



VIRTUAL ADVOCATE'S TOOLKIT

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DAY 2023



WELCOME

Thank you for your joining us on February 2nd for Legislative Advocacy Day (#VALeg)! We're excited you have committed to #AmplifySurvivorVoices and advocate for policies that both empower survivors and build a world rooted in justice and compassion.

Legislative advocacy means communicating directly with your elected representatives--in this case, legislators in the Virginia General Assembly (GA)--to educate legislators about issues that impact yourself, your family, and your communities.

Traditionally, legislative advocacy has meant speaking in person with lawmakers and their staff. However, this year many of us are not able to do so, and that's where virtual legislative advocacy comes in!

Virtual legislative advocacy consists of any engagement with representatives in the GA through the use of technology: phone calls, email, social media, and even good-old-fashioned letter writing. This toolkit is designed to help make engaging your legislators over social media, email, and telephone as easy as possible.

Here you will find the following tools:

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS: We've pulled together a number of sample Facebook and Twitter posts for you to share. All you need to do is copy and paste... and remember to use #CloseTheLoophole, #FundThePhones, #SurvivorJustice, #DisarmDV, #ActionAlliance and #VALeg

SHAREABLE GRAPHICS: Spread the word about #VALeg and why we need to #FundThePhones by sharing these images on social media, your website, and/or emails.

PHONE ADVOCACY TIPS AND EMAIL SCRIPTS: Worried about stumbling over your words or missing a talking point? We got you! If you'd rather email, simply copy and paste, or use these scripts as a jumping-off point for your own message.

CONTACT INFO FOR YOUR LEGISLATORS: Find names and addresses for all of your legislators, simply by entering your own address. We've also done the work of compiling all Facebook and Twitter handles for your Virginia Senators and members of the House of Delegates!

FIRST TIME THINKING ABOUT LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY? YOU MAY BE WONDERING...

1 WHY IS LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY IMPORTANT?

Lawmakers cannot be experts on all issues all the time. Do you know who are the experts on sexual and intimate partner violence? People who have been directly affected by sexual and intimate partner violence... and the professionals who help them! It's our job to make sure that lawmakers who vote on issues affecting survivors are knowledgeable about the issues before they vote.

2 IS LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY A GOOD USE OF MY TIME?

Yes! Because legislative advocacy works!

Lawmakers listen to their constituents. Pretty much every contact you have with a legislator and/or their staff is noted in order to keep track of where constituents stand on any given issue. Lawmakers want to be accountable to their constituents... and it's also in their best interests to do so. Plus, your voice/knowledge/point of view is worth sharing!

3 WHY AM I THE BEST PERSON TO CONTACT MY REPRESENTATIVES?

Because it takes all of us working together to build the world we want. You have a story to tell about how sexual and intimate partner has impacted you personally and/or professionally. You have your own vision of a world without domination. Never underestimate the power of story to influence lawmakers... whether it's about your own experience or the impact your program has on your community.

QUICK LINKS

- [Action Alliance 2023 Legislative Priorities and Talking Points](#)
- [Action Alliance Legislative Advocacy Guide](#)
- [Who's My Legislator?](#)
- [Virginia House of Delegates Contacts](#)
- [Virginia Senate Contacts](#)

SAMPLE POSTS

Here are a few sample posts to help get your message out there!

(tip: always remember to tag your representatives so they will see your post)



Join us in supporting Budget Items 408 #1s (Sen. Favola) and 408 #4h (Del. Morefield) which would provide life-saving appropriations to sustain Virginia's 24/7 Sexual and Domestic Violence Hotline.

An annual investment of \$1.2M can fully staff the Hotline with trained, professional sexual and domestic violence advocates and sustain our life-saving coverage across the state, 24/7, 365 days a year. It's time to #Fundthephones to ensure there are resources for survivors any time, day or night.



Stand up in opposition to bills like SB 1385 (Newman) and HB 2278 (Byron) that would restrict access to and criminalize abortion for survivors of sexual and domestic violence.

Sexual and domestic violence survivors not only have significantly higher rates of unintended pregnancies, but they also experience escalating and far more lethal violence during pregnancy. For this reason, access to contraception and safe and legal abortion, is critical to a survivor's safety, health, and freedom. Oppose all abortion bans and stand with survivors.

SAMPLE POSTS

Here are a few sample posts to help get your message out there!

