

**Goochland County
2023 Legislative Agenda**

County Policy Positions and Legislative Requests

1. **Policy Position:** Support the establishment of local authority over marijuana establishments, including retail stores, marijuana cultivation facilities, marijuana manufacturing facilities, or marijuana wholesalers.
 - **Legislative Request:** Reintroduce Delegate Ware’s 2022 session bill House Bill (HB) 43 in which localities can hold a referendum asking their residents to decide if retail marijuana stores should be permitted in their locality. This appropriately allows citizens to decide if they want their locality to have retail marijuana stores (and the tax revenue that may be available from them). In 2022, this bill was assigned to the House General Laws Committee where it was not considered by the Committee.
 - Provide localities the ability to object to, restrict, regulate, or prohibit the location and operation of marijuana cultivation & manufacturing facilities and marijuana wholesalers.

2. **Policy Position:** Provide and fund secure voting processes to maintain the integrity of elections.

- A. **Legislative Request:** Verification of social security number for voter registration.

Reintroduce Senator Peake’s 2022 session bill Senate Bill (SB) 162 which requires registrars to verify the name, date of birth, and social security number of applicants for voter registration. In 2022, this bill was assigned to the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections where it was passed by indefinitely.

- B. **Legislative Request:** Voter photo identification requirement.

Reintroduce Senator Peake’s 2022 session Senate Bill (SB) 168 bill which requires the Department of Elections to promulgate rules and regulations and provide equipment which will allow general registrars to obtain a photograph and signature of a voter who does not have one of the acceptable forms of identification. In 2022, this bill was assigned to the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections where it incorporated into Senator Obenshain’s SB 127, which was passed by indefinitely.

- C. **Legislative Request:** Reimburse costs for absentee voting.

Reintroduce Delegate Ware’s 2022 session House Bill (HB) 76 which required that each county and city be fully reimbursed annually for the costs of conducting absentee voting. In 2022, this bill was assigned to the House Committee on Appropriations’ General Government and Capital Outlay Subcommittee where it did not advance.

- Support initiatives to encourage broad voter participation by all, while keeping them safe, secure, and free.

- Support initiatives that ensure election integrity throughout the process from voter registration through ballot completion and counting. Efforts should be taken to clearly identify organizations distributing voter registration applications and election materials.

3. 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.

4. 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 decision 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.
- 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 – Pandemic Bonuses for Sheriff’s deputies:** Goochland County appropriated \$72,000 in funds to ensure parity in bonuses to all sworn positions (state-supported & local supported). Amendments to the 2021 Appropriations Act were adopted by the General Assembly during the 2021 Special Session II to appropriate American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds, including \$33.2 million to provide a \$3,000 bonus for state-supported sworn officers or sheriff’s departments and regional jails. Goochland County Sheriff’s Office had 43 sworn positions at the time, 19 of which are supported through the Compensation (Comp) Board. 19 sworn positions were eligible for the state funded \$3,000 bonus, leaving 24 sworn positions ineligible; localities were mandated to provide the bonus to eligible positions. In addition, Goochland County had to appropriate an

additional \$150,000 to include bonuses for Fire and EMS and Animal Protection positions to maintain parity.

- **Example – Assistant Commonwealth’s Attorney Required to Review Body-worn Camera:** Item 72 of the 2021 Special Session House Bill 1800 (Chapter 552) Section K and Item 76 of the 2022 Special Session House Bill 30 (Chapter 2) Section K requires one entry-level Assistant Commonwealth’s Attorney for up to 75 body worn cameras for law enforcement. In FY 2022, Goochland Commonwealth’s Attorney added this position at a cost of \$96,419, the position is locally funded and not eligible for Compensation Board funding. Goochland estimates that this position will cost the county over \$176,419 for FY 2022 and FY 2023.
- **Example – Teachers’ 5% raises:** The local school division must provide local funding to the 5% 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 \$681,779 and must be derived solely from local revenue sources. The FY 2023-2024 State Budget provides a 5% salary increase effective August 1, 2022, for funded SOQ instructional and support positions and another 5% salary increase effective July 1, 2023. 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.
- **Example – School Resource Officers:** Any 2023 legislation mandating School Resource Officers (SRO) in schools should include state funding to cover the costs of a trained and qualified SRO. During the 2022 General Assembly Session, two separate bills (HB 37 Anderson & SB 415 DeSteph) mandating SROs for every high school, middle school, and elementary school were considered, but did not ultimately advance; neither bill provided funding for the mandated SROs. The Goochland County Sheriff’s Office in partnership with Goochland County Public Schools, currently have three trained and qualified SROs to cover five schools in Goochland. The Sheriff’s Office is pursuing federal and state grants to cover the cost and increase the number of trained and qualified SROs in Goochland schools. In addition to funding any mandated SROs, the General Assembly should include SROs in Compensation Board calculations for required Sheriff’s Office positions.

5. Policy Position: Support increased funding, expanded efforts and implementation of new technology that improves and expands citizen access to high-speed broadband internet.

- Provide additional funding for the 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.

