



## 2019 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY GUIDE

The Virginia General Assembly is back for the 2019 legislative session! The Action Alliance invites you to join us January 30<sup>th</sup> to advocate for policies that empower survivors and prevents violence statewide. But first, the nuts and bolts of what legislative advocacy is, and where you fit into the equation.

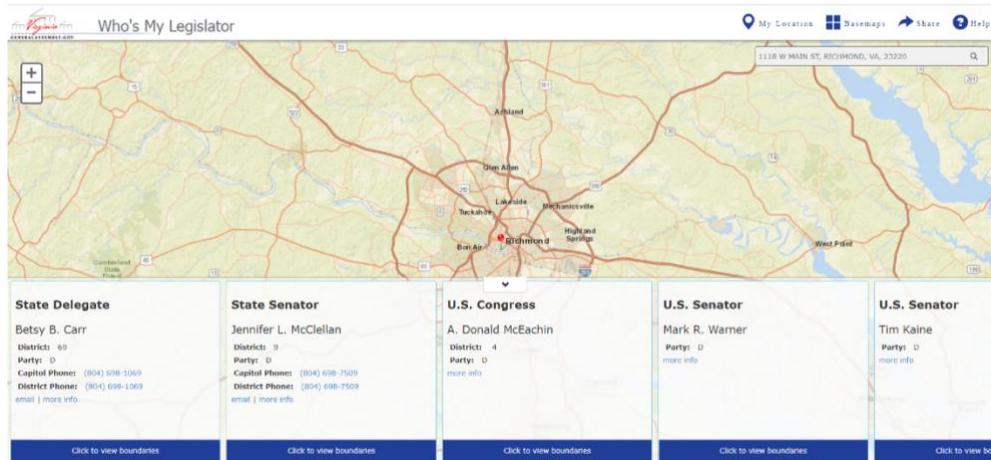
Enclosed you will find....

1. [Preparation](#): find out who your representatives are and what you're going to say.
2. [Making Contact](#): Explore the different ways you can engage with your representatives.
3. [Follow Up & What's Next?](#): Let us know how your visit went and let your representatives know you're holding them accountable & what you can do when you aren't attending Legislative Advocacy Day!
4. [Virginia's Legislature](#): How it works, how a [bill](#) becomes law, terms to know, and other civics class highlights.
5. [Glossary of Terms](#): Brush up on the most commonly used terms related to legislative advocacy.

# PREPARATION

## First things first – who are your legislators?

Members of the GA want to hear from their constituents – the people they represent within their respective districts. Every Virginian has two representatives in the General Assembly: a State Senator and a Delegate. You can use [this link](#) to find out who they are if you aren't sure.



## Craft Your Message.

When calling, emailing, or writing a letter, it's important to have a clear message: why are you contacting your representatives? We can make contact for a variety of reasons, but the main objective for our issues is to express desire for he or she to support or oppose a bill or set of bills introduced during the current session.

Consult the Action Alliance Legislative Priorities resources for information on this if you don't already know. offices keep records of how many phone calls, letters, and emails they receive concerning various issues. So it's important to make sure your support or opposition on a particular issue is heard.

This is the time where you can personalize an issue. If you work with survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence or with young people to prevent violence, why would you want your representative to support or oppose a bill? How does this help to shape a world that we want, a world without violence?

## Stay on Message.

- ❖ Whatever way you engage your representatives, keep it short and stay on message. If you have 30-60 seconds to speak on the phone, what is the **most important thing** you want them to know? If you are calling regarding a specific bill, **specify** the bill and **why** you support or oppose the legislation. If you have a personal story it can be challenging to do them justice **and** keep it short.

- ❖ Remember that staff are very busy during legislative sessions and may not be able to read a five-page email or speak on the phone at length. If you're having trouble figuring out which details to focus on, try practicing with a friend. Based on your experience with sexual assault and domestic violence, think about what the most important message is relative to the bills up for consideration. How would your life, your family, or your clients' lives be impacted if the legislation you are advocating for is put in place?
- ❖ **Most importantly – *how can your representative help?*** These are tough issues and it's easy to feel overwhelmed by them. There is hope, though – the General Assembly can pass legislation to help survivors and prevent violence. And your legislators really value your input, as community-based advocates, as change-makers, as survivors, and as constituents in this legislative process. **It's your superpower.**

## MAKING CONTACT

### By Phone:

The same webpage mentioned above (Who's My Legislator) which helps [you identify your representatives](#) also provides phone numbers. Once you know who your representatives and you are ready to call, here are some pro tips:

