

vanvalkenburg

for state senate

The 2025 Virginia General Assembly Legislative Session has officially adjourned! All of the bills that successfully passed both the House and Senate chambers are now headed to the Governor's office for approval. He can choose to approve, veto, or amend each bill. Once we have received his decisions, each chamber will reconvene in early April to consider his amendments to our bills and to the biennium budget. It is [possible that we will reconvene](#) before that in a special session to address the drastic cuts to the federal workforce and spending on programs in Virginia.



Congrats to Prof. Howard for being awarded the prestigious Outstanding Virginian of the Year Award! A founder of our 1971 Constitution, longest serving faculty member in UVA history, and champion of democracy and individual rights. I can't think of a more deserving Virginian!

Legislative Updates

I am happy to share an update on the progress of my bills from this past week. Below you will find a list detailing the status of each, along with a brief description of what each bill does. This ended up being a very productive session for me and while there's always more that could be done, I am happy about what my team and I were able to accomplish.

SB 822 - This bill would limit the amount of time that public school teachers are required to participate in non-academic trainings, helping our school districts to prioritize and saving teachers precious time for planning and grading.

Status: This bill passed the Senate and House, made it successfully through conference, and is headed to the Governor for his signature.

SB 838 - This bill will charge uncertified recovery residences with a Class 1 Misdemeanor if they fail to become certified, or register their desire to become certified, by July 1, 2025. It also directs the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to form a workgroup to recommend oversight measures and create credentialing guidelines for recovery residences.

Status: This bill passed the Senate and House with amendments, and is headed to the Governor for his signature.

SB 854: This bill limits the use of social media platforms with addictive feeds for users under 16 to an hour per day unless they get verified parental consent.

Status: This bill has passed the Senate and the House with a substitute, and is headed to the Governor for his signature.

 **Senate of Virginia**
GENERALASSEMBLY.GOV

THE SENATE OF VIRGINIA				P46
H.B. 1957. (Helmer)				
SOL assessments & related student assessment methods; assessm...				
YEAS: 27		NAYS: 12		R36: 0
 Aird	 Ebbin	 McDeagle		Roone
 Bagby	 Foyola	 McPike	 Salim	
 Bayko	 French	 Mulicki	 Srinivasan	
 Carroll-Fay	 Hackworth	 Obenshain	 Stanley	
 Oflers	 Hashmi	 Peake	 Stuart	
 Craig	 Head	 Pekariky	 Starbuck	
 Deeds	 Jordan	 Perry	 Sutterlein	
 DeSteph	 Leckie	 Pillion	 Sorell	
 Diggs	 Lucas	 Reeves	 VanValkenburg	
 Durant	 Marston	 Roen	 Williams-Graves	

February 20, 2025 - Regular Session - 10:00 am



SB 855 - This bill seeks to overhaul the K-12 assessment process, bolstering the quality of both SOL and local alternative assessments while limiting the window that the SOL tests can be given to the last two weeks in May.

Status: This bill was rolled into the Senate biennial budget as a budget amendment, and I have become a co-patron of the House companion bill, HB 1957, which passed the Senate with a substitute and is headed to the Governor for his signature..

SB 871 - Extends from 2025 to 2028 the expiration of the retail sales and use tax exemption for certain printed materials purchased by an advertising business from a printer in the Commonwealth, so long as such materials are distributed outside of the Commonwealth.

Status: This bill passed the Senate and House, made it successfully through conference, and is headed to the Governor for his signature.

SB 955 - This bill seeks to ensure all of our public schools have access to high quality instructional materials.

Status: This bill passed the Senate and House, made it successfully through conference, and is headed to the Governor for his signature.

SB 974: This bill will significantly reduce the time it takes to approve plat development plans by shifting approval authority from the local planning commission to a designated agent employed or authorized by a locality.

Status: This bill passed the Senate and House, and is headed to the Governor for his signature.

[SB 1014](#) - This bill prohibits any state agency from requiring a Bachelor's degree as a prerequisite for employment in a governmental job, with few exceptions.

Status: This bill passed the Senate and House, and is headed to the Governor for his signature.

[SB 1015](#) - This bill amends the definition of state code of "practice of chiropractic" to include recommending or directing patients on the use of vitamins, minerals, or food supplements.

Status: This bill passed the Senate and House, and is headed to the Governor for his signature.

[SB 1040](#) - This updates several of Dominion Energy Virginia's renewable energy portfolio standard programs. Under the pilot program, it'll eliminate the need for a solar and wind powered generating plant to have a minimum capacity of 50 kilowatts in order to be eligible for the third party power purchase agreement, and will help to get more solar installation on industrial facilities and locations other than farmland.

Status: This bill passed the Senate and House, and is headed to the Governor for his signature.

[SB 1119](#) - This bill provides that presidential primaries should be on the same date at the November election in presidential elections years. All primaries need to be held on the same day.

Status: This bill passed the Senate and House, and is headed to the Governor for his signature.

In addition to my newsletter, you can continuously stay updated on my bills through the [Legislative Information System \(LIS\)](#). Livestreams and past recordings of Session, as well as committee meetings can all be [found at this link](#). Legislation, as well as meeting calendars and committee information [can be found here](#).



I was excited to join House Speaker Scottt and Delegates Hayes and Thomas last Tuesday morning to discuss a breakthrough in getting legislation passed that will put meaningful guard rails on social media for minors. Right now social media apps incentivize endless use. And our bill changes that!

