



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

2026 GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE

Every year, Arlington County creates a legislative package that outlines the County's legislative values, initiatives, and positions for the Virginia General Assembly Session. The 2026 General Assembly session begins on January 14, 2026 and is scheduled to adjourn in early March. It is the 60-day "long" session. Beginning in January, the General Assembly will consider a myriad of issues and will include the creation of a new two-year budget for the Commonwealth.

Legislative Values

Explanation: These are the guiding principles that will direct and inform Arlington County's legislative efforts during the 2026 General Assembly session. Please note: items are listed in alphabetical order, not in order of importance.

- A. Build Stronger Virginia Communities – Implement policies and empower localities to create communities that are inclusive, safe, healthy, sustainable and where everyone is given the opportunity to thrive and have their civil rights protected.
- B. Enable Local Government Innovation – Allow local governments the freedom to develop and implement novel policy solutions to address pressing problems, without unnecessary state-level hurdles.
- C. Fully-Fund Commitments to Local Government and Avoid Unfunded Mandates – Ensure the state government fully funds existing commitments for services and staffing to local governments.
- D. Preserve Existing Local Governing and Revenue Authority – Ensure all current local authority to govern and generate revenue is preserved. Any proposals that negatively impact local revenues must be paired with offsetting measures.
- E. Protect Arlingtonians and Virginians from Federal Cuts – As much as possible, cover budgetary and service shortfalls created by the recent federal government cuts, especially those to social services such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid.



Legislative Initiatives

Explanation: These are leading areas of legislative engagement by the County. We have, or will be asking, legislators to carry bills and put in budget requests on our behalf to achieve these goals. Please note: items are listed in alphabetical order, not in order of importance.

- A. Compensate for Federal Cuts to Public Safety and Emergency Management – Cover emergency management shortfalls created by cuts at the federal level, including those to the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), among others, and study options for funding these efforts on a permanent basis at the state-level.
- B. Increase Local Authority Over Affordable Housing – Allow localities increased flexibility to promote affordable housing through housing solutions tailored to fit local needs, including but not limited to negotiating affordable set-asides.
- C. Performance Parking Pilot Expansion – Allow Arlington to continue the efforts of its Performance Parking Pilot and test out new, innovative techniques for enforcing parking laws efficiently, while equitably promoting transportation safety.
- D. Preserve and Expand Tree Canopy – Provide local governments with greater authority in the reforestation, preservation, and management of urban forests in recognition of their ability to capture and store carbon, reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality, lower energy use, mitigate invasive plant species effects, and mitigate urban heat islands.
- E. Promote Proper Structure and Functioning of the Independent Police Auditor – Allow Arlington to place its Independent Police Auditor under the supervision of the County Board and form a workgroup to ensure the Auditor’s office has all the records access that it needs to do its job.
- F. Update and Improve Tourism Improvement District Law – Amend the state code on Tourism Improvement Districts to allow for greater cooperation and synergy with local governments and their efforts to promote tourism.

Legislative Positions

Explanation: These are existing legislative efforts that the County will be supporting or key policy areas where the County has a vested interest. Please note: items are listed in alphabetical order not in order of importance.

A. Economic Development

- 1. Enhance Access to Cultural Experiences: Improve accessibility in communities where transportation and income gaps currently limit participation.



2. Increase Virginia Economic Development (VEDP) Funding: Increase funding for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) to attract out-of-state companies.
3. Promote Tourism: Invest in marketing efforts to attract visitors to Virginia.
4. Redevelop Vacant and Obsolete Office Space: Fund the Urban Public-Private Partnership Redevelopment Fund to leverage existing developed spaces for business development or residential purposes.
5. Support the Needs of Arlington's Workforce: Utilizing holistic, wraparound services, ensure Arlingtonians have access to the tools they need including broadband, affordable childcare, and paid Family Medical Leave. Emphasize upskilling existing workers and support the creation of programs tailored to the specific talents and needs of former federal workers.
6. Incentivize Child Care Subsidy Implementation: Increase local reimbursements for the state's childcare subsidy program to account for administrative costs and the actual cost of tuition in a locality. Direct the Virginia Department of Education to incentivize participation of child-care providers in mixed delivery programs while maintaining local flexibility to administer or expand support services.

B. Education and Youth

1. Fund a High-Quality Education System: Implement and fund JLARC recommendations to more equitably share the costs of K-12 public education with local governments and to ensure the overall success of students across the Commonwealth. Provide teacher raises without unnecessary hurdles for localities. Compensate, as much as possible, for cuts being made at the federal level.
2. Educate for the Future: Provide the resources and flexibility needed by localities to ensure students are prepared to be good citizens in our increasingly digital world and prepared to participate in the modern economy.
3. Invest in the Next Generation: Fund efforts to provide youth-focused programming, promote mental and physical well-being among young people and treat youth mental health challenges.

C. Environment

1. Access Clean Water: Provide full funding for the Storm Water Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) and the Virginia Conservation Fund. Reduce stormwater runoff by adopting best management practices and developing green infrastructure.



2. Increase Clean Energy Adoption: Meet the Arlington Community Energy Plan Goals of 100% renewable electricity by 2035 through support for state policies that increase the supply of clean energy, including active participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and adherence to the targets outlined in the Virginia Clean Economy Act.
3. Preserve Trees and Native Plants: Protect Arlington’s tree canopy, pollinators, native plants and natural spaces through responsible invasive species management, including the classification of invasive plants that cause substantial environmental, economic, or human harm as noxious weeds.
4. Promote Clean Air: Enhance air quality and reduce noise pollution through the adoption of strategies to decarbonize handheld lawn equipment use.
5. Reduce Exposure to Toxic Pollutants: Support state-level policies to reduce plastic bottle waste, decreasing litter and microplastics. Promote polluter accountability for the presence of “forever chemicals” (PFAS) in our waterways.
6. Support Energy Innovation: Support for policies that increase the ability of local governments, businesses, and residents to choose to adopt cleaner energy, through solutions such as municipal aggregation, cleaner building standards, residential solar, and virtual power plants.