- ✓ Remember your message prep! For phone calls, it can be helpful to write out some bullet-point notes ahead of time to make sure you know what you want to say. Remember that calls to the front desk are often brief, 2-10 minutes at the most, but legislative offices do take note of them.
- ✓ When you call your representative's office, the phone will be answered by a staff member (staffer).
  1. Tell the staffer that you are a constituent, or a local practitioner, and you'd like to speak to a legislative aide on sexual and intimate partner violence issues.
  2. When you get an aide or office member on the phone, introduce yourself "Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a constituent of Delegate/ Senator \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, Virginia."). "I'm calling to voice my support for House/Senate bill \_\_\_\_\_ and to encourage Delegate \_\_\_\_\_ to join me in supporting this issue and ensuring that all Virginians have access to safe and just communities and that we can prevent violence before it happens".

Follow your script. Talk clearly and at a measured pace and remember that the Legislative Aide that you're speaking with may not only support your issue but may encourage your representative to take note and commit to action on the bill that you're speaking to.

3. Make sure your ask is clear and direct ("I'm asking for Delegate \_\_\_\_\_ to support House/Senate bill \_\_\_\_\_."). Your voice will be heard, but it doesn't hurt to repeat the ask to ensure that it's fully captured in office/message notes.
4. Be prepared to entertain any comments or questions that the Legislative Aide may have – you don't need to know any answers, but what you can certainly do is

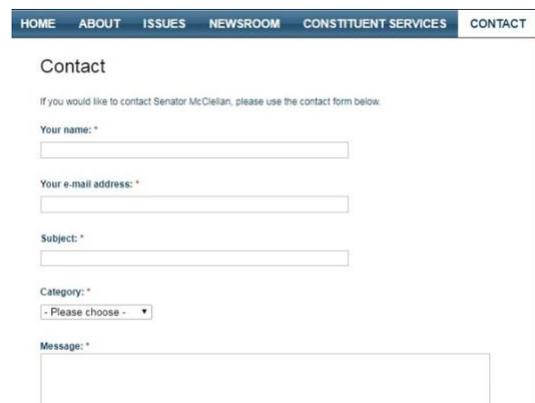
direct them to Jonathan Yglesias, Public Policy Director at the Action Alliance, and let them know that he can serve as a legislative resource to their office on these issues.

## BY LETTER:

That's right, good-old-fashioned letters through the mail. In the age of email and instant communication, writing real letters may feel antiquated, but they can have much more impact on an office and the attention your message receives. There are hundreds of bills introduced each session, and many more individuals, businesses, and nonprofits contacting each member asking them to give attention to various issues. This means that email inboxes fill up quickly. A real letter on paper takes up physical space and is harder to slip by the wayside. It's also more personal – emails are quick, letters take more effort. And, if they receive multiple letters on the same issue, it can have a real impact!

Many representatives have contact forms on their websites for constituents to leave feedback or comment on issues. Offices consistently tell us they pay attention to these messages, even if they don't have the capacity to respond to every message they receive.

The example here is from Senator Jennifer McClellan's website.



The screenshot shows a website navigation bar with links for HOME, ABOUT, ISSUES, NEWSROOM, CONSTITUENT SERVICES, and CONTACT. Below the navigation bar is a "Contact" section. It begins with the text "If you would like to contact Senator McClellan, please use the contact form below:". The form contains the following fields: "Your name: \*" with a text input box; "Your e-mail address: \*" with a text input box; "Subject: \*" with a text input box; "Category: \*" with a dropdown menu showing "- Please choose -"; and "Message: \*" with a large text area.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Most representatives use social media in some capacity, and it's a great way to further engage with them. This is especially true for a concentrated effort from supporters of an issue. Show representatives how much Virginians care about survivors and to tell them there are ways they can help!

Here's a few places to start:



- [House Democrats](#)
- [House Republicans](#)
- [Senate Democrats](#)
- [Senate Republicans](#)

*\*Note: not every representative uses Twitter or Facebook, and some use neither.*

The Action Alliance [Twitter account](#) also maintains lists of members of the General Assembly for the [House](#) and [Senate](#).

## IN-PERSON VISITS WITH LEGISLATORS

### POCOHANTAS BUILDING: 9TH AND MAIN STREET IN RICHMOND

If you have not already done so, please schedule meetings with your legislators as soon as possible. The best time to schedule meetings is usually between 9:00 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. However, you may have a legislator that offers a meeting later in the day.

