

JCRC'S 2026 VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY SUMMARY

After several months of extended negotiations that required a special session, the General Assembly and Governor Spanberger reached an agreement on a roughly \$207 billion two-year budget, resolving the central dispute over taxing Virginia's data center industry while also funding major new investments in education, providing tax relief, and establishing a new adult-use retail cannabis market.

On Monday, June 29, the General Assembly approved a package of technical amendments sent by the Governor, officially ending the budget impasse just two days shy of the start of the new fiscal year. The new budget went into effect on Wednesday, July 1.

Notably, the special session itself remains technically open: rather than adjourning, the General Assembly went into recess, preserving its ability to reconvene at a time of its choosing.

Aside from the budget, all other legislation was addressed during the regular 60-day session, which convened January 14 and adjourned as scheduled on March 14. During the regular session, the JCRC successfully advocated for three constitutional amendments advanced by the General Assembly: [marriage equality](#), [reproductive rights](#), and [automatic restoration of voting rights to returning citizens](#). These amendments now go to Virginia's voters as referenda that will be on the ballot in November's election.

Of the 2,366 bills introduced by members of the General Assembly, over 1,156 were sent to the Governor. The Governor took action on 180 bills and vetoed 31 others. While the General Assembly did not overturn any vetoes, it did reject a handful of the Governor's amendments when they reconvened on April 22.

Ultimately, 1,131 bills were enacted into law, with the vast majority taking effect on July 1.

With both the budget and legislation now finalized, the JCRC was successful in advancing the following budget and legislative priorities:

- **Hate Crimes Security Grant Program**

The budget provides \$3 million (\$1.5 million per year for two years) in funding for the Hate Crimes Security Grant Program and amends the previous language to ensure that funding is distributed equitably across the Commonwealth to organizations on the front lines of combatting hate crimes and provides additional guidance on the use of funding for security, technical assistance, training, and coordinated services. The new language also permits the Department of Criminal Justice

Services to implement an expedited application and award process following a hate-motivated incident or in the event of a heightened threat risk.

- **Ensure Robust Access to Social Services**

The budget provides \$89,396 for each of two years to support Makom's MOST program for individuals with developmental disabilities who are aging out and exiting the school system in Loudoun County.

The budget additionally provides \$200,000 for each of the next two years to support the Jewish Social Services Agency's program that provides assistance to Holocaust survivors and other low-income seniors who have experienced trauma.

- **Virginia Israel Advisory Board (VIAB)**

VIAB funding was increased to \$316,655 per year for each of the next two years. VIAB was established as a government agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1996, celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. It is funded through the state budget because it has proven its value through its strong annual return on investment. It has played a critical role in attracting Israeli investment in Virginia over its decades, leveraging its annual budget to bring Israeli businesses to Virginia.

- **[VA HB131 Higher Educational institutions, public; reasonable accommodations for religious beliefs, etc.](#)**

Requires each public institution of higher education to provide reasonable accommodations for the religious beliefs and practices of individual students with regard to admissions, class attendance, and the scheduling of examinations and work assignments and to provide and describe in the institution's student handbook or an equivalent document and in the institution's faculty handbook or an equivalent document a grievance procedure for any student to seek redress when the student believes that he has been unreasonably denied such reasonable accommodations for his religious beliefs and practices.

- **[Voter registration; regular periodic review of registration records.](#)**

Requires the Department of Elections to complete not later than 90 days prior to the date of a primary or general election any program the purpose of which is to systematically remove the names of ineligible voters from the voter registration system based on evidence of ineligibility, including evidence of lack of eligible residence or evidence of noncitizenship. Under prior law, such restriction only applied to federal primaries and federal general elections. Additionally establishes

a process for confirming a voter's citizenship status prior to cancellation based on a report of non-citizen status and extends (a) the period of time registrars have to cancel registrations from 30 days to 60 days after notification of the need to cancel by the Department of Elections and (b) the period of time a registered voter has to respond to a notice of cancellation related to citizenship status from 14 days to 28 days.

