



Your Guide to the

# Virginia General Assembly

*Produced for upper school-age students and adult constituents*





## **JAMESTOWN 1607 – 1699**

Although four public buildings and a private residence are historically identified as onetime seats of the colonial government, none is portrayed in any known contemporaneous picture, etching or painting. The third state house, built about 1665, was burned in 1676 during Bacon's Rebellion.

## **WILLIAMSBURG 1699 – 1780**

The restored Capitol at Williamsburg, rebuilt on its original foundations, marks great events in Virginia and American history – the introduction of Virginia's Declaration of Rights, Patrick Henry's Stamp Act speech, the lowering of the British flag in favor of that of the American colonies, and other stirring colonial and Revolutionary actions.

## **RICHMOND 1780 – PRESENT**

The central section of the Virginia State Capitol, at Richmond, was designed by Thomas Jefferson after the Maison Carrée at Nîmes, France, when Jefferson was Minister to France. The cornerstone was laid in 1785, and the building was sufficiently completed for occupancy in 1788. Here meets the oldest representative legislative assembly in the new world – an assembly which met first at Jamestown in 1619 and later at Williamsburg when it was the Colonial Capital of Virginia. The Congress of the Confederate States of America met here during the War Between the States. In the Rotunda is the famous Houdon statue of George Washington, life-size, the only statue for which the First President posed.

Surrounding that statue are busts of the other seven Virginia-born Presidents: Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor, and Woodrow Wilson. There is also a bust of the Marquis de Lafayette, Virginia's first honorary citizen.



# Virginia State Capitol Richmond, Virginia



# The General Assembly

## Navigating the Basics



The Virginia General Assembly dates from the establishment of the House of Burgesses at Jamestown in 1619. It is heralded by Virginians as the “oldest continuous law-making body in the New World.”

The 1776 Virginia Constitution confirmed our bicameral legislature which consists of the Senate of Virginia and the House of Delegates. The present state Constitution, adopted in 1970, provides that the Senate shall consist of 33 to 40 members and the House of Delegates shall consist of 90 to 100 members. All members of the General Assembly are elected by qualified voters within their respective Senate and House districts. The terms of office are four years for members of the Senate and two years for members of the House of Delegates. Members may not hold any other public office during their term of office.

The General Assembly is commonly referred to as a citizen legislature, a governing body made up primarily of citizens who have a full-time occupation besides being a legislator. The legislature meets annually, beginning on the second Wednesday in January, for 60 days in even-numbered years and for 30 days in odd-numbered years, with an option to extend annual Sessions for a maximum of 30 days. The Governor may call a Special Session when it is deemed necessary or advisable, and must do so when petitioned by two-thirds of the members of both houses. A Reconvened Session is held on the sixth Wednesday after adjournment of each Regular or Special Session for the purpose of considering the Governor’s recommendations and vetoed legislation.

The General Assembly’s chief responsibilities are to represent citizens in the formulation of public policy, enact laws of the Commonwealth, approve the budget, levy taxes, elect judges, and confirm appointments by the Governor.

### **SENATE**

The Senate of Virginia consists of 40 members. Each member is elected for a term of four years and receives an annual salary of \$18,000. A Senator represents approximately 200,000 citizens of the Commonwealth. The membership of the Senate is composed of attorneys, business owners and executives, a physician and a health planner.

The Lieutenant Governor is the presiding officer of the Senate and is elected in a statewide election for a four-year term. In the event of his absence, the President *pro tempore* carries out the duties of the presiding officer. The President *pro tempore* is elected by the Senate for a term of four years.

Each major party elects a floor leader to represent them on issues relating to the rules and administration of the Senate. They are known as the majority leader and minority leader.

The Clerk of the Senate is elected by the Senate for a four-year term and continues in office until another is chosen. In addition to referring bills and resolutions to committees, the Clerk’s duties include overseeing the daily operations of the Senate, keeping the daily Journal, maintaining Senate records, and supervising facilities

management, personnel, information systems, and support services.

## **HOUSE OF DELEGATES**

The House of Delegates consists of 100 members. Each member represents approximately 80,000 citizens. The House membership primarily consists of attorneys, business executives, educators, and farmers. The term of office for a member of the House of Delegates is two years. Each member receives an annual salary of \$17,640.

The Speaker of the House is the presiding officer of the House and is elected by the House in even-numbered years for a two-year term. The Speaker's duties are dictated by the Rules of the House. Among these duties are the assigning of bills to committee and appointing the membership of the 14 House standing committees.

The Clerk of the House is elected by the House in even-numbered years and continues in office until another is chosen. The Clerk is responsible for the administration of the House under the direction of the Speaker.

The Majority Leader and the Minority Leader are elected by their respective caucuses.

## **LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS**

By order of the Constitution of Virginia, the legislature convenes annually on the second Wednesday in January. This provision is set forth in paragraph one of Article IV, Section 6.

### **REGULAR SESSION**

In even-numbered years, the legislature convenes for 60 calendar days. Since the Commonwealth of Virginia operates on a biennium budget, much of the time is spent debating a two-year spending plan. In odd-numbered years, the legislature convenes for 30 days with an option to extend the session for a maximum of 30 days. The legislature typically meets for 46 calendar days in odd-numbered years.

### **SPECIAL SESSION**

The Governor may convene a special session of the General Assembly when, in his opinion, the interest of the Commonwealth may require and shall convene a special session upon the application of two-thirds of the members elected to each house.

### **RECONVENED SESSION**

A reconvened session is held on the sixth Wednesday after adjournment of each regular or special session.

# The Constitution of Virginia

The Constitution of Virginia was first approved in 1776. Virginia's fundamental law has been completely revised on five occasions. The present-day version contains Articles I through XIII.

Articles IV, V and VI of the Constitution of Virginia provide for three separate and distinct branches of state government: Executive, Legislative and Judicial. Article IV outlines the manner in which our legislature conducts business. This includes the qualification of senators and delegates, the dates on which the Senate and House convene for session and the enactment of laws. Article V outlines the qualifications and powers of the Governor of Virginia. The judicial branch, including the qualification of judges and the manner in which they are appointed to the bench, is set forth in Article VI.

The Constitution also sets forth the election process for all statewide elected officials, legislators, members of local governing bodies and local constitutional officers in article VII.