## HELPFUL TIPS FOR MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS

- 1) Check in with the member's front desk staff. If you have business cards, have one ready to hand to staff when you arrive at your legislator's office. This helps them "announce you" and tell the Legislator/Staff who has arrived for a visit.
- 2) Don't be disappointed if you don't get to meet directly with your legislator. The legislative assistants/aides (LA's) will take notes and pass your message on to their boss. LA's are often experts in certain policy issues (education, healthcare, etc.) and are sometimes the *best* person to speak to, since their boss depends on them to navigate the hundreds of bills introduced each session.
- 3) Decide in advance on your most important message or priority and make sure you lead with that— schedules during this time are very tight!
- 4) Thank the legislator and staff for meeting with you.
- 5) Introduce yourself and where you live and/or work. It is important for the legislator to know that you live/vote in their district OR serve people in their district. Many offices only want to speak with constituents. However, if you represent an agency which serves their constituents, that is a great way to demonstrate why these issues matter to their district.
- 6) If you are with an agency, provide a brief description of your program and services.
- 7) A great way to start discussions on issues is to simply ask, "How familiar are you with sexual and domestic violence issues?" This can help guide what you share and establish rapport – they may already champion these issues, or they may not know much and look to you for education.
- 8) Tell your personal story – why are sexual and domestic violence issues are important to you?
- 9) Be prepared for tough questions and try not to take them personally. By asking those tough questions, legislators are often seeking information that will help them in the process. As advocates, we are bringing issues to their attention and possibly educating them, so tough questions may also be an opportunity to educate.
- 10) It is ok if you don't know the answer to their questions. Thank them for the question and tell them you will get the information they asked for and get back to them. Action Alliance staff will help you follow up.
- 11) Thank them again for their time—encourage them to contact you if they have questions about any sexual and domestic violence issues that come up during session and let them know that the Action Alliance can be a legislative resource to their office.

## **IN-PERSON VISITS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **WHERE AND WHEN DO I GET LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY MATERIALS (FACT SHEETS, TALKING POINTS, POLICY PRIORITIES LIST, ETC)?**

Links to access/download materials will be on the [Action Alliance's Policy website page](#) where we will be posting Action Alliance priorities and relevant information and fact sheets.

### **WHEN SHOULD I START SCHEDULING MY VISITS?**

The General Assembly begins the second Wednesday in January. We recommend you start calling to schedule your visits as soon as you are able! It is never too early to get on your legislators' calendar.

Those who have scheduled meetings with legislators and their staff will have the opportunity to hold a 10-15 minute meeting to share your views on pending sexual and domestic violence legislation. Because the meetings are brief, it can be helpful to practice what you want to say and how to say it both concisely and powerfully.

### **WHAT IF I AM UNABLE TO GET A SCHEDULED APPOINTMENT?**

If you cannot schedule a meeting, you are encouraged to go by your Delegate and Senator's offices and speak briefly with their staff/legislative assistant. Everyone is encouraged to leave behind information on your local agency and the Action Alliance Policy Priority Summary.

### **WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING ON MY VISITS?**

You should bring information and materials about your community, your programs' services and stories that demonstrate the impact of your services.

### **WHAT SHOULD I WEAR AND EXPECT WHEN VISITING THE CAPITOL?**

Dress is business attire. However, you will need to walk several blocks from public parking to the General Assembly Building so wear comfortable shoes.

Please bring your ID and be prepared to pass through a security screening and have your personal items screened by an x-ray machine prior to entry to the building. Please note that all packages and bags are subject to physical search.

## FOLLOWING UP & WHAT'S NEXT?

Following up with your legislators is a great way to reinforce your initial message and to stay on their radar – it also gets counted as another registered contact from a concerned constituent or a community advocate on this issue!

Your method of follow up may depend on your initial method of contact. If you called your legislator and spoke with a legislative aide or an office rep, it may be a good idea to send a follow up email to their office (you can find their [email addresses here](#)) and just mention who you spoke with, on what date, and about what topic/bill(s). Thank them for the conversation and ask that they continue to support survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence by acting on the topic and/or bill(s) that you discussed. You might also consider giving them a call back a few days later to thank them for the discussion and ask if the Delegate or Senator has agreed to support the bill/issue that you discussed.

Of course, you can always reach your representative in a public forum through Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. A message via social media may be a particularly impactful way to register your thanks or to reinforce their needed support on a bill or issue.

Here's a few ideas on what you can do on the other 364 days you aren't advocating with us!

