



2021 GENERAL ASSEMBLY WRAP UP LEGISLATIVE & BUDGET PRIORITIES

RESTORE CRUCIAL INVESTMENTS IN PREVENTION

Currently, the Commonwealth invests \$0 toward the important goal of preventing sexual and domestic violence. [In 2020, policy leaders recognized the critical need to prevent violence](#) before it happens and established the first-ever state fund to support and expand these efforts. Unfortunately, this was one of the funding initiatives put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the enormous fiscal impact it had on our state budget.

What were we asking for?

Budget items [301 #2s](#) (Favola) and [301 #3h](#) (Herring), restoring the original \$1.5 million per biennium, or \$750k annually to the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Prevention Fund.

Status: *Whew.... what a roller-coaster ride this has been! In the middle of a session (and in the middle of an ongoing pandemic!) while we were asking the legislature to restore appropriations to our new state prevention fund, federal funding through the CDC's Rape Prevention Education (RPE) program flowing to Virginia's sexual violence prevention programs was abruptly ended. This created a sudden \$850,000 gap in vital funding and made this ask more urgent.*

Action Alliance membership and partners quickly and effectively mobilized, reaching out to legislators to ask for full restoration of state funds and to respond to the urgent gap in federal funding flowing to programs. These advocacy efforts were successful! [The House & Senate compromise budget includes](#) \$750,000 for sexual and domestic violence prevention with a direct request to our state administrators to continue to disseminate federal RPE dollars to the sexual violence prevention field.

If you were in contact with your legislators about this issue, we would ask that you now follow up and thank them for going to bat for us and supporting our request to sustain and even expand prevention impact statewide.

ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY

The existence of the death penalty for any crime perpetuates the use of violence to exert control over individuals and groups and creates a society that tolerates abuse. Recognizing that the death penalty is disproportionately and unjustly applied to survivors, people of color, low-income people, and people with serious mental health needs, it is not consistent with the Action Alliance's mission this practice. See our [policy position on the death penalty](#).

What were we asking for?

[SB 1165](#) (Surovell) and [HB 2263](#) (Mullin) abolishing the death penalty, including for those persons currently under a death sentence.

Status: *These bills have **PASSED** the Senate (21-17) and House (57-41) and are on their way to the Governor's desk to be signed into law! Making Virginia the first Southern state to abolish the death penalty.*

REPEAL VIRGINIA'S DISCRIMINATORY PROHIBITION ON LGBTQ MARRIAGE

Advancing equality and respect for LGBTQ Virginians is integral to creating a Virginia free from sexual and domestic violence. See our [policy position here](#).

What were we asking for?

[HJ 582](#) (Sickles) repealing the constitutional provision defining marriage as only a union between one man and one woman as well as the related provisions that are no longer valid as a result of the US Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. 644 (2015).

Status: *This resolution **PASSED** the House (60-33) and the Senate (22-12) and per the [Constitution of Virginia](#) will need to be considered by the legislature once more (during the 2022 General Assembly Session) before being proposed to qualified voters in Virginia. Once it clears these next two hurdles, it will be incorporated into the Virginia Constitution.*

ELIMINATE MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES

Mandatory minimums are a costly and simplistic tool that serve to remove judicial discretion, disproportionately impact historically marginalized and oppressed communities, and provide little real safety for victims or accountability for offenders. See our policy [position here](#).

What were we asking for?

[SB 1443](#) (Edwards) eliminating all mandatory minimum sentences of confinement from the Code of Virginia and providing a petition process for a person who was previously convicted.

Status: *Despite this bill having passed the Senate and the House, it **FAILED TO PASS** in conference. Lawmakers [could not come to a consensus](#) on how far to take the repeal of mandatory minimum sentencing. This Senate bill scrapped mandatory sentences for almost all crimes in Virginia, but the House pushed its own legislation that narrowed the focus to drug offenses. Virginia's State Crime Commission [endorsed legislation to eliminate all mandatory minimum sentencing](#) regardless of the crime in an effort to restore sentencing discretion to judges and juries.*

EXPUNGE CRIMINAL RECORDS FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

Many of those who have been trafficked were forced to commit crimes against their will. A vacatur statute would serve to clear wrongful convictions and expunge criminal records, making survivor access to resources like trauma counseling, housing, education, and employment easier.

What are we asking for?

[HB 2133](#) (Delaney), allowing victims of trafficking to vacate and expunge criminal convictions.

Status: *This bill **PASSED** the House (99-0) and the Senate (39-0) and is headed to the Governor's desk to be signed into law.*

PASS THE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EQUITY ACT (RHEA)

Access to reproductive health care is critical for the health and economic security of survivors. See our full [policy position here](#).

What are we asking for?

[HB 1922](#) (Price) revising health benefit plans and the state plan for medical assistance to include specific reproductive health services.

Status: This bill **FAILED TO PASS** in the House and is no longer active. However, other reproductive justice bills, like [HB 1896](#) and [SB 1276](#), **PASSED** the House and Senate and are headed to the Governor's desk to be signed into law.

REDUCE OFFENDER ACCESS TO FIREARMS

The presence of a firearm in abusive relationships makes it five times more likely that homicide will occur. Expanding firearm prohibitions to include DV/SA crimes has tangible results in reducing IPV homicide and community violence. For more, see the Action Alliance's [DV & Firearms infographic](#).

What are we asking for?

[HB 1992](#) (Murphy) prohibiting a person who has been convicted of assault and battery of a family or household member from purchasing, possessing, or transporting a firearm. The bill also outlines that firearm prohibition expires three years after the date of conviction, at which point, the person's firearms rights are restored, unless they receive another disqualifying conviction.

Status: This bill **PASSED** the House (54-46) and Senate (20-19) and is headed to the Governor's desk to be signed into law.

CREATE A PAID FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM

Without the option for paid leave, 55% of Virginia families face impossible choices when children are born and when serious personal or family health needs arise. Proposals to [create a family friendly economy](#), like this one, are directly linked to reducing risk factors for violence and supporting an environment in which every family can fully thrive.

What are we asking for?

[SB 1330](#) (Boysko) and [HB 2016](#) (Ayala) requiring the VA Employment Commission to administer a state paid family and medical leave program.

Status: These bills **FAILED TO PASS** in the House and Senate and are therefore no longer active. However, other economic justice bills, like [HB 2137](#) carried by Delegate Guzman which establishes paid sick days for essential workers, did **PASS** both chambers and are expected to be signed into law.