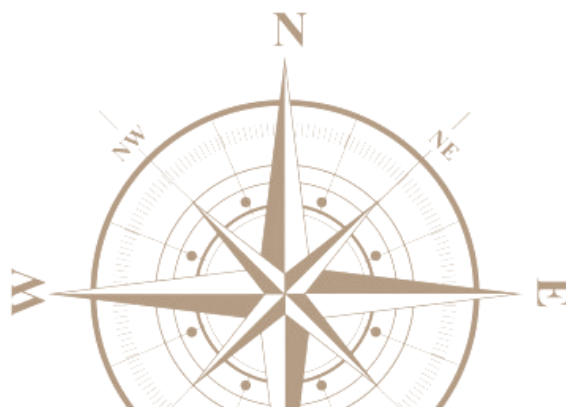
The last significant revision to the Constitution of Virginia was approved by the voting public in 1971. Minor changes, also known as amendments, have been adopted many times since then. Amendments to the Constitution may be proposed by either the General Assembly or a constitutional convention established by the General Assembly. Article XII of the Constitution of Virginia sets forth the manner in which amendments to Virginia's fundamental law are considered and adopted.

## Executive, Legislative and Judicial Branches

The legislative branch is the Virginia General Assembly, a bi-cameral legislature consisting of the Senate of Virginia and the Virginia House of Delegates. One hundred forty members of the General Assembly establish public policy through the enactment of legislation. Other related agencies include Division of Legislative Automated Systems (DLAS), Capitol Police and the Division of Legislative Services (bill drafting).

The executive branch is tasked with implementing policy passed by the legislative branch. This branch is led by three statewide elected officials: The Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General.

The judicial branch consists of the lower courts, courts of appeal and the Supreme Court of Virginia. This branch interprets the laws establishing policy.







# Qualifications to Vote and Serve

## **VOTING**

In order to vote in the Commonwealth of Virginia, a person must be at least 18 years of age; a citizen of the United States, of Virginia and the precinct in which he shall vote; a registered voter prior to the election; and, he must not have had his voting rights revoked for being a convicted felon or being deemed mentally incompetent.

## **SENATE AND HOUSE PAGES**

For each annual session of the General Assembly, Senators and Delegates appoint Pages in order to provide young people, ages 13-14, the opportunity to observe and participate in the legislative process. In the Senate, the Clerk of the Senate also makes page appointments. In the House, the Speaker makes all page appointments.

## **SENATOR OR DELEGATE**

In order to become a Senator or Delegate, a person must be at least 21 years of age, an eligible voter, and reside in the district for which he is seeking to represent.

## **GOVERNOR**

To become Governor, a person must be a citizen of the United States, be at least 30 years of age, and be a registered voter and resident of the Commonwealth of Virginia for at least five years prior to election. Once elected, a Governor may not serve consecutive terms.

## **LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**

The qualifications for becoming Lieutenant Governor are the same as for becoming Governor; however, once elected, there is no limit to the number of terms a Lieutenant Governor may serve.

## **ATTORNEY GENERAL**

The Attorney General of Virginia must meet the same qualifications as the Governor of Virginia and also possess the qualifications required for a judge of a court of record. Like the Lieutenant Governor, there is no limit to the number of terms an Attorney General may serve.

# Citizen Participation: Channeling Your Opinion

The election of the members of the Virginia General Assembly is the responsibility of the citizens of Commonwealth. It is incumbent upon citizens to register to vote, research the issues and the candidates, and exercise their right to vote on Election Day. In addition, the citizens are responsible for being active in the legislative process of government beyond the polls.

During the General Assembly session, Senators and Delegates can be reached at their offices on Capitol Square. When the General Assembly is not in session, legislators should be contacted in their district offices. The most up-to-date contact information for Senators and Delegates is available on the Virginia General Assembly website.

Familiarize yourself with “How a Bill Becomes a Law” located in this publication. A basic understanding of the legislative process will help you effectively express your ideas. Visit the Legislative Information System online ([lis.virginia.gov](http://lis.virginia.gov)) to track legislation and review committee agendas prior to a meeting.

Contact your Senator or Delegate before the General Assembly takes action on a particular issue. Express your views by testifying before a legislative hearing conducted by a standing committee or interim study group. You can also voice your opinion by telephone, letter, or social media pages.

Legislators want to hear from their constituents. Writing an effective letter or email is a way to correspond with a legislator. Be sure to write the legislator who represents you. Mass mailings (email or letter) are not as effective as personal correspondence.

- Be sure to include your contact information. Even in an email, include your full name, home address, phone number and email address. You may not get a response from a legislator, if you do not include your contact information.
- The date you are writing the letter or email.
- Keep the letter or email brief, to the point, and no more than one page.
- Be courteous and do not use vulgar or profane language.
- Clearly state the purpose of your correspondence with an example of the situation you are trying to address.
- The letter should address one issue.
- Thank the legislator for taking the time to read the letter.
- If you are writing about a specific bill or resolution include the bill or resolution number. Listed below are the written formats for bills or resolutions that should be included in the email or letter:

Senate Bill: “SB\_\_\_”

Senate Joint Resolution: “SJR\_\_\_”

Senate Resolution: “SR\_\_\_”

House Bill: ”HB\_\_\_”

House Joint Resolution: ”HJR\_\_\_”

House Resolution: ”HR\_\_\_”

If you do not know the Senator or Delegate representing your locality, the “Who’s My Legislator?” feature on the Virginia General Assembly website ([viriniageneralassembly.gov](http://viriniageneralassembly.gov)) will help you locate the elected officials who represent the district in which you reside.

# The Committee Process

The Senate and the House have standing committees in order to deal with the large volume of bills introduced. This affords the opportunity for all bills to receive careful consideration in each legislative chamber. The Clerk of the Senate refers all Senate bills to one of ten standing committees or the Committee on Rules, according to the subject matter. In the House, the Speaker of the House refers all House bills to one of 13 standing committees or the Committee on Rules.

Committees often hold public hearings on bills. This is an excellent opportunity for citizens to give input on proposed legislation. In an even-numbered year, the committee can continue the legislation to the next year.

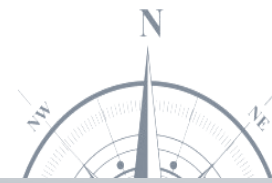
- The committee chair chooses which bills to include on the docket.



- Dockets are made available to all patrons and interested parties.
- Regularly scheduled committee meeting is held.
- Chief patron explains purpose of the bill.
- Experts may testify.
- Senators and Delegates pose questions.
- Public input by way of the following:
  - Verbal testimony.
  - Letters, phone calls, e-mail messages and faxed correspondence.
- Committee action.
- Vote to report by way of the following:
  - A bill is sent to the floor of the Senate or House.
  - A bill is referred to another committee.
  - A bill is defeated or the committee fails to take action.

Bills are reported from committee before they are considered on the floor of the Senate or the House or Delegates. Bills passed by the Senate are communicated to the House of Delegates for consideration and vice versa.





# Mapping out the Steps to

*The following steps depict the procedure by which a non-controversial bill becomes a law. Bills may originate in either house of the General Assembly.*

**1.** A Senator or Delegate has an idea for legislation or receives requests for legislation from constituents, state agencies, organizations or the business community.

**2.** He or she presents the idea to the Division of Legislative Services and requests that it be drafted into a bill. The bill is signed by the patron, introduced, and printed.