D. Fiscal

1. Keep Existing Local Procurement Rules: Avoid enacting procurement mandates that are not fully funded, including those that impose additional administrative burdens and other costly requirements on local governments.
2. Maintain Local Tax Authority: Preserve all current local taxing authority, including, but not limited to business license, real estate and rate making authority, sales, and property. Any modifications to local taxing authority must include an alternative revenue authority with reliable, sustainable revenue sources.
3. Regulating Cannabis and Vaping: Ensure legislation regarding cannabis and vaping sales benefits local communities and remain consistent with local land use, public health, and safety policies.
4. Return Excess Clerk Fees: Restore approximately \$200,000 of excess clerk fees to Arlington County. During the budget crisis of 2009, the state amended the formula and took away 1/3 of the funding to larger localities.



5. Study and Change the State-Local Shared-Employee Rules and Cost Ratios: Review the current cost-burdens of employees that are compensated by both the localities and the state to prevent undue local burden and ensure that raises from the state don't force localities to unevenly compensate workers doing the same job.

E. Good Governance

1. Leverage Emerging Technology: Seek to responsibly and efficiently use AI to enhance capabilities that improve operations, service delivery, and other functions of effective government.
2. Modernize Meeting Access: Permanently allow virtual participation to allow public bodies to meet by electronic means under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.
3. Review Form and Powers of Government: Ensure any changes to Arlington's form of government are made at the discretion of the County Board and County residents.

F. Healthcare

1. Support Aging Virginias: Make sure Virginia has the systems in place to support residents as they age by supporting Area Agencies on Aging, funding the work of the Long-term Care Ombudsman, and promoting innovative solutions to our care worker shortages.
2. Reinforce Virginia's Behavioral Health Infrastructure: Expand Crisis Receiving Center Capacity and facilitate individuals' transition to community-based behavioral health support.
3. Social Safety Net Programs: Utilizing data and recommendations from regional commissions, emergency legislative committees, local governments and healthcare professionals, backfill the loss of funding for Medicaid, hospitals and healthcare, SNAP, childcare subsidies and mental health services caused by federal funding reductions for these core services.
4. Clarify Virginia's Public Health Guidance: Given the uncertainty surrounding federal health guidance, ensure Virginia's public health policies and guidance reflect the most up-to-date consensus of scientific experts on the relevant issues.

G. Housing & Land Use

1. Adequately Fund Affordable Housing Initiatives: Ensure the Virginia Housing Trust Fund and local housing initiatives are adequately resourced and have the flexibility they need to address housing needs.



2. Create and Maintain Inclusive Housing Standards and Planning: Make sure housing policies consider the needs of individuals from all backgrounds, including older Virginians and those with disabilities, and that anti-discrimination policies are enforced.
3. Protect Tenant Rights: Expand tenants' rights by providing additional recourse, including local enforcement, in situations of inadequate health and safety conditions and access to legal resources during eviction proceedings.
4. Provide Maximum Flexibility for Addressing Housing Affordability and Quality: Allow for creative solutions for developing more housing and for flexibility in dealing with housing quality issues such as inadequate heating or A/C causing risks during extreme heat or cold.

H. Individual Rights and Civil Liberties

1. Defend Reproductive Health Care and Services: Maintain unrestricted access to the full range of reproductive health services, including contraceptives and abortion care.
2. Foster Racial Equity: Tackle the issues and policies that lead to poorer outcomes and other disparities experienced by people of color, immigrants, and refugees.
3. Promote Disability Equity: Promote measures to ensure persons with disabilities maintain their independence and enhance their quality of life.
4. Protect and Expand LGBTQ+ Rights: Protect existing legislation that codifies rights and protections for LGBTQ+ Virginians. Support any proposed expansions to those rights and reinforce school boards in their efforts to allow LGBTQ+ students freedom of expression.
5. Support Gender Equity: Support all efforts to promote gender equity and combat gender discrimination.

I. Public Safety

1. Allow Local Law Enforcement Flexibility to Promote Public Safety: Oppose any mandates requiring local law enforcement officers to evaluate the immigration status of individuals encountered during lawful stops or other routine police activities.
2. Invest in Public Safety: Continue existing funding for police departments (“599 money”), fire departments, sheriffs, jail personnel, emergency management disaster coordinators, and other emergency medical services personnel.
3. Preserve Local Discretion in Juvenile Justice: Oppose any efforts to limit the ability of localities to tailor their juvenile justice policies to local needs.



4. Promote the Use of Preventative Measures to Address Public Safety: Incentivize efforts to improve streetlighting and visibility on transit and trail infrastructure.

J. Transportation

1. Maintain Local Towing Authority: Oppose any efforts to undermine local authority to regulate trespass towing including fees, practices, and consumer protection measures.
2. Prioritize Transportation Safety: Support localities in achieving Virginia's commitment to Vision Zero, eliminating transportation-related deaths and serious injuries on streets and trails. Allow for automated and equitable enforcement of traffic laws, while considering the emerging challenges posed by autonomous vehicles.
3. Provide Robust Transportation Funding: Advocate for long-term, sustainable, dedicated funding and expanded revenue opportunities to meet the growing needs of public transit in our region, including funding for Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA), and other regional transportation initiatives.