- **Hate crimes; crime victim's right to nondisclosure of certain information.**

Prohibits a law-enforcement agency from disclosing to the public information that directly or indirectly identifies the victim of a hate crime.

- **Suicide; abolishes common-law crime, delayed effective date, report.**

Abolishes the common-law crime of suicide. Abolishes the common-law crime of suicide. Suicide is currently a common-law crime in Virginia, although there is no statutorily prescribed punishment. The bill has a delayed effective date of July 1, 2027, and also requires the Bureau of Insurance of the State Corporation Commission to review the effect and implication of abolishing the common-law crime of suicide on insurance throughout the Commonwealth and submit its findings and any recommendations by November 1, 2026, to the Chairs of the House and Senate Committees for Courts of Justice.

- **Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition Program; plan for expansion of Program.**

Directs the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with the Department of Education, to develop a plan to expand the Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) Program to increase the number of students assisted in the transition from high school to postsecondary programs. The bill requires such plan to equip local community services boards with the resources to assist an increased number of students in such transition, publish online resources about the transition process, and develop an online dashboard to provide information about possible postsecondary education programs.

- **Affordable housing; religious organizations and other nonprofit tax-exempt properties.**

Allows for the administrative approval of development and construction of housing on land owned by property tax-exempt religious organizations or certain property tax-exempt nonprofit organizations and provides that zoning ordinances shall allow the by-right development and construction of housing on real property owned by such organizations, subject to various conditions and limitations. The bill provides that the review of such developments be completed pursuant to general law and states that localities shall not require a special exception, special use permit, conditional use permit, rezoning, or any discretionary review or approval process. The bill

requires that at least 60 percent of the housing development's total units be for affordable housing and that the housing development remain affordable for at least 30 years. The bill also provides that all such housing is subject to local real property taxation following completion, unless explicitly exempted by the locality. The bill has a delayed effective date of January 1, 2027, and expires on January 1, 2031.

- **Clean energy and community flood preparedness; market-based trading program.**

Directs the Department of Environmental Quality and the State Air Pollution Control Board to establish and maintain a market-based trading program consistent with the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative program, as defined in existing law, to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from electricity generating units in the Commonwealth.

- **Firearms; purchase, etc., after assault & battery of family or household member or intimate partner.**

Adds to the definition of "family or household member," as such definition relates to juvenile and domestic relations district court, a person's intimate partner, defined in the bill as an individual who, within the previous 12 months, was in a romantic, dating, or sexual relationship with the person as determined by the length, nature, frequency, and type of interaction between the individuals involved in the relationship. The bill also adds to the definition of "family or household member," as such definition relates to a person's purchase, possession, or transportation of a firearm following an assault and battery of a family or household member, any individual who cohabits or who, within the previous 12 months, cohabitated with the person.

- **School boards; parental notification; safe storage of prescription drugs and firearms in the household.**

Requires each school board to develop and implement a policy to require the annual notification of the parent of each student enrolled in the school division, to be sent by email and, if applicable, SMS text message, of (i) the importance of securely storing any prescription drug, as defined in relevant law, present in the household and (ii) the parent's legal responsibility to safely store any firearm present in the household.

- **Firearms; transfers to another person from a prohibited person.**

Provides that a person who is prohibited from possessing a firearm because the person is subject to a protective order or has been convicted of an assault and battery of a family or household member may transfer a firearm owned by the prohibited person to any person who is not otherwise prohibited by law from possessing such firearm, provided that the person who is not otherwise

prohibited by law from possessing such firearm is 21 years of age or older and does not reside with the person who is subject to the protective order. Under prior law, there was no requirement that a transferee could not be younger than 21 years of age and could not reside with the prohibited person.

In addition, JCRC successfully advocated to defeat [an effort to allow unfettered agitation on college campuses](#) and another that would have adopted an “ethnic studies” type requirement in Virginia’s K-12 schools. The first measure, which failed to advance, would have left Jewish students and faculty unprotected from harassment and intimidation. The second, which was [amended dramatically to remove the potential harm and ultimately passed in that new form](#), would have opened the door to embedding antisemitic teachings in Virginia’s social studies curriculum.