**3.** The bill is referred to an appropriate committee. The members of the committee consider the bill and decide what action to take. The public is given an opportunity to address the committee regarding the bill.

**4. FIRST READING** The bill title is printed in the calendar or is read by the Clerk, and the bill advances to second reading.

**5. SECOND READING** The next day the bill title is placed in the printed calendar. The Clerk reads the title of the bill a second time. A bill on second reading is amendable. A bill that has passed second reading with or without an amendment is engrossed. If an amendment is adopted, the bill is reprinted in its final form for passage.

**6. THIRD READING** The next day, the engrossed bill title is placed in the calendar. The title is read a third time by the Clerk. By recorded vote, the bill passes or is defeated.

**7. COMMUNICATION** When passed, the bill is sent to the other body for its consideration.

# How a Bill Becomes a Law



**8. IN THE OTHER BODY** The bill goes through essentially the same procedure as it did in the house of origin. The bill title is printed in the Calendar or is read by the Clerk. The bill is referred to a standing committee, considered, and reported by the committee. The title is read a second and a third time before passage.

**9. COMMITTEE OF CONFERENCE** If the House amends a Senate bill, or the Senate amends a House bill, and the house of origin disagrees with the amendment, a Committee of Conference, usually three members from each legislative body, may be formed to resolve differences.

**10. ENROLLMENT** After being passed by both houses of the General Assembly, the bill is printed as an enrolled bill, examined, and signed by the presiding officer of each chamber.

**11. GOVERNOR** The bill is then sent to the Governor for his approval. After being signed by the Governor, the bill is sent to the Clerk of the House (Keeper of the Rolls of the Commonwealth) and is assigned a chapter number. All chapters of a session are compiled and bound as the Acts of Assembly.

**12.** Bills that become law at a regular session (or the reconvened session that follows) are effective the first day of July following adjournment of the regular session unless otherwise specified.

**13.** Bills enacted at a Special Session (Reconvened Session) are effective the first day of the fourth month following the adjournment of the Special Session, unless another date is specified.

**14.** The General Appropriations Act is usually effective July 1st and Emergency Acts become effective when signed by the Governor.

# Calendars and the Order of Business

The Calendar is the daily printed agenda of business for each house. Though arranged with slight differences to suit the customs and practices of each body, the Senate and House Calendars are comprised of the bills and resolutions that have been reported from standing committees to their respective chamber for debate and passage by the full body's membership. Each are divided into First, Second and Third Readings (as required by Article IV, Section 11 of the Constitution of Virginia). Each Reading is subdivided into an Uncontested and Regular Calendar for both bills and resolutions. The Uncontested Calendar includes bills or resolutions which received no negative votes or abstentions when reported from committee; the Regular Calendar includes all bills or resolutions which received a "nay" vote or abstention when reported from committee.

First Reading requires no action. It is merely an announcement to the body that the bill or resolution has been reported from committee. Legislation on its Second Reading will have any committee or floor amendments or substitutes agreed to by the body. This is also where full debate occurs in the House of Delegates. Legislation on the Third Reading is up for final passage. Debate in the Senate occurs on Third Reading. The Calendar also contains information on scheduled committee meetings and public hearings.

## **SENATE OF VIRGINIA—ORDER OF BUSINESS**

### **AT THE APPOINTED HOUR**

Call to Order  
Period of Devotions  
Roll Call  
Reading of the Journal

### **MORNING HOUR**

Communications (messages) from the House of Delegates or Governor  
Recognition of visitors  
Resolutions, Petitions and Bills

### **MORNING HOUR HAVING EXPIRED**

Consideration of the Calendar  
Memorial Resolutions  
Commending Resolutions  
Points of Personal Privilege  
Announcements  
Recess  
Adjournment

In the House of Delegates, the order of business follows a similar format. The biggest difference is the ability of Delegates to move Calendar items from regular to uncontested. In addition, points of personal privilege are delivered before the Calendar is called.

