



2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Budget Items 394 #1s (Favola) and 394 #18h (Delaney)

- ✓ Budget items adding \$6M in additional state funding to restore the field's average to an approximate \$28M annually, ensuring that core victim services are available in every community.

TALKING POINTS: For most of the last decade, federal and state funding to local SDVAs totaled \$28M or more. This year federal funding plummeted to an all-time low of \$11.6M, supplemented by \$10M in state funding. Virginia's 54% drop in federal VOCA funding has led to widespread cuts to services. \$6M in additional state funding can restore vital service in communities. See the corresponding two-pager on Virginia's critical need to restore funding for sexual and domestic violence agencies statewide.

SB 38 (Favola) and HB 93 (Bennett-Parker)

- ✓ Bills to enforce the prohibition against firearm possession for those subject to protective orders and those convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence.

TALKING POINTS: Virginia law currently prohibits firearms possession for those subject to final protective orders and those convicted of domestic abuse (assault and battery against a family or household member). But there is a deadly loophole. Under current law, abusers can transfer their firearms to a household member or a third party without providing any information to the courts or law enforcement regarding the eligibility of that transfer. There is no enforcement mechanism to ensure that safe and lawful transfers occur. Given this, many victims tell us that their abusers continue to have access to deadly firearms while judges and law enforcement tell us that "the current law has no teeth." In cases where the threat of escalating violence is particularly high, this loophole leaves victims without safety, undermines the court's authority, and significantly impedes law enforcement's ability to implement the law.

SB 160 (Perry) and HB 19 (McClure)

- ✓ Bills to strengthen protections for survivors of intimate partner violence by closing the dangerous "boyfriend" loophole in firearm restrictions.

TALKING POINTS: Prohibiting firearm possession for individuals convicted of assault and battery against an intimate partner addresses the proven link between firearm access and the heightened risk of lethal domestic violence. This bill introduces the terminology of "intimate partner" in an effort to expand protections (and eliminate risk factors associated with lethality) for all survivors, regardless of their relationship to their abuser.

HB 839 (McClure)

- ✓ This bill directs Virginia's Access to Justice Commission to assign its DV subcommittee to study provisions regarding victims of family abuse, coercive control, and child custody.

TALKING POINTS: Current domestic violence law in Virginia focuses on individual acts of violence but often does not protect those subjected to the wide range of non-physical but nonetheless damaging abusive behaviors. This is a particular issue in the context of custody. As the law currently exists, protective parents often struggle to successfully obtain custody orders that are safe for their children. To protect victims and their children from the wide range of harmful behaviors wielded by abusers, it is critical that our courts understand coercive control and can take its presence into account when making custody decisions.

SB 673 (Mulchi)

- ✓ This bill adds cyberstalking to the stalking definition, outlining the behavior, including family and household members and intimate partners to the list of protected parties.

TALKING POINTS: The current stalking statute in Virginia is limited and does not capture the broad range of behaviors that make up modern day stalking, which often occurs largely by virtual means. This bill seeks to modernize our law to reflect the nature and dynamics of stalking in 2026 and to create more clear pathways to justice for law enforcement, Commonwealth's Attorneys, and victims.

HB1408 (Schmidt)

- ✓ This bill protects victims of family abuse from early lease termination by removing the onerous requirement that a victim inform the landlord of the abuser's return to the property.

TALKING POINTS: In 2024, a whopping 26% of survivors in VA reported becoming homeless or being forced to relocate as a direct result of the violence they experienced. Domestic violence shelters around the state have also consistently reported significantly longer shelter stays while the availability of community resources to support stable and independent housing for survivors continues to shrink. This important bill strengthens protections against eviction for survivors, thereby increasing stability and safety. Removing the onerous requirement that a survivor inform the landlord if the abuser returns to the property to be protected from eviction solely due to violence is a big step for housing justice for survivors. This bill recognizes that the most dangerous time for an individual escaping abuse is often soon after they obtain help, and that it is a matter of safety and autonomy for each survivor who determines when and if to inform the landlord of an abuser's return.

HB 1464 (Shin)

- ✓ Adds strangulation to the list of offenses reimbursable by the Virginia Victim Fund and consolidates DV and SV victim reimbursement under one government agency

TALKING POINTS: Currently, reimbursement for medical expenses incurred as a result of strangulation are sent to and processed by the Supreme Court of Virginia, with onerous requirements to comply with the criminal justice process and with separate protocol, timelines,

and documentation required in order to successfully obtain reimbursement through the agency. Our victim reimbursement and compensation process in Virginia is not perfect, but this bill seeks to consolidate efforts under one agency thereby aligning the process, timelines, and requirements and ensuring easier access to reimbursement for medical expenses. The bill also states that strangulation victims shall not be required to participate in the criminal justice system or cooperate with law-enforcement authorities in order to be provided with medical exams and obtain reimbursement for costs.

HB 148 (Williams)

- ✓ This bill requires the seizure, forfeiture, and destruction of property used in connection with the exploitation and solicitation of children

TALKING POINTS: This bill is a common-sense protective measure that requires courts to order the destruction of all audio and visual equipment, electronic equipment, devices, and other personal property used in connection with the possession, production, distribution, publication, sale, possession with intent to distribute, or making of child pornography, or in connection with the solicitation of a person less than 18 years of age, after prosecution has occurred and after all rights of appeal have been exhausted.

SB 351 (Salim)

- ✓ Codifies Virginia's common law privilege against civil arrests at courthouses, prohibiting arrests inside courthouses unless authorized by a judicial warrant

TALKING POINTS: Virginia's justice system is unable to function as intended because courthouses are no longer safe spaces. Since January 2025, federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has reversed longstanding policies and ramped up warrantless civil arrests in Virginia's courthouses. Masked, plainclothes agents often refuse to identify themselves and conduct arrests inside Virginia's General District Courts. This has eroded trust in the judicial system and has deterred survivors, witnesses, and families from seeking help or appearing in court. When Virginians who rely on the protection of the courts are scared to show up, the entire system breaks down. The General Assembly has a legal and moral responsibility to protect access to justice by restricting warrantless arrests at Virginia's courthouses.

WE OPPOSE

We oppose any legislation that would restrict the safety, support, and autonomy of survivors or limit Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies from providing trauma-informed and holistic services in the community.

We oppose any legislation that would restrict the ability of immigrant survivors, LGBTQ survivors, BIPOC survivors, and pregnant and parenting survivors to seek and receive help, and to determine their own pathways to healing, justice, and wholeness.