



Policy Priorities for 2024 General Assembly with final results

Health Equity

VICPP Leading

Unconscious Bias Training for Healthcare Professionals (SB 35, HB 1130). After a four year effort, the General Assembly (GA) finally adopted a requirement that healthcare professionals who deal with pregnant women be trained in unconscious bias. The PUSH Coalition that VICPP helped organize garnered strong bi-partisan support. Senate Co-Patrons: Senator Locke (D), Senator Head (R). House Co-Patrons: Delegate Hayes (D), Delegate Coyner (R). ***The bill passed with strong bi-partisan support, but the Governor amended the bills in ways that defeated the purpose of the bills. The amendments were defeated by the House and Senate. When the bill was returned to the Governor, he vetoed it.***

Community Health Workers (HB 594). A Community Health Worker (CHW) is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of the community. Virginia is *not* among the 25 states that have created a sustainable pathway to fund CHWs. With the end of COVID-19 emergency funding, most CHWs connected to Local Health Districts will lose their funding in 2024. VICPP advocates money in the budget to support CHWs connected to local health districts. Budget amendment sponsors: Delegate Sickles (D) and Senator Aird (D). In addition, VICPP supports creating a process for Medicaid reimbursement for CHWs. Patrons: Senate Pillion (R) and Delegate Sickles (D). ***The budget included \$6 million for the community health workers in local health departments but not for DMAS to study how Medicaid could cover CHWs.***

VICPP Supporting

Healthcare Coverage for Undocumented Children (SB 231, HB 970). VICPP advocated a bill to cover healthcare for the 13,000 children who would be eligible for Medicaid except for their documentation status. Work led by The Commonwealth Institute. Patrons: Delegate Tran (D) and Senator Hashmi (D). ***This was not funded in the budget.***

Criminal Justice Reform

VICPP Leading

Limiting the use of attack dogs in prisons (HB 159). Most prison systems use dogs to locate contraband. Virginia uses attack dogs to “manage” people who are incarcerated. Between 2017 and 2022, people incarcerated were bitten by dogs 271 times. Some of these bites caused permanent damage. The next highest state had only 15 bites. Patron: Delegate Seibold (D) and Chief Co-Patron: Delegate Webert (R). ***Passed the House and Senate with strong bi-partisan support. Signed into law by the Governor.***

No cost communication (SB 378, HB 801). VICPP supported bills to provide no-cost communication (phones, videocalls and emails) between families and their incarcerated loved ones. VICPP helped lead a coalition effort on this work with other key organizations like the Legal Aid Justice Center, the ACLU, Sistas for Justice Reform, SALT, and the Humanization Project. Patrons: Senator Boysko (D) and Delegate Rasoul (D). ***A severely watered down version of the bill passed and was signed by the Governor.***

VICPP Supporting

Oversight (SB 456, HB 555). There was money in the 2023 budget to set up an oversight office. In 2024, the office needed to be codified. The ACLU led the work. Patrons: Senator Marsden (D) and Delegate Hope (D). ***This bill passed with strong bi-partisan support and was signed into law by the Governor. Money was included in the budget.***

Second Look (SB 427, HB 834). This bill provided people who are incarcerated with long prison sentences an opportunity to get a second look at their sentence if they've served at least ten years and been active in education and reform opportunities. The ACLU led the work. Patrons: Senator Deeds (D) and Delegate Cousins (D). **The Senate bill was continued to 2025. The House bill was killed.**

Limiting solitary confinement (SB 719, HB 1244). This bill limits solitary or isolated confinement to less than 15 days. VICPP supported the work of the ACLU on this initiative. Patrons: Senator Bagby (D) and Delegate Cole (D). **The bills passed on party-line vote, and were vetoed by the Governor.**

Automatic restoration of voting rights (SJ 2, HJ 2). VICPP supported bills to automatically restore voting rights. Patrons: Senator Locke (D) and Delegate Bennett-Parker (D). **Bills were held over till 2025.**

Affordable Housing

VICPP Leading

Housing and Faith in the Commonwealth (SB 233, HB 1124). VICPP led an effort to get Virginia to allow congregations to build affordable housing without special zoning changes. VICPP's bill was modeled after one that recently passed in California called "Yes, in God's Backyard." Patrons: Senator Hashmi (D) and Delegate Carr (D). **The bill was assigned to the Virginia Housing Commission for work.**

VICPP Supporting

Money. VICPP supports more money for building affordable housing, rental assistance, and eviction prevention. This work is led by the Virginia Housing Alliance and the Virginia Poverty Law Center. **The final budget included extra money for the VA Housing Trust Fund, manufactured home parks, down-payment assistance, and the eviction reduction program.**

Tenant protections. VICPP supports the Virginia Poverty Law Center's and Housing Opportunity Made Equal's proposals for protecting tenants against evictions. **There were many bills that passed and were sent to the Governor. He signed a few, amended a few, and vetoed a few. The ones that had modest amendments were accepted. Those with substantial amendments were rejected.**

Working Family Support

VICPP Leading

Paid Sick Days (SB 507, HB 348). VICPP has led a coalition effort to create a Paid Sick Day standard for all workers. Patrons: Senator Surovell (D) and Delegate Ward (D). **The bills were carried over to 2025.**

Child Labor Protections (HB 100). VICPP sought to increase the penalties for child labor violations. The penalties had not been updated in 30 years. Patron: Delegate Siebold (D). **The bill passed with strong bi-partisan support and was signed into law by the Governor.**

VICPP Supporting

Minimum wage (SB 1, HB 1). The minimum wage bill that passed in 2020 must be reenacted before July 2024 for the next two increases can go into effect and raise the minimum wage up to \$15 per hour Patrons: Senator Lucas (D) and Delegate Ward (D). **The bills passed both chambers on party-line votes. The Governor vetoed the bills.**

Childcare subsidies. VICPP is part of a childcare coalition (Virginia Promise Partnership) advocating more subsidies for childcare. Much more is needed for working families. The Governor proposed money in his budget. The Partnership advocated more in the budget. **The final budget consolidated childcare and early education funding and allocated \$1.1 billion for early care and education services, including historic state general fund investments of \$366 million in FY25 and \$461 million in FY26.**

Wage Theft (HB 325). VICPP is part of a group of labor attorneys, labor groups and worker advocates that want to strengthen remedies on minimum wage and overtime laws to make the remedies the same as the wage payment law. Patron: Delegate Thomas (D). **The bill was continued till 2025.**

Remove farmworker exemption (HB 157). Currently farmworkers are exempted from the state minimum wage, a clear legacy from slavery. The Legal Aid Justice Center is the lead on this work. Patron: Delegate McClure (D). **The bill passed both chambers. The Governor vetoed the bill.**

Labor Trafficking (HB 633). Virginia's trafficking code covers sex trafficking. This bill adds labor trafficking to the code to better protect workers. Patron: Delegate Cherry (R) and Chief Co-Patron: Delegate Delaney (D). ***The bill passed with strong bi-partisan support and was signed into law by the Governor.***

Other

Assault weapon ban (SB 2, HB 2). VICPP supports commonsense gun reform, including a ban on assault weapons. Patrons: Senator Deeds (D) and Delegate Helmer (D). ***Passed on party-line votes. Vetoed by the Governor.***

Tax reform. VICPP has been a part of tax coalition led by The Commonwealth Institute. The coalition supports making Virginia's taxes more progressive. VICPP supported efforts to decrease taxes for low-income families and increase taxes on those most able to pay. ***No tax changes were made in the final budget, but the Joint Committee on Fair Taxation is charged with considering various tax reform options.***