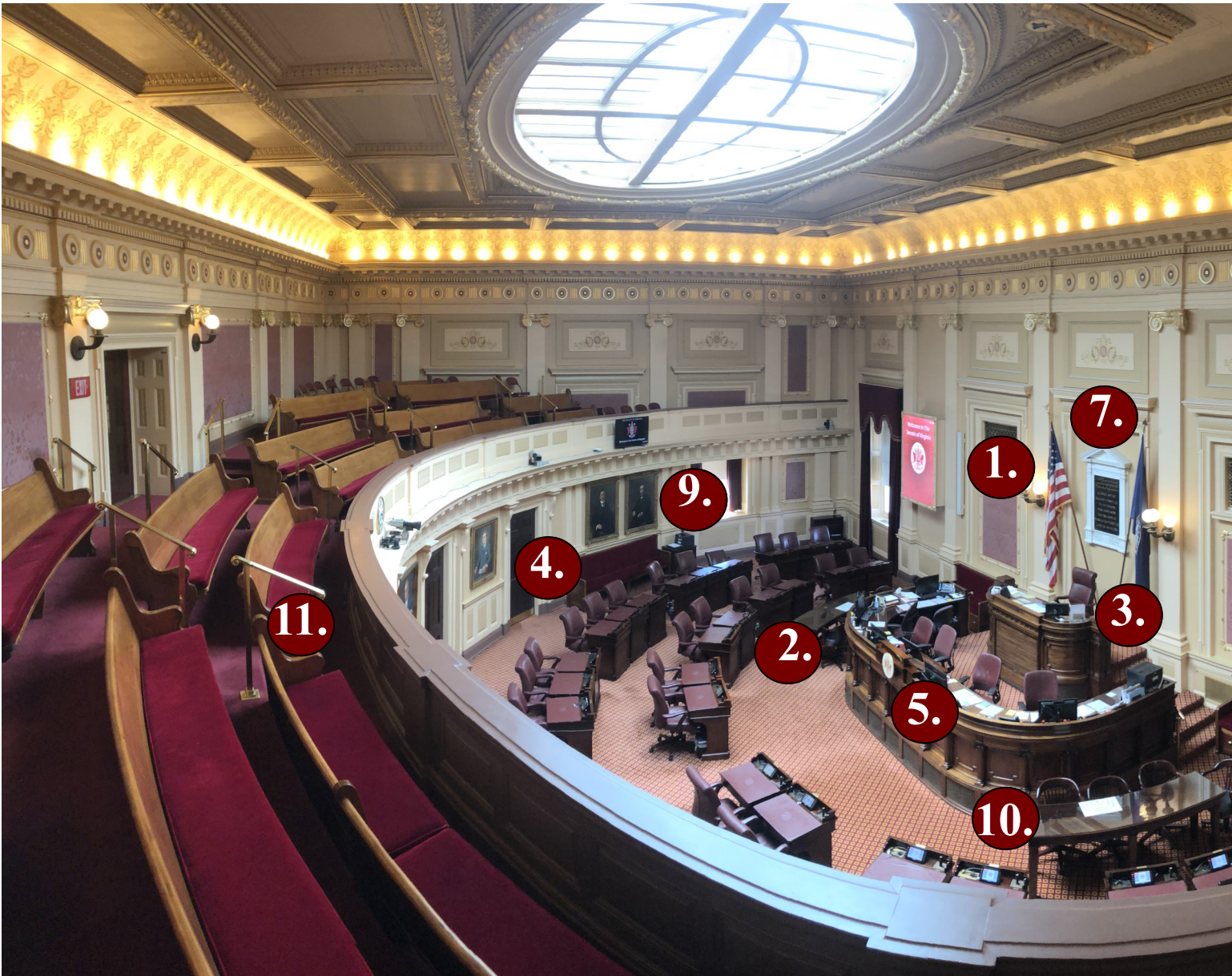
# A Day in the Life of a Legislator

The schedule of a Senator and Delegate during a short or long session can be very demanding. In addition to debating legislation during floor sessions and listening to public comment in committee meetings, legislators must also spend time meeting with constituents and reviewing mail, e-mail and social media correspondence. Here is a sample what a day in the life of a Virginia legislator may entail.

## **A Sample Session Day Schedule of a Virginia Senator or Delegate**

7:30 a.m.: Subcommittee on health care, 4th floor conference room  
8:30 a.m.: Senate Finance Committee meeting, Senate Room B  
9:45 a.m.: Meeting with Secretary of Public Safety, my G.A.B. office  
10:00 a.m.: Testify for S.B. 232, House Room D, G.A.B.  
10:30 a.m.: Subcommittee on texting while driving legislation, 3rd floor conference room.  
11:15 a.m.: Meet with high school students, Senate Room 3, Capitol  
11:30 a.m.: Caucus meeting, Capitol  
Noon: Floor session, Capitol  
2:00 p.m.: Courts of Justice Committee, Senate Room A  
2:30 p.m.: Testify for S.B. 500 in courts subcommittee  
3:00 p.m.: Meet with local mayors, my G.A.B. office  
3:30 p.m.: Meet with members of State Banking Association, my G.A.B. office  
4:00 p.m.: Public education subcommittee, 8th floor conference room  
5:30 p.m.: Review constituent correspondence and schedule for the next day (attend local health fair downtown, if time permits)  
7:00 p.m.: Speak at the state Chamber of Commerce meeting  
8:30 p.m.: Reception at science museum (if the chamber meeting does not run long)

# Guiding Your Way Through



1. The American and Virginia Flags are displayed behind the upper podium.

2. There are 40 desks in the Senate Chamber, 20 on either side of the center aisle.

3. The Lieutenant Governor presides from the upper podium.

4. Benches along the perimeter are reserved for Senate Pages, 13 and 14-year-old students who assist with administrative tasks and errands.

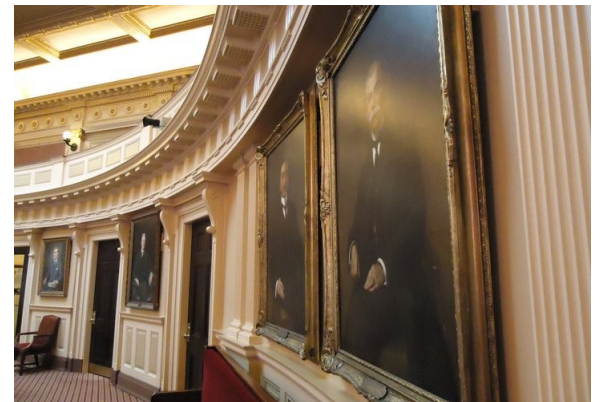
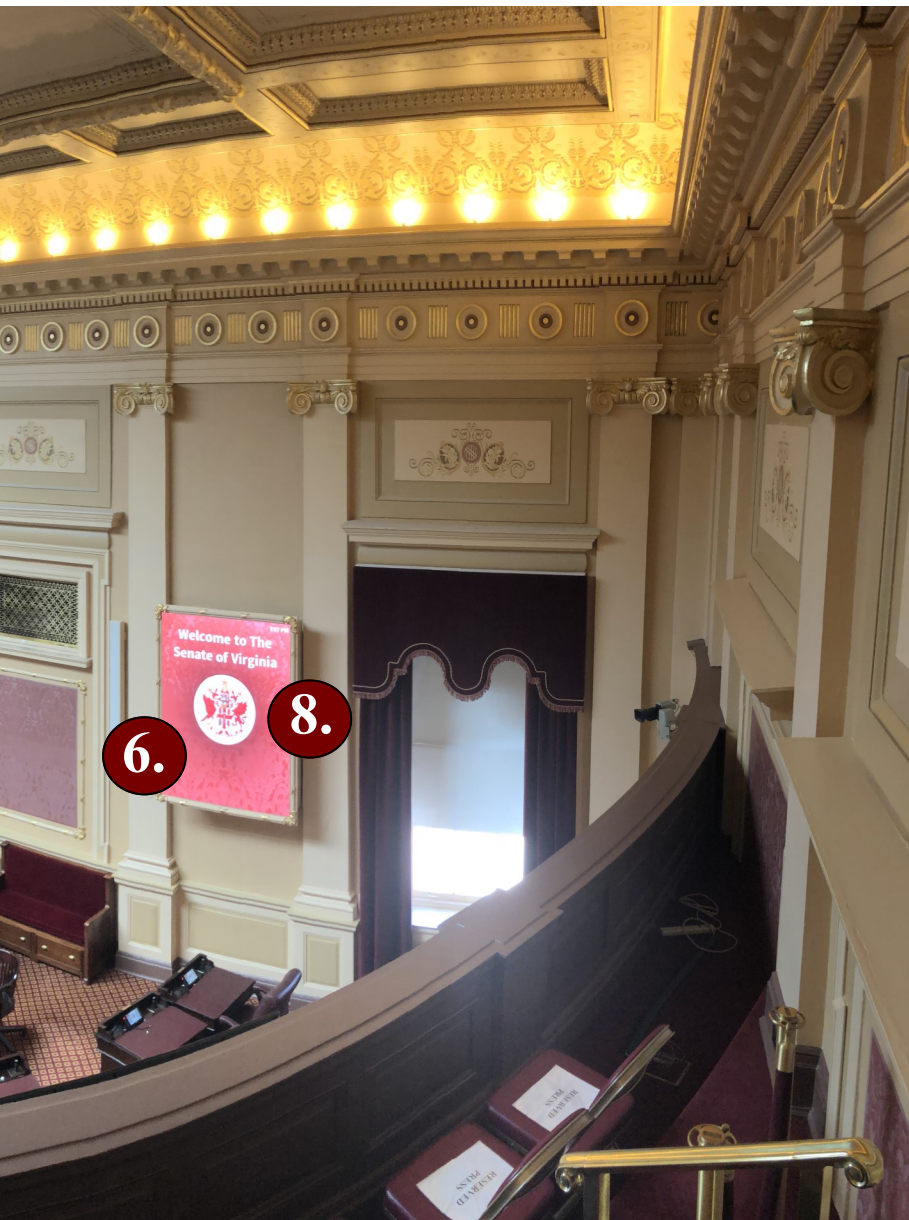
5. The Clerk of the Senate, who is charged with keeping the daily calendar, stands at the lower podium.





