



**Virginia Funeral Directors Association
2021 Session Weekly Report**

**Week Ending
January 8, 2021**

THE 2021 REGULAR SESSION

Convenes January 13th, 2021 – The start date and the duration of the General Assembly session is outlined in Virginia’s Constitution. [Article IV Legislature, Section 6 – Legislative Sessions](#) states: “*The General Assembly shall meet once each year on the second Wednesday in January. Except as herein provided for reconvened sessions, no regular session of the General Assembly convened in an even-numbered year shall continue longer than sixty days; no regular session of the General Assembly convened in an odd-numbered year shall continue longer than thirty days; but with the concurrence of two-thirds of the members elected to each house, any regular session may be extended for a period not exceeding thirty days. Neither house shall, without the consent of the other, adjourn to another place, nor for more than three days.*”

While a 46-day session in odd-numbered years has become the norm for some time, leadership in the House and Senate minority party issued a statement at the conclusion of the 84-day Special Session that concluded on November 9th, they would not agree to language in the Session Schedule Resolution that is introduced on the first day of session each year. The 2021 General Assembly will therefore commence on January 13th, 2021 and is scheduled to end on February 11, 2021.

Logistics of the 2021 Legislative Session

Meeting Locations - The Senate’s 40 members will hold sessions and committee meetings in the Virginia Science Museum as they did during the 2020 Special Session due to COVID. The 100 House members will meet virtually with only the Speaker of the House, the House Clerk and key operations staff in the House Chambers. In a recent court case suing to require the Pocahontas Building to be open for meetings during the legislative session, the plaintiffs did not prevail, and the State Capitol and Pocahontas Building remain temporarily closed for public safety. The Clerks of the Senate and House are exploring how to arrange for legislators to meet with their constituents and other groups. Expect limits to the number of people who will be allowed to meet wherever such arrangements may be made.

There will be access for the press at the Science Museum and in the House Gallery. The Senate will permit one member and one staffer per legislative office in the Pocahontas Building. The House is discouraging physical attendance of Members and staff. Senate members and some members of the House had expressed a willingness to meet in a socially distanced environment in the Downtown Richmond area; however, all should plan for their primary means of communication to be phone, email or text.

In preparation for the upcoming 2021 General Assembly Session, the Virginia Senate Republican Caucus has acquired dedicated meeting space in close proximity to the Science Museum of Virginia. Republican Senators and their staff will be able to schedule in-person meetings with constituents and government relations representatives. The input provided by these groups during the legislative session are invaluable.

By contacting the respective Senator’s office, meetings may be scheduled for Monday through Friday beginning January 13. Due to COVID-19 social distancing guidelines, space is very limited.

Uses of Space

- One-on-One Legislative Aide or Member meetings with constituents or government relations representatives

Safety Protocols

- Masks will be required for all persons entering the building
- All persons entering the building will be subject to a temperature check
- Tables will be sanitized after every meeting
- Common areas will be sanitized every 60 minutes
- Hand sanitizer will be provided on every table
- Social distancing mandates from federal, state, and local officials will be followed
- To ensure the safety of our Senators, their staff, and our guests, it is imperative that VSRC be notified immediately of any person that has recently tested positive for or been exposed to COVID-19, if that person plans to attend a meeting or has recently attended a meeting at this venue

Parking

- The Science Museum of VA parking lot is a two-block walk from the venue
- Additionally, there are 5 spaces directly in front of the building and a variety of 'on-street' parking options on adjacent streets

Scheduling

- Considering the varying schedules of our Senators during the legislative session, anyone wishing to request a meeting with a Senator or the Legislative Aide will need to contact the respective office directly
- The purpose of this space is for legislative meetings with constituents, lobbyists, or interest groups, not to coordinate meetings for other purposes
- The respective Legislative Aide will be responsible for informing their guests of the meeting's confirmation as well as ensuring the required safety guidelines are adhered to.
- Address and location of the meeting space will be made available upon meeting confirmation.

Subcommittee and Committee Meetings - Subcommittee and committee meetings will be live streamed. Members of the public will be able to submit written comments in advance of bills coming before committee, or sign-up in advance to speak at an online committee hearing. Some House subcommittees will not convene meetings and bills will be sent directly to full committee. Specifically, Chairman of House Health Welfare and Institutions (HWI) Committee has indicated that he will not hold subcommittee meetings and other Chairs may follow suit.

There have been announcements of some modifications made to the virtual committee process that may improve the interaction and ability for expert testimony to be given during committee. We have heard that some enhancements on the House side will be made that will permit an expert witness (either a lobbyist or an industry/local government expert) to be able to speak to a bill and provide testimony to support the bill patrons. Each hearing schedule will include a live streamed link and a public comment link. An example of the [House of Delegates online Request to Speak Form is here](#). We have heard that committee testimony in the House may be limited and those who are collaborating on an issue should determine who will speak for a broader group. Sadly, the fluidity of the process creates a conundrum for many entities that may want to testify for or against a bill, particularly if the entity has signed up and designated support or opposition and a bill is amended during the committee process leaving no way for that entity to change its position following any changes to the legislation being discussed.

