

# Goochland County 2025 Legislative Agenda

## County Policy Positions and Legislative Requests

1. **Policy Position: Support** full state funding for public education, including the Standards of Quality (SOQ) as recommended by the Board of Education, the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission (JLARC), and Joint Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education Funding. As long as these recommendations coincide with prevailing local practice, Goochland County supports targeted incentive programs, capital, and maintenance support, and teacher salaries. Full state funding should be achieved without reduction to other parts of state public education budgets or to other core services.
  - **Support** additional state resources and additional statewide funding options for localities for capital and school construction costs, including expanding dedicated local sales and use tax authority first given to select counties by the General Assembly in 2019 as well as continuing to fund the School Construction Grant Program and School Construction Assistance Program.
  - **Approve** and fund strategies to address the teacher shortage in the Commonwealth, including a targeted approach by prioritizing areas in critical need.
  - **Support** programs that encourage teachers to stay in the profession including measures that provide mentorship, guidance and other forms of support for teachers in their first five years in the profession.
  
2. **Policy Position: Support** a robust and sustainable transportation funding framework that effectively addresses the evolving needs of Goochland County and communities across the Commonwealth.
  - **Support** continued study and action to address the causes for declining growth in transportation revenues and to develop recommendations to grow revenues over time to meet increasing demands for new construction and maintenance for existing transportation infrastructure. Such actions must, without impacting other transportation funding, address the secondary road needs of counties as well as unpaved roads.
  - **Strongly support** addressing the increasing cost of transportation related projects that impact localities, especially fees to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for locally managed transportation projects.
  - **Support** additional flexibility within the VDOT project approval process and standards to be responsive to localities' individual needs. Goochland County supports the expansion of authority and discretion of Resident Administrator of VDOT to approve modifications to design standards where appropriate with local needs, including reduction of speed limits.

- 3. Policy Position: Support** the ability of localities to require residential property disclosures related to zoning classification or permitted uses of adjacent parcels.
- **Legislative Request:** Establish a standardized list of required property disclosures that include proffered land use conditions enacted by local government action.
- 4. Policy Position: Support** sound structurally balanced State Budget & Fiscal Practices
- **Maintain** full funding of the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) pension plan.
  - **Maintain** full funding of the Commonwealth’s Revenue Stabilization and Cash Reserve Funds (Rainy Day Funds) to ensure the Commonwealth is prepared for any future economic downturn.
  - **Plan** for inflation and rising interest rates in upcoming State Budget Amendments.
  - **Support** any legislation that enhances or strengthens the Commonwealth’s ranking for doing business in Virginia.
- 5. Policy Position: Oppose** new unfunded mandates and **Support** the implementation of a “Sunset Clause” on existing unfunded mandates that are imposed upon localities and increase the cost of doing business.
- **Support** the requirement that all bills that have a local fiscal impact must be introduced by the first day of the General Assembly session.
  - **Support** protection of existing authority regarding local budget decisions and oppose shifting of funding responsibility from the state to localities for new or existing programs. When funding for a mandated program is altered, the mandate should be suspended until full funding is restored.
  - **Support** legislation to streamline required newspaper advertising for public notices, public hearings and public procurement including legislation to give localities the option to use electronic or other forms of notification as an alternative to newspaper advertising.
  - **Oppose** any financial policies or regulations that harm or impose burdens upon localities. When legislation with a cost to localities is passed by the General Assembly, the cost should be borne by the Commonwealth, and the legislation should contain a sunset clause providing that the mandate is not binding on localities until funding by the Commonwealth is provided.
  - **Example:** For Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, the local school division must provide local funding to the 3% salary increase, for Standard of Quality (SOQ) instructional and support positions, based on the composite index of local ability-to-pay; this funding cost Goochland \$526,332 and must be derived solely from local revenue sources. The FY 2024-2026 State Budget provides a 3% salary increase effective July 1, 2024, for funded SOQ instructional and support positions and another 3% salary increase effective July 1, 2025. Goochland County’s composite index of local ability-to-pay is .8000 or 80% to the

Commonwealth's .2000 or 20%, meaning the County contributes approximately 80% of local funding towards shared educational costs. This is an unfunded mandated upon localities, local governments are not given a choice in the salary increase and are obligated to provide local funding for it.

6. **Policy Position: Support** the protection of existing local government authority in all areas, specifically including revenue streams, local land use decisions, procurement, and other issues of local concern.
  - **Support** and protect local zoning authority in land use and zoning changes. Any amendments or changes, especially related to affordable housing, **should not** supersede local zoning authority or decisions.
  - **Support** the preservation of authority of county governments to collect revenues necessary to provide local public services.
  - **Support** extending powers currently granted to some local governments to all local governments.
  - **Oppose** legislation that erodes local authority, including state mandates for affordable housing and accessory dwelling units that usurp local zoning authority.
  - **Oppose** any substantive change in local governments' present defense of qualified immunity and sovereign immunity.
  