# The Senate Chamber

*The Senate Chamber is located in the west wing of the State Capitol.*



6. Senate Seal was designed by the College of Arms in London and was adopted by the Senate on January 22, 1981.

7. The Signers Tablet honors Virginians who signed the Declaration of Independence.

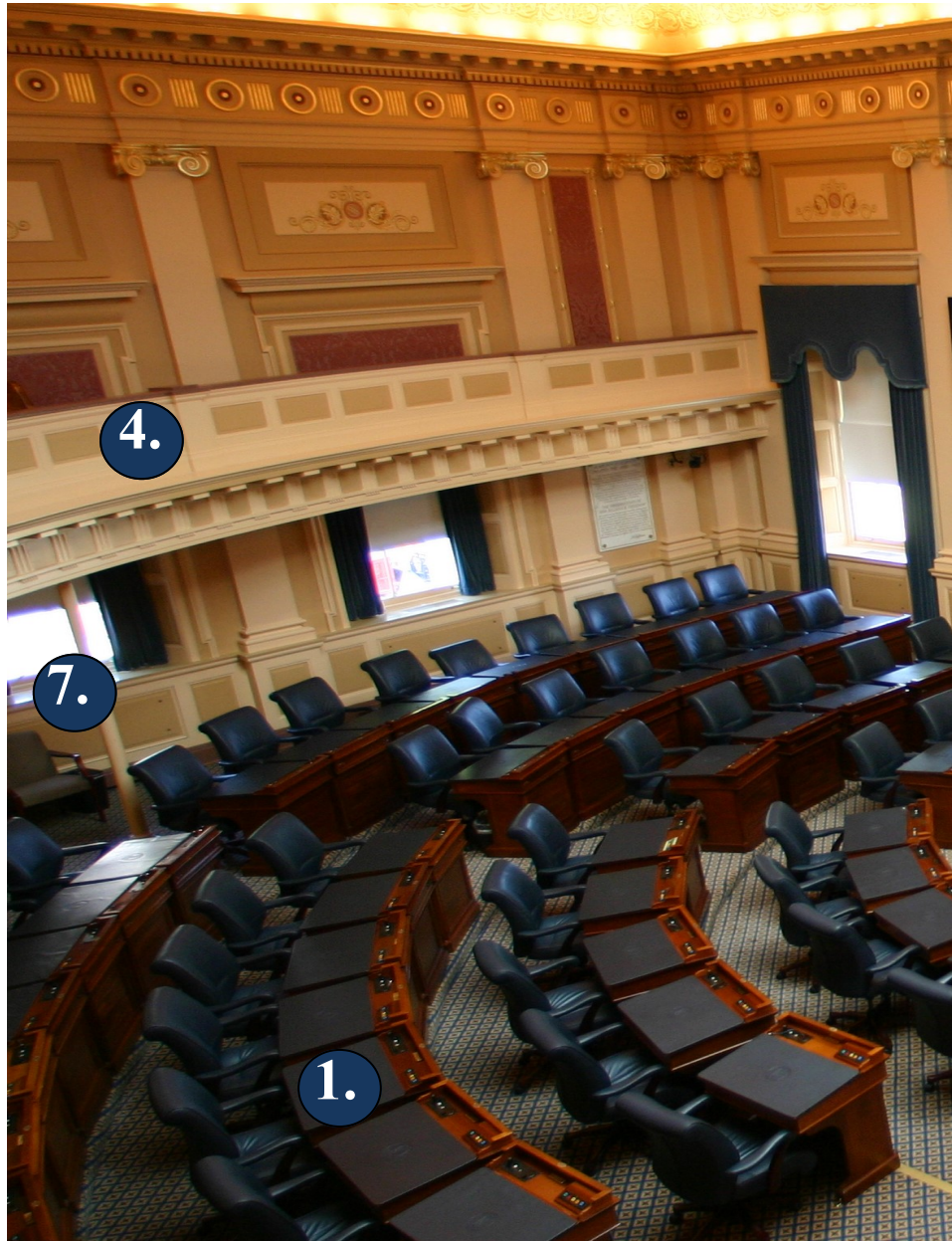
8. Each votes shows up on the voting boards.

9. Portraits of Lieutenant Governors of Virginia who have not gone on to become Governor are on display along the rear wall.