(tip: always remember to tag your representatives so they will see your post)



@_____ (Senator/Delegate twitter handle) close the dangerous loophole in Virginia's strangulation statute! Vote YES on HB 1673 and SB 1156 #CloseTheLoophole #SurvivorJustice #ActionAlliance #VALeg



@_____ (Senator/Delegate twitter handle) stabilize VA's 24/7 sexual and domestic violence hotline NOW! Support budget items 408 #4h (Del. Morefield) and 408 #1s (Sen. Favola) #FundThePhones #ActionAlliance #VALeg



@_____ (Senator/Delegate twitter handle) Firearms and domestic violence are a lethal combination! Help align and clarify firearms transfer protocol in Virginia, vote YES on SB 909 (Favola) and HB 1729 (Bennett-Parker) #DisarmDV #ActionAlliance #VALeg



@_____ (Senator/Delegate twitter handle) Stand with sexual and domestic violence survivors and advocates, oppose ALL abortion bans in Virginia! #ActionAlliance #BansOffOurBodies #AbortionIsHealthcare #VALeg

GRAPHICS

Share these graphics with your Facebook and Instagram posts to easily **#FundThePhones**.



VIRGINIA SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTION ALLIANCE

FUND THE PHONES!

SUSTAIN VIRGINIA'S 24/7 SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

An **annual investment of \$1.2M** can fully staff the Hotline with sexual and domestic violence advocates and sustain life-saving coverage across the state, 24/7, 365 days a year.

Support Budget Item **408 #4h** (Del. Moorefield) and **408 #1s** (Sen. Favola)

5-YEAR HOTLINE TRENDS 2017-2021

HOTLINE CALLS ANSWERED



Net increase of 17,219 contacts
+3,444 contacts/year (avg.)

THE HOTLINE SAVES LIVES AND RESTORES HOPE.

In 2021, survivors of violence reported that their advocate helped them to...

know more about services in their community

plan for their safety

take steps towards healing and repair

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD HAVE DONE IF THESE SERVICES DIDN'T EXIST?

"I would have likely given up, stayed in an abusive relationship, and I might have been killed."

"My initial phone call gave me the courage to leave the abusive house with my children. The follow up care is helping me to stay out of the house and plan for the future."

"I spent 42 years with an abusive man. I didn't know that I was a victim of domestic violence. Not even when he put the gun to my head. I would probably be dead if these services did not exist."

"I didn't have anyone that I could talk to about my rape. I don't know what I would have done if these services didn't exist."

FUND THE PHONES!

SUSTAIN LIFE-SAVING SERVICES TO SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS IN VIRGINIA!

VIRGINIA SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTION ALLIANCE



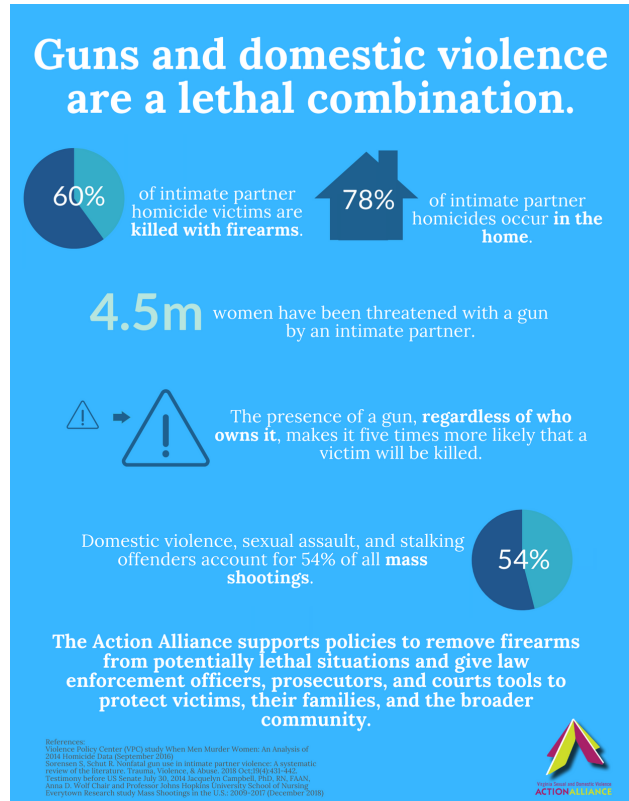
VSDVALLIANCE.ORG

Click here to download
all of the images included
in this toolkit.