7. **Policy Position: Support** increased funding, expanded efforts and implementation of new technology to build the necessary telecommunications infrastructure to deploy universal affordable access to high-speed broadband internet for all areas, particularly in underserved and rural areas.
  - **Provide** additional funding, including 100 percent match funding to counties, for the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) grants, Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) grants, Line Extension Customer Assistance Program (LECAP), and other programs to expand high speed broadband internet to unserved and underserved areas of the Commonwealth until universal service is reached in Virginia.
  - **Support** improvements to existing state law to make it easier for wireless communication companies to either use existing tall structures or building communication structures so long as localities' ability to regulate land use is preserved.
  - **Support** implementation of new policies and technology that brings reliable and affordable high speed broadband internet to unserved and underserved areas.
  - **Support** efforts to streamline the permitting of broadband infrastructure in the VDOT right-of-way, at railroad crossings, and within utility easements.

- 8. Policy Position: Oppose** the passage of any state laws that infringe upon the rights of the law-abiding citizens of the Commonwealth under the Second Amendment of the United States Constitution and under Article I, Section 13 of the Virginia Constitution.
- **Support** gun safety and training for the youth of Goochland County and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Specifically, this includes the strengthening of and access to curriculum for firearms education training for youth by organizations in the Commonwealth of Virginia including expanding the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) 4-H Youth Development’s 4-H Shooting Education program.
- 9. Policy Position: Support** efforts to increase and enhance the funding of local public safety agencies and employees, including enhanced retirement benefits to increase recruitment and retention.
- **Legislative Request:** Reintroduce 2024 legislation allowing local governments to provide enhanced retirement benefits for hazardous duty service to full-time salaried 911 dispatchers. The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission conducted a study on the Eligibility of Public Safety Occupations for Enhanced Retirement Benefits in 2023 and determined that 911 dispatchers are often the first public safety employees to become involved in an emergency and have a high potential for their job performance to impact the safety of 911 callers and other first responders.
  - **Legislative Request:** Introduce legislation allowing local governments to provide enhanced retirement benefits for hazardous duty service to animal control officers. The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission conducted a study on the Eligibility of Public Safety Occupations for Enhanced Retirement Benefits in 2023 and determined that animal control officers have a moderate level of public safety responsibility and face a high level of physical and psychological demands. Granting of the enhanced retirement benefits will increase the recruitment and retention of animal protection officers.
  - **Support** the identification and implementation of new funding sources for Virginia’s fire departments and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) agencies. In 2023, the General Assembly passed House Bill (HB) 2175 establishing a work group to study existing fire service needs, analyze sustainability of funding, and review alternative funding models. The HB 2175 Workgroup submitted their report, “Service to Others: A Report on the Commonwealth’s Fire and EMS Service,” to the General Assembly and the Governor in October 2023. In addition, support the recommendations of the HB 2174 Workgroup and continued study of fire and EMS funding in the Commonwealth.
  - **Support** efforts to improve school safety and preparedness. Goochland County supports continued local authority and state funding to implement appropriate security, preparedness, and health measures. Goochland County supports dedicated state funding that may include capital and operational costs, including ongoing support for School Resource and School Security Officer positions. The Goochland County Sheriff’s Office, in partnership with Goochland County Public Schools, currently has six trained, qualified, and assigned SROs to cover five schools in Goochland. The Goochland County Sheriff’s Office has an additional four trained and qualified SROs that are available to serve as back-ups as necessary.

- **Support** the full funding of all Sheriff's Office Deputy positions that have already been approved through the Compensation Board.
- **Oppose** any federal or state regulatory action that hinders the provision of emergency services by increasing costs of operations or deterring recruitment and retention of emergency Services employees. This includes the Occupational Safety and Health Administration proposed rules change to Fire Brigades Standards and the Food and Drug Administration's proposed rule changes impacting prescription drug box programs.

**10. Policy Position: Support** measures to ameliorate the effects of state facilities and tax-exempt property on localities and the local tax base, including under-utilized or vacant facilities.

- Goochland County recommends that prior to the proposed closure of any state facilities or for existing closed state facilities, the Department of General Services provide a detailed plan to the locality regarding removal, demolition, rehabilitation and/or adaptive reuse of buildings and property.
- Goochland County also recommends that the state provides technical and financial resources to assist localities in ameliorating the impacts of any closure will have on the local economy.

**11. Policy Position:** Support increased funding for and expansion of pretrial services in localities across the Commonwealth. If the Commonwealth adopts a funding formula for pretrial services, it must hold harmless the localities currently participating.

**Adopted by the Goochland County Board of Supervisors – December 3, 2024**