10. During the daily session of the Senate, the press is invited to sit in reserved seating up front.

11. The Senate Gallery is where the public views session.

# Guiding Your Way Through



1. Each Delegate has a desk in the Chamber. The desks have power cords and voting buttons.

2. Each votes shows up on the voting boards.

3. The Speaker presides over the House of Delegates from the upper podium.

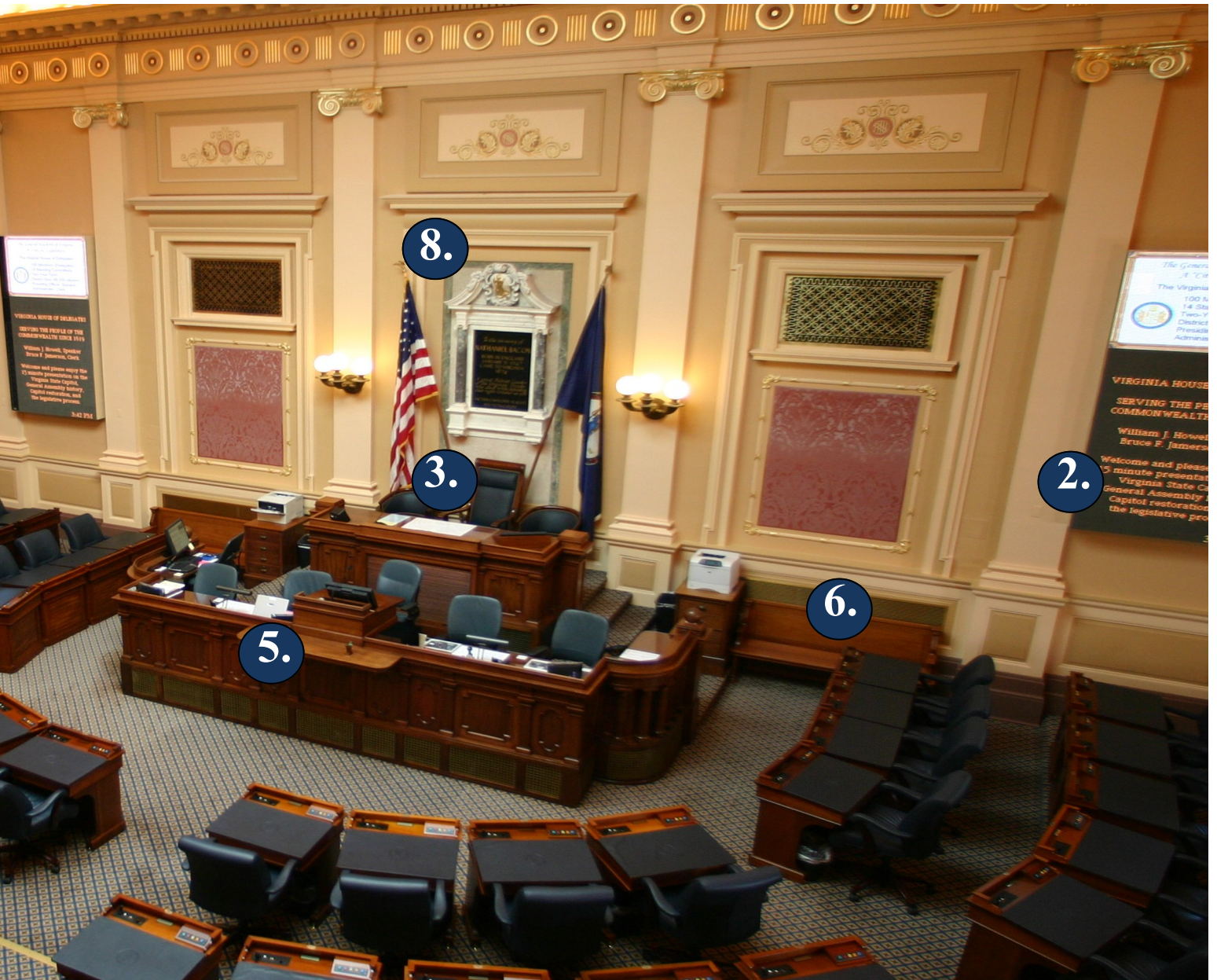
4. The House Gallery is where the public views session.

5. A 20-pound, 24-karat gold coated mace is placed in front of the Clerk's desk each day during session by the Sergeant-at-Arms.



# The House Chamber

*The House Chamber is located in the east wing of the State Capitol.*



6. Pages sit on the front benches. They run errands for Delegates.

7. During the daily session of the House, the press is invited to sit in the rear of the House Chamber.

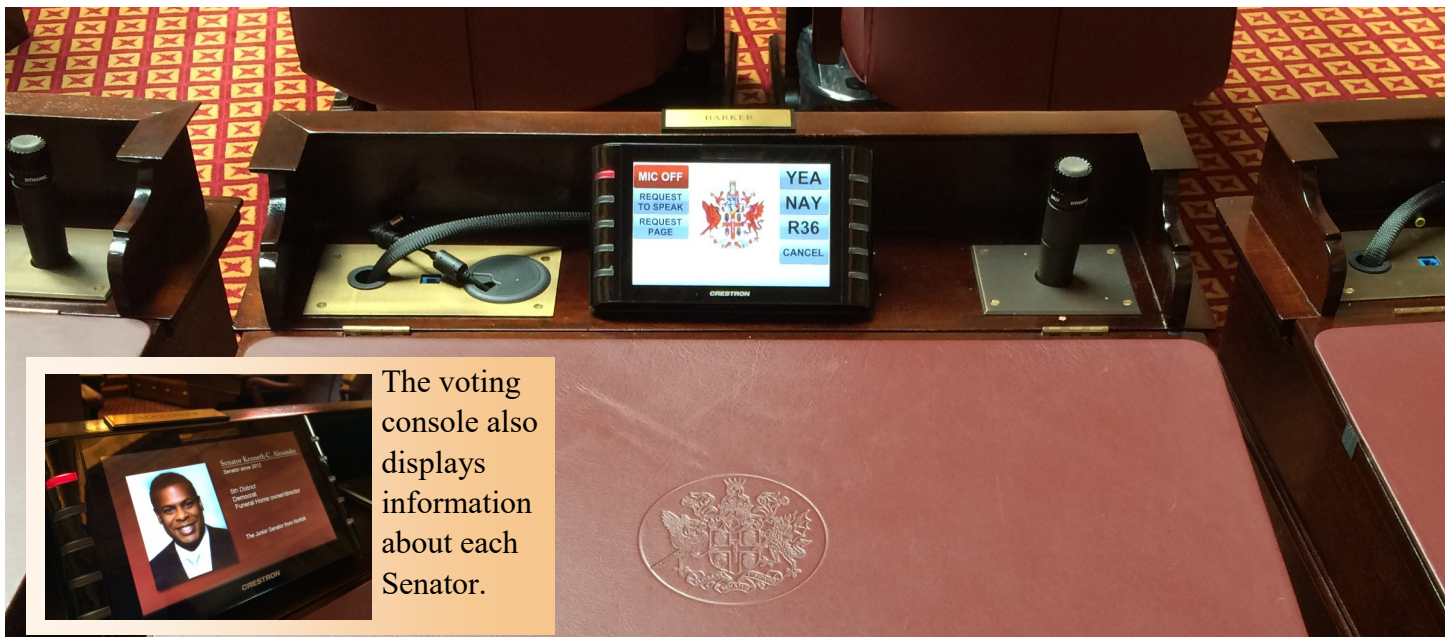
8. A plaque commemorating Nathaniel Bacon, who believed in governing by the consent of the people, is displayed behind the upper podium.

# A Senator's Desk

*Desks in the Senate Chamber have been in continuous use since 1906.*

A power cord allows Senators to use their laptop computer. Senators are able to access bills and e-mail during floor sessions. Cords for mobile devices are also available.

The microphone allows everyone to be heard and must be used when a Senator speaks. It is wired to the desk on a retractable cord.



Each desk has a voting console with a variety of buttons, including the capability of the Clerk of the Senate to summon a member to the front desk with a “Please see the Clerk.” Other functions include the following:

The **MIC** button turns the microphone on and off.

When a Senator wants to speak, the **REQUEST TO SPEAK** button is pressed. The same applies to asking another Senator a question in debate or making a procedural inquiry. The presiding officer of the Senate calls on the Senator at the appropriate time. Use of this button is similar to raising your hand in class or during a meeting.

Senators use the **REQUEST PAGE** button when they need assistance from a Senate Page.