Legislative Highlights of the Session

While I am looking forward to going back to the classroom and to spending more time with my family, I had an amazing legislative session—one of my best. I co-patroned a diverse set of bills. While they didn't all pass, I had many victories and where I didn't, I started and engaged in important conversations and know I will return to those priorities and be victorious later. Here are some of the highlights from this legislative session.

First, I accomplished some meaningful improvements in education—all three of my education bills passed both chambers. SB 822 reduces the amount of time public school educators will have to spend on non-instructional teacher trainings. My and Del. Helmer's HB [1957/SB 855](#) reforms the k-12 assessment process. My SB 955 expands access to high quality educational materials for all schools, especially those serving a majority of students living in poverty.

Next, in previous newsletters I mentioned our hard work related to housing this session. Although only one housing bill passed through both chambers, we sparked an important conversation around housing solutions that would increase supply and bring down prices for buyers and renters alike. There needs to be fundamental changes to Virginia's housing policies, and I will continue to create and advocate for legislation that expands access to affordable housing in Henrico and across the Commonwealth. Stay tuned because my work on housing is far from done.

Earlier last week, I participated in a [press conference](#) about my Senate Bill 854. This is [breakthrough legislation](#) that passed both chambers unanimously. My original bill eliminated access to addictive feeds to children 18 altogether. The amended bill doesn't go as far—it would limit children under the age of 16 to one hour per day for each social media app while allowing parents to adjust the time limit as they see fit. But it gets at the same issue of our kids spending too much time online in service to endless scrolling. When they spend all day online, it diminishes their attention span, undermines their academic success, and increases their social isolation. This has a negative impact on their mental health. Our kids have a right to access social media, but this legislation puts meaningful guardrails on that.

Next, something close to home for many of us, [Senate Bill 1223 \(SB 1223\) was incorporated into the Senate budget](#) for the upcoming fiscal year! If included in the final budget, this budget language will give the Henrico community the opportunity to officially weigh in on the proposed Rosie's gaming emporium by putting this issue on the ballot so the people, not private interests, decide whether these slot-like machines belong in our community! I will continue to monitor events as they unfold and will keep you all informed.

I was proud to carry other budget amendments that made it into the [final budget bill](#) (HB 1600). I helped to get [additional funding for the Commonwealth's free clinics](#), which do vital work, especially now with all of the Trump cuts to federal healthcare funding, to fill gaps and provide healthcare to all Virginians in need. An allocation for one-time funding for the Virginia Leads Innovation Network was made at my request, which will help bring together 25-30 school division teams to explore flexible scheduling models that would advance workforce preparedness and reduce student loan debt. Finally, another one of my budget priorities, additional funding for the work of the Virginia Holocaust Museum, was granted.





Finally, I was honored to receive thanks from members of the Richmond area's Iranian-American community last week for carrying a resolution declaring March Persian Heritage Month in Virginia. We are the first state in America to recognize Iranian Americans in this way. Hopefully we won't be the last. The Iranian-American community is such a force for good in Henrico and Virginia.

I am proud of all of the work we have accomplished this legislative session and year so far. I am grateful for the dedicated staff in my office, the leadership and support of my fellow Senators, and for you—my constituents, who highlight important issues for me every day.

My Session Staff

I was fortunate to have a great team with me this Session. First of all, I would be remiss if I didn't mention my longtime Chief of Staff and Legislative Aide, Kelly Johnson. After spending six years with my office, Kelly moved on to a great opportunity in the private sector just before the legislative session began. A lot of our successes this session were due to her previous work. I am grateful for her years of service, and for making sure we had a smooth transition, and I wish her every success.



Kelly and I having a much-needed laugh after a long day of legislating.



After taking many, many pictures with constituents, Rachel, Diane, and Emmaline get their picture taken in front of the “Henrico wall” of my Senate office.

Luckily, my other Legislative Aide, Emmaline Herring, was with us again this session and was invaluable as she juggled taking on more policy work with helping to show the way to our new Senior Legislative Aide, Rachel Levy, and our new Administrative Assistant, Diane Weeks. Rachel survived, and enjoyed, her very busy first session with my office and with Emmaline will continue working through the rest of the year to the next session.





I am thankful for the work of my session interns—Zach, Theo, and Michael.

We couldn't have gotten through Session without Diane, Zach, Theo, or Michael's help. We wish our three session interns much luck in their future endeavors, and hope Diane will be back with us in 2026.

Post Session: Goals for the Year

As the 2025 legislative session comes to an end, I want to share about all of the exciting work we do outside of the legislative session to engage with the community and prepare for next year.

First, be on the lookout for community events! We have plans for community service opportunities in and around Henrico and Richmond. In previous years, we've held panel discussions focused on climate change and local issues, which foster lively debates, and highlight opportunities to clean up the spaces around us and take part in our political system. In addition, I often hold town halls, where anyone is welcome to hear updates about Henrico, and

ask questions of their elected officials. These community panels are a great way to connect with my constituents and hear more about your needs, while I share my own thoughts and priorities.

Next, I will be collaborating with relevant stakeholders to refine legislation that did not pass this session and generate ideas for new legislation. Some bills that failed to pass this year will undergo some revisions and incorporate new ideas in the hopes that they'll pass during next year's session. For example, I plan to address some of the concerns that were raised about my housing bills, and to expand my legislative portfolio.

As such, if any of you have input on housing affordability, improvements in education, or clean energy solutions, or need anything otherwise, please reach out to my office at senatorvanvalkenburg@senate.virginia.gov. We're always happy to listen and consider your ideas!

Yours in service,

Schuyler VanValkenburg
Senator, District 16, Henrico County