1. If you work for an agency, or have friends and family who know survivors, care about these issues, etc., consider **hosting a letter writing party**. It can be a great way to make sure everyone takes the time to sit down and spend a few minutes crafting a thoughtful letter, and then you can make sure they all get mailed at once. Plus, it's a great excuse to get together, share food and drinks, and make advocacy into a community endeavor – especially for folks who might not otherwise have the time or interest in a formal advocacy day.
2. **You can propose your own bill**. Ask your representative to introduce your idea to the Division of Legislative Services (DLS) on your behalf. This type of introduction is a “bill-by-request,” and should be presented in writing. A short description and some points will suffice. You can also send your idea to the Division of Legislative Services first, and they will turn your idea into a bill. But remember! You will still need a General Assembly member to introduce your bill. Contact the DLS [here](#).
3. **The best time to have your voice heard is during subcommittee or committee hearings**. [Committee](#) hearings are packed with media, members, and the press. If you can, make time to make statements in support or opposition of the bill you're tracking during the committee hearing!
4. **Stay persistent**. Don't forget, every General Assembly member tracks who and how many contacts they get on any given bill. That means every call, letter, visit, e-mail, and even tweet is tallied, and they are paying attention; everything you do moves the needle!

5. **Attend Townhall meetings or District office hours.** Members often hold meetings for the public to reach them in person, in their district. Keep an eye on your members' social media or sign up for their district newsletters to know when they will be in town.
  
6. Lastly, **VOTE!** To be Eligible to Register to Vote in Virginia a Person must:
  - Be a resident of Virginia (a person who has come to Virginia for temporary purposes and intends to return to another state is not considered a resident for voting purposes).
  - Be a U. S. Citizen.
  - Be 18 years old (any person who is 17 years old and will be eighteen years of age at the next general election shall be permitted to register in advance and also vote in any intervening primary or special election).
  - Not be registered and plan to vote in another state.
  - Not currently declared mentally incompetent by a court of law.
  - If convicted of a felony, your right to vote must have been restored.



# THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## How Bills Become Laws

The process of introducing legislation to be considered by the General Assembly and ultimately enacted into law is one of the most important responsibilities of a Senator or a Delegate. [The Constitution of Virginia](#), the [Rules of the Senate](#), and the Rules of the [Virginia House of Delegates](#) outline the process bills must go through become law. The following outline depicts the various steps required for an idea to be considered and passed by the General Assembly, and approved by the Governor:

## CREATION OF A BILL

- ✓ Bills may originate in either the Senate or the House of Delegates.
- ✓ A Senator or Delegate, as requested by constituents, prepares to introduce legislation. (For example: Permitting the governing bodies of localities to prohibit the sale and use of certain fireworks)
- ✓ The Senator or Delegate then explains exactly the proposal he/she has in mind to a staff attorney in the Division of Legislative Services. A staff attorney checks existing law and the constitutionality of the proposed legislation.
- ✓ The bill is then drafted by the Division of Legislative Services. Draft copies of the bill are made and delivered to the Senator or Delegate.
- ✓ The member signs his/her name on the bill and introduces it by laying the original and duplicate copies on the desk of the Clerk (of the Senate or of the House of Delegates).
- ✓ The bill is ordered printed and referred by the Senate Clerk or the House Speaker to the appropriate Standing Committee. (The Senate has 11 Standing Committees and the House of Delegates has 14 Standing Committees.)
- ✓ The members of the Committee -in public session- study, discuss, and vote on the bill.
- ✓ The Committee then [reports](#) ("approves") the bill, with or without [amendments](#), to the originating body (Senate or House of Delegates).

## BILL READINGS, DEBATES, AND AMENDMENTS

- ✓ The Constitution, within Article IV, Section 11, requires that every bill have three readings on three calendar days.
- ✓ First Reading: The bill title is printed in the Calendar (the daily printed agenda of business) or is read by the Clerk.
- ✓ Second Reading: The next day the bill title appears in its respective Calendar. Bills are considered in the order in which they appear in the Calendar. The Clerk of the Senate/House of Delegates reads the title of the bill.
- ✓ A bill on second reading is amendable. Any amendments are taken up and agreed to or rejected. By voice vote, the bill is [engrossed](#) and passed to its third reading.
- ✓ A bill that has passed the second reading with or without amendments is engrossed
- ✓ If amendments are adopted, the bill is rewritten with amendments included and reprinted in its engrossed form for passage.
- ✓ Third Reading: The next day, the engrossed bill title appears in the calendar on third reading. The bill is read by title by the Clerk. By a recorded vote, the bill is passed.
- ✓ Communication: When passed, the bill is sent to the other house for its consideration.

- ✓ In the other body's chamber: The bill goes through substantially the same procedure as it did in the originating body.
- ✓ The bill is read by title a first time, then the bill is referred to a Standing Committee, considered and reported by the Standing Committee, read a second time and a third time before passage by a constitutional majority.
- ✓ If there are differences between the Senate and House versions of the bill, a Committee of Conference is created to resolve them.