INFOGRAPHIC

Share these infographics when you post to help share knowledge about how prevention can end violence before it starts.



Click here to download
all of the images included
in this toolkit.



ZOOM BACKGROUNDS

Make a statement in your Zoom meetings using these social media banners and Zoom backgrounds.



ZOOM BACKGROUNDS

Make a statement in your Zoom meetings using these social media banners and Zoom backgrounds.



SAMPLE SCRIPTS

Use these scripts as copy-and-paste templates or to help guide you as you send emails to your representatives.



#FUNDTHEPHONES Sustain Virginia's 24/7 Sexual and Domestic Violence Hotline!

Subject: Sustain VA's 24/7 Sexual and Domestic Violence Hotline

Dear Delegate/Senator _____:

I'm _____ (name), _____ (position/title) at _____ (sexual and/or domestic violence agency), a community based program serving _____ (town/city/county/) and working every day to end sexual and domestic violence. I'm emailing you today to urge you to support Budget Items 408 #1s (Sen. Favola) and 408 #4h (Del. Morefield) which would provide life-saving appropriations to sustain Virginia's 24/7 Sexual and Domestic Violence Hotline.

As federal funding becomes more volatile and fluctuates from year to year, a solution is needed to sustain the Statewide Hotline and ensure its life-saving services are accessible to all throughout the Commonwealth. In 2021 alone, the Hotline received 77,456 calls resulting in 30,731 referrals to local sexual and domestic violence agency for help with emergency shelter, crisis response, safety planning, healthcare, legal services, and more. Demand for these services continues to rise statewide. Over a five-year period (since 2017), the Statewide Hotline has seen a net increase of 17,219 total contacts with an average annual increase of 3,444 contacts per year. And according to survivors, these services are making lasting impacts:

·"[Without these services] I would have likely given up, stayed in an abusive relationship, and I might have been killed."

·"My initial phone call gave me the courage to leave the abusive house with my children. The follow up care is helping me to stay out of the house and plan for our future."

An annual investment of \$1.2M can fully staff the Hotline with trained, professional sexual and domestic violence advocates and sustain our life-saving coverage across the state, 24/7, 365 days a year.

Thank you for your time and commitment to building a safe and healthy Virginia! If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or our partners at the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance.

Thank you!

_____ (Name, title, agency, contact info)

SAMPLE SCRIPTS

Use these scripts as copy-and-paste templates or to help guide you as you send emails to your representatives.



CLOSE THE DANGEROUS LOOPHOLE IN VA'S STRANGULATION STATUTE

Subject: Vote YES on HB 1673/SB 1156 – Close VA's Strangulation Loophole!

Dear Delegate/Senator _____:

I'm _____ (name), _____ (position/title) at _____ (sexual and/or domestic violence agency), a community based program serving _____ (town/city/county/) and working every day to end sexual and domestic violence. I'm emailing you today to urge you to support HB 1673 (Bell) and SB 1156 (Boysko) that would close the dangerous loophole in Virginia's strangulation statute.

Throughout the pandemic, both the frequency and lethality of intimate partner violence has been on the rise. The act of suffocating or smothering is an increasingly used and incredibly lethal tactic employed by abusers. Domestic violence advocates, Commonwealth's Attorneys, and law enforcement have seen many recent abuse cases involving this act where respiration is knowingly impeded but the abuser is careful to not leave marks or cause death – the act is meant to torture an individual while evading criminal charges or prosecution. According to national experts, strangulation and suffocation indicate a 750% increase in the likelihood that domestic violence homicide will occur.

Right now, there is a dangerous loophole in Virginia's definition of strangulation where the specific act of restricting oxygen to an individual's airways is not captured under current law. Thirty-nine states, including federal law, currently address suffocation, or blocking or obstructing the airway of another, in their definition of strangulation. It is time for Virginia to fix this oversight and to provide victims of violence, and those who work with them, with the tools needed to seek safety, justice, and accountability.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to safety and justice in Virginia! If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or our partners at the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance.

Thank you!

_____ (Name, title, agency, contact info)

SAMPLE SCRIPTS

Use these scripts as copy-and-paste templates or to help guide you as you send emails to your representatives.



CLARIFY & ALIGN FIREARMS TRANSFERS FOR PROTECTIVE ORDERS & DV CONVICTIONS

Subject: Vote YES on SB 909/HB 1729 – Disarm Domestic Violence!