Bill Limits: In addition to the shortened session, there will also be fewer bills filed in the 2021 session. A number of policy priorities in criminal justice reform, police reform, and COVID related issues were passed in the 2020 Special Session so the House and the Senate have set limits on the number of

bills each legislator will be permitted to introduce. The House has operated with a 15-bill limit during short sessions for several years now with no limits in the Senate until this year. The House has set a limit of 7 bills per member and Senate has set a 12-bill limit per member.

Key Dates:

January 8 th	Members must submit all redrafts or corrections of pre-filed bills.
January 8 th	Deadline for House of Delegates Budget Amendments
January 12 th	All final pre-filed bills will be available to members by Noon
January 13 th	All pre-filed bills must be introduced by 10:00 am
January 13 th	House and Senate Floor Session Convenes at Noon
January 15 th	Deadline for Senate Budget Amendments
January 26 th	Cross-over (half-way point where all bills originating in one body must have an affirmative floor vote in order to advance to the other body).
February 11 th	Sine Die - Last Day of Session (or is it?)

Redistricting

Virginians will elect a Governor, Attorney General, Lt. Governor, members of the House of Delegates, as well as many local constitutional officers in 2021. Prior to the election, the ten-year Census data update will be released in order for new district boundaries to be drawn. For the first time, this process will be conducted by a newly created Virginia Redistricting Commission. Public hearings across the Commonwealth will commence in mid-February. Once the Commission receives the Census data, they will have 45 days to deliver a map plan to the General Assembly for consideration. The members of the General Assembly will have 15 days to vote on the plan. If the General Assembly fails to adopt a plan submitted by the Commission, the districts will be established by the Supreme Court of Virginia. Should any part of the plan be deemed unlawful or unconstitutional, the Commission will be required to reconvene to propose a new plan to remedy the issue. It is highly probable that there will be a special redistricting session in 2021. The eight legislative members have been named to the redistricting commission. Over 1,200 citizen applicants applied for eight available appointments and earlier this week, retired judges selected 8 citizens members from a pool of 62 finalists. Judges must select the 8 citizen nominees by January 15th, 2021.

Budget

The Governor came before the Joint Meeting of the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee to present his budget for the second year of the biennium on December 16th. The Governor's introduced budget re-allocates several previously unallocated funds from the 2020 Session budget. As the additional Federal stimulus package passed Congress after the date of the Governor's introduced budget, as we expected, House Appropriations staff reviewed some of the positive adjustment to budget projections as a result of the additional stimulus package. We may see some adjustments in priorities due to the additional Federal stimulus funds.

To access the budget directly, click [here](#).

The House Appropriations Budget Briefing from January 8th Budge Briefing, can be downloaded [here](#).

MEDIA CLIPS:

[VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY: Chafin's seat will go unfilled for upcoming session](#)

There will be an empty chair when the Virginia Senate convenes for the 2021 session because there isn't time to determine a replacement for Sen. Ben Chafin, who died Friday

heraldcourier.com

[EDITORIAL: JLARC report slams special ed failures](#)

A REPORT released last month by the Joint Legislative and Audit Commission was highly critical of how many school divisions in Virginia are failing to comply with federal special education

fredericksburg.com

[Group of Virginia prosecutors call on General Assembly to make justice reforms](#)

Twelve Virginia commonwealth's attorneys signed a letter calling on the General Assembly to make criminal justice reforms ...

WTOP News

[Virginia Crime Commission endorses getting rid of all mandatory minimum sentences](#)

The recommendation to Virginia's legislature would remove laws passed in the "tough on crime" era of the 1980s and '90s. The panel found mandatory minimums disproportionately affect Black people and –

Roanoke Times

[Bill to legalize marijuana in Virginia reintroduced by Hampton Roads Del. Steve Heretick](#)

After years of attempts, could 2021 be the year local Del. Steve Heretick's marijuana legalization bill passes ...

WAVY

[Va. has released the outlines for who's next in line for COVID-19 vaccines.](#) Here's what they are

The Virginia Department of Health released a more detailed outline on Wednesday of who will be eligible for vaccinations in the next two phases of the state's efforts. The first

richmond.com

[Retired judges pick eight citizen members for Virginia redistricting commission](#)

A panel of retired judges on Wednesday picked the eight Virginia citizens who will serve on the state's new redistricting commission, finalizing the group that will handle the important task of red...

www.virginiamercury.com

[Virginia senators propose legislation to change voter registration, vote counting process](#)

Virginia's General Assembly will reconvene next week for the beginning of a new session, and there are several bills on the table that aim to change voting and elections in the state. Republican S...

wset.com

[Members of Black clergy call for end to death penalty in Virginia](#)

A group of African American pastors from across Virginia on Thursday called for abolition of the death penalty in the upcoming ...
Richmond

2021 Session Introduced Bills:

As of this update, there are no bills introduced directly relating to the industry. Final drafting activity is taking place on the Virginia Funeral Directors Association's legislative agenda bills. We will forward a notice once these bills have been introduced.