## SIGNING A BILL INTO LAW

- ✓ After the bill has been passed by both houses of the General Assembly, it is printed as an [enrolled](#) bill, and examined and signed by the presiding officer of each house.
- ✓ The bill is sent to the Governor for approval, where the Governor may 1) sign the bill into law; 2) amend the bill and return it to the General Assembly for approval; 3) veto the bill and return it to the General Assembly, where the House of Delegates and the Senate may override the veto by a two-thirds vote of both houses; or, 4) take no action and the bill becomes law without the Governor's signature.
- ✓ After being signed by the Governor, the bill is sent to the Clerk of the House of Delegates (Keeper of the Rolls of the Commonwealth) and is assigned a Chapter number. All Chapters of a Session are compiled and bound as the Acts of Assembly.

## NEW LAWS

- ✓ Bills enacted at a Regular Session (or the Reconvened Session which follows) are effective the 1st day of July following [adjournment](#) of the Regular Session, unless another date is specified.
- ✓ Bills enacted at a Special Session (or Reconvened Session) are effective the 1st day of the fourth month following the adjournment of the Special Session, unless another date is specified.
- ✓ The General Appropriations Act is usually effective July 1st and Emergency Acts become effective when signed by the Governor.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

\*A full list of Legislative Terms is available on the [General Assembly website](#).

1. **Adjournment**- Termination of a Session for that day, with the hour and day of the next meeting being set prior to adjournment.
2. **Adjournment Sine Die**- The final adjournment of a legislative Session. The Latin translation is "without a day, an indefinite period."
3. **Amendment**- A change made to legislation in committee or on the chamber floor that adds to, revises, or deletes language from the legislation.
4. **Bill**- A proposal to amend, repeal, or add sections to the Code of Virginia or the Acts of Assembly.

5. **Bill Status (Legislative Information System)**- The database system for tracking legislation and the daily activities of the Senate and the House of Delegates.
6. **Caucus**- An informal meeting of a group of members, most often called on the basis of party affiliation or regional representation.
7. **Committee**- A group of legislators from the Senate or the House of Delegates organized for the purpose of considering and deciding on the disposition of legislation.
8. **Committee Actions**
  - **Carry Over (Continue)** – Action which removes the measure from consideration during an even-numbered year Session and provides for its reconsideration at the next regular Session of the General Assembly. No bill may be carried over in an odd-numbered year Session. A carry-over bill retains its assigned bill number in the odd-numbered year Session.
  - **Fail to Report (Defeat)** – The committee rejects a motion to report a bill to the full house.
  - **Incorporate** – The committee incorporates one or more bills into another bill.
  - **No Action Taken** – No motion is made on the bill and it dies at the time of the committee deadline.
  - **Pass By Indefinitely (PBI)** – This action allows the committee to reconsider legislation at a later meeting. If the committee takes no further action, the bill is “dead.”
  - **Report** – The majority of the committee approves the bill and it is reported to the floor. The bill may be reported three ways: without amendment(s), with amendment(s), or with an amendment in the nature of a substitute. A bill may also be reported and referred to another committee.
  - **Strike** – The bill is removed from the docket. This action frequently occurs at the request of the patron.
9. **Engrossed**- A stage in the legislative process when a bill passes the second reading in the house of origin. If amended, the engrossed version of the legislation is printed incorporating all amendments that are agreed to. If not amended, the introduced version of the legislation becomes the engrossed bill, and if an amendment in the nature of a substitute is agreed to, the substitute becomes the engrossed bill.
10. **Enrolled**- Legislation which has passed both the Senate and the House of Delegates. It has been signed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House and it has been sent to the Governor, but not yet signed. If signed by the Governor, the bill becomes a law and a Chapter of the Acts of Assembly.
11. **Referral**- The assignment of legislation to a committee. In the House of Delegates, referral is initially done by the Speaker of the House. In the Senate it is done by the Clerk of the Senate.
12. **Rereferral**- In the House of Delegates, this is the reassignment of legislation to the last committee that considered it. Rereferral is initiated by a member from the floor and a vote is taken. In the Senate rereferral is the reassignment of legislation to another committee. It is done by the committee that is considering it or by a member from the floor.
13. **Vote, En Bloc**- The disposition of several items, such as a series of bills or amendments, by taking one vote.
14. **Vote, Recorded**- A roll call vote in which each member electronically votes yea, nay, or abstain. The vote is recorded in the Journal of each legislative body.

**Vote, Voice-** Oral expression of the members when a question is submitted for their determination. Response is given by “yeas” and “nays,” and the presiding officer states his/her decision as to which side prevails.



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence  
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