6. Legislative Request: Request a Study of Compensation Board funding for the Offices of Constitutional Officers

We request the Compensation Board or the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) be directed to study Compensation Board funding for the offices of constitutional officers and to review the trends and trajectory of general fund support in the state budget for the offices of constitutional officers, the metrics by which support is determined, the equity of such state support considering the needs of the various localities, the degree by which localities are supplementing the Commonwealth's funding, and evaluate the formula for allocation of positions and workload based staffing standards.

In the absence of adequate state support for the offices of constitutional officers, localities are frequently placed in the untenable position of supplementing the funding of these offices with local dollars to ensure they carry out their assigned responsibilities. This request would direct JLARC to complete a comprehensive review of Compensation Board funding for the offices of constitutional officers and the formula for allocation of positions and staffing standards. We urge the General Assembly and the Commonwealth to meet its full funding obligations, to include realistic levels of staffing to enable constitutional offices to meet their responsibilities and limit the need for localities to provide additional locally-funded positions. JLARC last completed a comprehensive review of statewide staffing standards for the funding of constitutional officers over 30 years ago.

See Item 4 above for examples of recent Compensation Board funding issues with the Sheriff's Office pandemic bonuses and the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office required staffing.

7. Policy Position: Support the protection of existing local government authority in all areas, specifically including revenue streams and local land use decisions.

- 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 granting counties equal taxing and borrowing authority to that of cities and towns.

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.

Priority Requests – Schools

- 1. Provide state funding for all schools in the Commonwealth to be staffed with a qualified and trained School Resource Officer.** The safety and security of students, staff, and guests at public schools in the Commonwealth must be a priority. A trained and qualified School Resource Office provided multiple benefits to the school setting that extend beyond threat of school violence. We request that the Commonwealth invest the financial resources required to allow every locality to staff every school in their jurisdiction with a School Resource Officer.
- 2. Support legislation that establishes a tax credit for businesses that host students for career development opportunities.** Our school division recommends that the Virginia General Assembly support legislation that opens additional opportunities for students from public high schools, technical centers, governor’s schools, or specialty school as interns or apprentices in a qualified field that aids students in completing CTE course requirements, in preparation for career certifications, or in preparation for post-secondary plan of study or employment.
- 3. Advocate for legislation that reduces the total number and type of required SOL assessments.** Our school division has achieved success by utilizing a balanced assessment program that emphasizes student growth over achievement. It is our belief that our school division should be held accountable for student performance. However, there are too many required assessments for students. Legislation that reduces the total number and type of assessments to align with the minimum requirements in the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, is in the best interest of our students.
- 4. Support legislation that increases early childhood education and preschool opportunities for students.** Recent information from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Office of Early Childhood Education indicates that there is a growing discrepancy in the level of kindergarten readiness among preschool aged children. It is important to continue to support programs and funding of birth-5 education, to include partnerships with private entities, adequate facility space, increasing the number of teachers, and providing support for families across the Commonwealth.
- 5. Repeal legislation that supports collective bargaining efforts.** Collective bargaining can be costly for local school divisions and create issues for School Boards where none currently exist. We ask that you support legislation that repeals SB939 and HB 582.
- 6. Support legislation that allows for local autonomy on education issues impacting Goochland County students, staff, and families.** As members of an elected School Board, we understand the values and ideals of our community. Decisions regarding curriculum, assessment, and employee evaluation must be made at the local level. We ask that you oppose legislation that forces our school division to implement initiatives that are contrary to our community’s beliefs. Allow local school boards to make decisions on these important issues.

7. **Adjust the funding formula to Regional Governor’s Schools to accommodate the needs of full day programs** - Currently, full day Governor’s Schools programs like the one at Maggie L. Walker are funded using the same mechanism as are partial day programs. Full day programs require greater funding needs from an administrative, maintenance, operations, security, and programmatic standpoint. However, the nature of the full day program is not accounted for in budget appropriations. It is our belief that the needs of full day programs should be accounted for in future appropriations for the Commonwealth’s Regional Governor’s Schools.
8. **Support any Legislation that continually moves the state closer to fully funding the Standards of Quality (SOQ)** - The School Board believes that the cap on support positions over 10 years ago has prevented necessary state funding. The School Board believes the state should begin funding critical positions not covered in the Standards of Quality (SOQ), such as reading specialists, math specialists, and elementary assistant principals.
9. **Oppose any legislation that requires a redistribution of local dollars when establishing State-Wide virtual schools/programs** - The School Board requests that the General Assembly oppose any legislation that requires a redistribution of local dollars when establishing state-wide virtual schools/programs. Local school divisions frequently have to support these students with their enrollments and process in the course, the state funding is necessary to manage this process; otherwise, local dollars are inherently going to support this state program.
10. **Oppose any bill that creates Parental Choice Educational Savings Accounts** - The School Board believes that these accounts would be considered unconstitutional under Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of Virginia.
11. **Oppose any bill that would allow the Board of Education to establish regional charter school divisions that would be governed by a separate board appointed by the Board of Education.**
12. **Initiate legislation that would require local school divisions to report both a letter grade and a specific numerical value earned by students on all official transcripts.** - Divisions across the Commonwealth struggle with the idea of 10 point grading scales to best serve their students in applying for post-secondary schools. Reporting of numerical grade values removes the need to “normalize” grading scales and provides more exact data for post-secondary applicants.

Adopted by the Goochland County Board of Supervisors – September 6, 2022