Dear Delegate/Senator _____:

I'm _____ (name), _____ (position/title) at _____ (sexual and/or domestic violence agency), a community based program serving _____ (town/city/county/) and working every day to end sexual and domestic violence. I'm emailing you today to urge you to **support SB 909 (Favola) and HB 1729 (Bennett-Parker), bills to clarify and align firearms transfer protocol for protective orders and domestic violence convictions.**

Given the lethal combination of domestic violence and firearms, Virginia law currently prohibits those subject to Final Protective Orders and those convicted of assault and battery against a family or household member from purchasing, possessing, or transporting firearms.

However, current statute allows abusers to certify before the court that firearms in their possession have been transferred without providing any information on the eligibility of the transferee. Many domestic violence victims are telling us that despite the firearms restrictions, their abusers still have access to lethal weapons. One way to address this dangerous loophole is by clarifying who an eligible transferee is and by aligning transfer protocol across code sections. **This technical fix will support more robust implementation of the law at the local level, while also saving lives.** IPV Homicide data from Virginia's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner suggests that proper implementation and enforcement of Virginia's protective order and firearm restriction laws can help us to prevent 32% of the overall homicides that occur in Virginia. **Vote YES on SB 909 (Favola) and HB 1729 (Bennett-Parker)!**

Thank you for your time and your commitment to safety and justice in Virginia! If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or our partners at the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance.

Thank you!

_____ (Name, title, agency, contact info)

SAMPLE SCRIPTS

Use these scripts as copy-and-paste templates or to help guide you as you send emails to your representatives.



PROTECT REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM AND CHOICE FOR SURVIVORS

Subject: Ensure Reproductive Freedom for Sexual and Domestic Violence Survivors

Dear Delegate/Senator _____:

I'm _____ (name), _____ (position/title) at _____ (sexual and/or domestic violence agency), a community based program serving _____ (town/city/county/) and working every day to end sexual and domestic violence. I'm emailing you today to urge you to **oppose bills like SB 1385 (Newman) and HB 2278 (Byron) that would restrict access to and criminalize abortion for survivors of sexual and domestic violence.**

Survivors of sexual and domestic violence can and do become pregnant because of the violence that they experience. According to a recent CDC survey, 14.9% of rape victims became pregnant. What's more is that approximately 1 in 5 women report having experienced forced pregnancy or pregnancy coercion and 1 in 7 women have had their abusers actively interfere with their birth control. Sexual and domestic violence survivors not only have significantly higher rates of unintended pregnancies, but they also experience escalating and far more lethal violence during pregnancy. For this reason, access to contraception and safe and legal abortion, is critical to a survivor's safety, health, and freedom. Allowing survivors to make informed decisions regarding their body and their care is an empowering step toward recovery and healing.

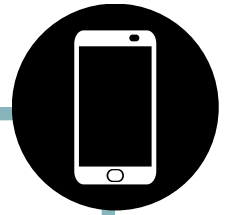
Stand with sexual and domestic violence survivors and advocates in opposing all abortion bans in Virginia. Thank you for your time and your commitment to survivor safety and justice! If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or our partners at the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance.

Thank you!

_____ (Name, title, agency, contact info)

PHONE ADVOCACY

The tips below can help you navigate phone-based advocacy during Legislative Advocacy Day. If you need any support, our staff will be available, simply email policy@vsdvalliance.org



The same webpage which helps you identify your representatives also provides their phone numbers. Once you know which representatives are yours, you can use the links provided on Page 3 to find their contact information.

1) Remember your message prep! For phone calls, it can be helpful to write out some talking points ahead of time to make sure you know what you want to say. Calls to the front desk are often brief, but they do take note of them.

2) Use the following email scripts as a launching pad to get you started on talking points.

3) When you call your representative's office, the phone will be answered by a staff member (staffer). Tell the staffer you are a constituent and you'd like to speak to someone about sexual/ domestic violence issues. This information will help direct you to the most appropriate person.

EMAIL FOOTERS



GETTING IN TOUCH WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVES



Find your representatives.

Find your Virginia Senators on Twitter
and Facebook.



Find your Virginia Delegates on Twitter
and Facebook.

FOLLOW US



@VActionAlliance



@VSDVAA

VIRTUAL ADVOCATE'S TOOLKIT



VIRGINIA SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTION ALLIANCE

VIRGINIA'S LEADING VOICE ON SEXUAL AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE.

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#LAD23