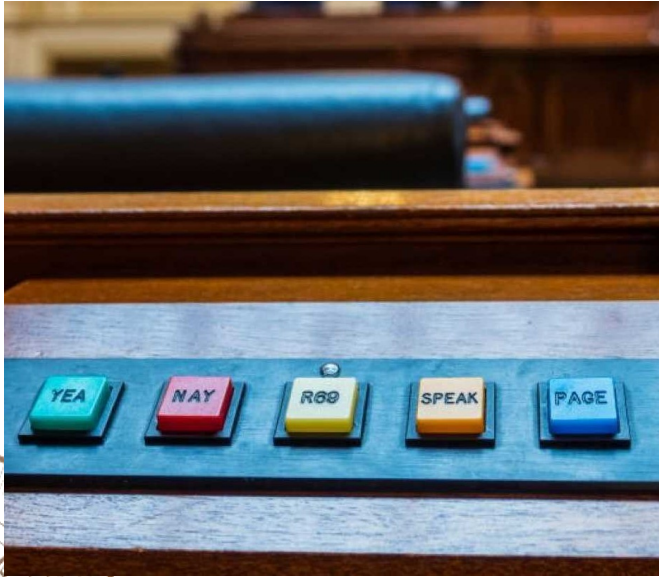
There are three buttons used when voting on a bill:

**YEA:** A Senator votes in favor of a bill.

**NAY:** A Senator votes against a bill.

**R36:** R36 stands for Rule 36 (one of 54 Rules of the Senate) that says Senators shall participate in the voting process during a floor session. This choice is used to indicate that a Senator has a personal interest in the legislation being voted upon.





Buttons on a Delegate's desk are similar to those on the desk of a Senator. They include the following:

When a Delegate wants to speak, the **SPEAK** button is pressed.

Senators use the **PAGE** button when they need assistance from a House Page.

**YEA**: A Delegate votes in favor of a bill.

**NAY**: A Delegate votes against a bill.

**R69**: A Delegate is neither voting for or against the bill because of a conflict of interest. R69 stands for Rule 69, one of 84 Rules of the House. This rule is similar to R36 in the Senate.

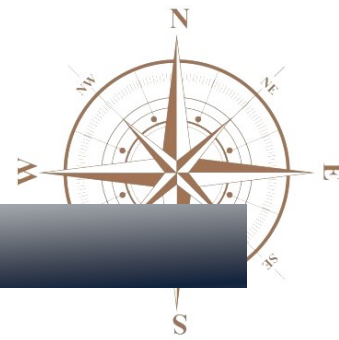
## A Delegate's Desk



A power cord allows Delegates to use their laptop computer. Delegates are able to access bills and e-mail during floor sessions.

The microphone is very similar to the one used by Senators during a floor session. It allows everyone to be heard and must be used when a Delegate speaks. The microphone is wired to the desk on a retractable cord.

# Legislative Terms



**ACTS OF ASSEMBLY** Those bills passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor. An act is given a number which represents the numerical sequence in which the bill was signed. This number refers to the “chapter” of the Acts of Assembly, i.e. Senate Bill 79 became Chapter 23 of the Acts of Assembly, being the twenty-third bill signed into law by the Governor. After the session, all acts are bound into volumes referred to as the Acts of Assembly. Joint resolutions amending the Constitution of Virginia are also assigned a Chapter number, but are not signed by the Governor, and are placed in the Acts of Assembly.

**ADJOURNMENT** Termination of a session for that day, with the hour and day of the next meeting being set prior to adjournment.

**ADJOURNMENT SINE DIE** The final adjournment of the legislative Session. The Latin translation is without a day, an indefinite period.

**AMENDMENT** A change made to legislation in committee or on the chamber floor that adds to, revises, or deletes language from the legislation.

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE** A substantive redrafting of legislation that incorporates the changes in a new version referred to as a “substitute.” An amendment in the nature of a substitute may be proposed by a standing committee, a member on the chamber floor, conference committee, or Governor.

**BIENNIUM** A two-year term of legislative activity, usually used in association with the budget.

**BILL** A proposal to amend, repeal or add sections to the Code of Virginia or Acts of Assembly.

**BUDGET BILL** Recommended appropriations of state revenue presented by the Governor to the General Assembly for its consideration during the legislative Session.

**BY REQUEST** A member may add “by request” to his/her name when introducing a bill, which indicates that the bill has been introduced at the request of a constituent, a governmental agency, or an organization.

**CALENDAR** The daily printed agenda of business for each house. The Calendar also contains scheduled committee meetings and public hearings.

**CAUCUS** An informal meeting of a group of members, most often called on the basis of party affiliation or regional representation.

**CHAPTER** A bill passed and signed into law by the Governor. The term also applies to constitutional amendments passed by the General Assembly and to bills passed notwithstanding the Governor’s objections or amendments.

**CHARTER BILL** Legislation relating to powers of counties, cities, and towns specifically granted by the General Assembly. Charters and changes thereto, are not codified and are found only in the Acts of Assembly.

**CODE OF VIRGINIA** A compilation of laws of the Commonwealth that is arranged alphabetically by subject, with each subject heading being referred to as a “Title.”

**COMMITTEE** A group of legislators from the Senate or the House of Delegates organized for the purpose of considering and deciding on the disposition of a bill or resolution. Committee Actions include the following:

**CARRY OVER (CONTINUE)**—Action which removes the measure from consideration during an even-numbered year Session and provides for its reconsideration at the next regular Session of the General Assembly. No bill may be carried over in an odd-numbered year Session. A carry-over bill retains its assigned bill number in the odd-numbered year Session.

**FAIL TO REPORT (DEFEAT)**—The committee rejects a motion to report a bill to the full house.

**INCORPORATE**—The committee incorporates one or more bills into another.

**NO ACTION TAKEN**—The committee takes no formal action on a measure and the bill dies at the time of the committee deadline.

**PASS BY INDEFINITELY (PBI)**—An unfavorable committee action to kill a measure, known as PBI. However, a bill may be passed by indefinitely at one committee meeting and reconsidered by the committee at the next meeting upon a motion made by a member who voted on the prevailing side to PBI the bill. If enough votes are changed, the bill may be reactivated and sent to the floor.

**REPORT**—The majority of the committee approves the bill and it is reported to the floor. The bill may be reported three ways: without amendment(s), with amendment(s), or with an amendment in the nature of a substitute. A bill may also be reported and referred to another committee.

**REREFERRAL**—The majority of the committee deems it necessary for another committee to consider the legislation. (See Rereferral from the floor.)

**STRIKE**—The bill is removed from the docket. This action frequently occurs at the request of the patron.

**COMMITTEE DOCKET** A list prepared by the committee clerk of all legislation pending before a standing committee or subcommittee. The order in which bills are taken up is determined by the Committee Chair.

