Zehr
HB735	Board of Housing and Community Development; Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code; temporary tents used for agritourism purposes.	Committee Referral	Leftwich
HB1054	Virginia Fire Personnel and Equipment Grant Program; established, report.	Pending	Phillips
HB1269	Virginia Retirement System; Virginia Law Officers' Retirement System; emergency dispatchers.	Committee Referral	Nivar
		Pending	



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<u>HB1314</u>	Civil action for deprivation of rights; liability of persons acting under color of law.	Committee Referral Pending	Maldonado
<u>HB1333</u>	Hours of work for paid firefighters.	Committee Referral Pending	Feggans
<u>SB80</u>	Virginia Fire Personnel and Equipment Grant Program; established, report.	In Committee	Mulchi
<u>SB87</u>	Local government sporting events and sporting facilities; automated external defibrillators.	In Committee	Stanley
<u>SB98</u>	Virginia Emergency Management Preparedness & Capabilities Grant Program & Fund; established, report.	In Committee	Stanley
<u>SB100</u>	Volunteer emergency responders, protection of employees; civil action.	In Committee	Stanley
<u>SB101</u>	Med. assistance serv.; supplemental payment for ground emerg. medical serv. vehicle transportation.	In Committee	Stanley
<u>SB111</u>	Trespassing on Emergency vehicles; prohibition, penalty.	In Senate	Craig
<u>SB132</u>	Uniform Statewide Building Code; exemptions for agritourism structures.	In Committee	Craig
<u>SB140</u>	Fire Programs, Department of; development of mental health awareness training.	In Committee	McPike
<u>SB156</u>	Emergency medical services personnel; requirements for personnel without commercial drivers license.	In Committee	McDougle
<u>SB197</u>	Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund; loan and grant program, deferment of interest accrual.	In Committee	Williams Graves
<u>SB233</u>	Fire Programs Fund; distribution.	In Committee	Head
<u>SB523</u>	Line of Duty Act; payments to beneficiaries.	In Committee	Deeds