**COMPOSITE** A combining of photographs of the members and staffs of the House & Senate, traditionally created in even-numbered years. Composite photographs for the respective chambers are on display in the East (House) & West (Senate) wings of the Capitol's first floor.

**CONFERENCE COMMITTEE** A group of legislators, usually six, although the number may be increased, taken from the Senate and House of Delegates, who meet to resolve the differences between the versions of a specific bill as passed by their respective bodies.

**CONSTITUENT** A citizen residing within the district of a legislator.

**DILLON RULE** Restricts the authority of local governments with the respect to the enactment of ordinances. Local governments only have powers granted by the Constitution of Virginia and/or passed by the General Assembly. This authority is found in the Constitution of Virginia Article VII, Section 3.

**DIVISION** A method of voting; a request that members stand or raise hands to be counted when the outcome of a voice vote is unclear or in dispute.

**EFFECTIVE DATE** Date on which a Chapter of the Acts of Assembly becomes a law. Laws become effective July 1 in the year they are passed, unless otherwise specified. Laws passed at a Special Session become effective on the first day of the fourth month following adjournment, unless otherwise specified.

**EMERGENCY CLAUSE** Specifies a date other than July 1 for legislation to be effective. The effective date of legislation with an emergency clause is the date when signed by the Governor.

**ENGROSSED** A state in the legislative process when a bill passes the second reading in the house of origin. If amended, the engrossed version of the legislation is printed incorporating all amendments that are agreed to. If not amended, the introduced version of the legislation becomes the engrossed bill, and if an amendment in the nature of a substitute is agreed to, the substitute becomes the engrossed bill.

**ENROLLED** Legislation which has passed both the Senate and House of Delegates. It has been signed by the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House and has been sent to the Governor, but not yet signed. If signed by the Governor, the bill becomes a law and a Chapter of the Acts of Assembly.

**FLOOR LEADER** Refers to the majority or minority leadership in each house.

**GERMANENESS** The relevance or appropriateness of amendments or substitutes in association with the topic of the legislation being amended. Bills considered by the General assembly shall contain only one topic. (See Constitution Article IV, Section 12.)

**INTERIM** The interval between annual Sessions.

**JOURNAL** The compilation of legislative actions and proceedings of the Senate and House of Delegates which are published by their respective Clerk's office. The Journal is the official record of each legislative body.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE** Permission granted to a member to be absent for a day.

**LEGISLATIVE INTENT** The purpose for which a measure is introduced and/or passed.

**LEGISLATOR** An elected member of a legislative body.

**LEGISLATURE (GENERAL ASSEMBLY)** The branch of state government responsible for enacting laws.

**LOBBYIST** A person who represents a particular interest or group of interests before the General Assembly.

**MAJORITY LEADER** A member of the majority party designated to be its floor leader.

**MAJORITY PARTY** The political party having the greater number of members in either house of the legislature.

**MINORITY LEADER** A member of the minority party designated to be its floor leader.

**MINORITY PARTY** The political party having the fewer number of members in either house of the legislature.

**MORNING HOUR** A period at the beginning of each day's Session when members may introduce distinguished visitors to their colleagues, introduce legislation or speak on any subject by asking for a "Point of Personal Privilege." In the Senate, members may speak on a Point of Personal Privilege only after the Calendar has been considered.

**PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY** A question posed to the presiding officer for clarification of a point in the proceedings.

**PATRON** A legislator who introduces a specific piece of legislation. Other legislators may show their support by signing on as co-patrons.



**READING** The presentation of a bill before either house requiring the reading and printing of the bill title. This formal procedure is required by the Constitution and the Rules of each house and indicates to the legislators and the public a stage in the enactment of a measure. The Constitution requires that bills receive three readings or three printings by title on three different days in each house, unless readings are waived.

**REAPPORTIONMENT** A redrawing of legislative district boundaries every ten years to provide equality of representation according to population.

**RECOMMITTAL** In the Senate, this is the reassignment of legislation to the last committee that considered it.

**RECONSIDERATION** A motion which, when granted, results in another vote annulling or reaffirming an action previously taken. Such a motion may be offered only by a member having voted previously on the prevailing side.

**RECONVENED SESSION** A Session held on the sixth Wednesday after adjournment of each regular or special Session when the legislature meets to consider and act on bills vetoed by the Governor and bills with recommendations by the Governor. (See Article IV, Section 6 and Article V, Section 6 of the Constitution of Virginia.)

**REFERENDUM** A method by which a measure adopted by the legislature may be submitted to the voters.

**REFERRAL** The assignment of legislation to a committee. In the Senate, referral is done by the Clerk of the Senate. In the House of Delegates, it is done by the Speaker of the House.

**REREFERRAL** In the Senate, this is the action on a measure taken by a committee of the Senate or House of Delegates which sends that measure to another committee for consideration. It is done by the committee that is considering it or by a member from the floor. In the House of Delegates, this is the reassignment of legislation to the last committee that considered it.

**RESOLUTION** Legislation which requests a study or expresses legislative opinion or sentiment on a particular issue. Resolutions do not have the force of law and do not require the signature of the Governor. Constitutional amendments are signed by the presiding officer of each house and are assigned chapter numbers.

**SESSION** The period of time for which the legislature officially convenes. In even-numbered years, the Session meets for 60 days; in odd-numbered years it meets for 30 days. The Session may be extended for a maximum of 30 days. The odd-numbered year Sessions are usually extended to 46 days.

**STANDING COMMITTEES** Regular committees of the legislature set up to perform certain legislative functions, and to consider legislation regarding certain areas of the law.

**SUBCOMMITTEE** A group of legislators who are members of a standing committee selected by the Committee Chair to consider certain categories of bills. Subcommittees make recommendations to the full committee.

**SUNSET** The expiration date of a legislative measure.

**VETO** Action by which the Governor refuses to sign legislation passed by the General Assembly. The Governor returns the vetoed bill to its house of origin. A 2/3 vote of each body is required to overturn a veto.

**VOTE** Formal expression of will or decision by the legislative body.

**VOTE, EN BLOC** The disposition of several items, such as a series of bills or amendments, by taking one vote.

**VOTE, RECORDED** A roll call vote in which each member electronically votes yea, nay, or abstain. The vote is recorded in the Journal of each legislative body.

**VOTE, VOICE** Oral expression of the members when a question is submitted for their determination. Response is given by “yeas” and “nays,” and the presiding officer states his/her decision as to which side prevails.

**YIELD** The relinquishing of the floor by one member to another member to speak or ask a question during debate.



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### Your Guide to Additional Resources Online

“Capitol Classroom” and the Legislative Branch: <http://viriniageneralassembly.gov>

Executive Branch: <http://governor.virginia.gov>

Judicial Branch: <http://courts.state.va.us>

Commonwealth of Virginia: <http://virginia.gov>

State Board of Elections: <http://sbe.virginia.gov>