



Dear {{FirstName or 'Friend'}},

Happy First Week of Session!



We kicked off the 2026 Legislative Session by hitting the ground running and *passing* our four Constitutional Amendments.

My Democratic colleagues and I in the General Assembly are unified in our fight for protecting the fundamental right to reproductive care, restoring voting rights, enshrining marriage equality, and safeguarding fairness and democracy amongst the ongoing gerrymandering

efforts of Donald Trump and MAGA-controlled states. The voters will now have the opportunity to let their voice be heard when these amendments reach the ballot.

I am reminded everyday what an honor it is to serve our wonderful district, and I am looking forward to the next 6 weeks getting to carry legislation that benefits all Virginians.

As always, it is a please to serve you in the 36th District,

Cheers,



Stella Pekarsky

Senator, District 36



Legislative Update

I'm very excited to share that I am carrying 25 pieces of legislation this Session. For the full bill pdf text, check out the LIS website [here!](#)

Here is a brief summary of the bills I am carrying that are available to view online:

SB 107: Jury Service; Exemptions Upon Request

→ This bill will allow individuals to be exempt from jury service if they are the caretaker or have legal custody of

a child 18 years or younger who has a serious health condition.

SB 108: No Cell Phones in Schools

→ **This bill is simply an amendment to the no cell phones in schools bill that was passed and signed into law in the 2025 legislative session. It simply updates the language to be more clear and concise by changing “restrict cell phone and smart device usage on school property” to “prohibit cell phone and smart device usage on school property.”**

SB 109: Safe Storage

→ **This bill requires each school board to to develop and implement a policy to require the annual notification of the parent of each student enrolled in the school division, to be sent by email and, if applicable, SMS text message, of the importance of securely storing any prescription drug, as defined in relevant law, present in the household and the parent's legal responsibility to safely store any firearm present in the household.**

SB 110: Certified School Library Specialist

→ **This bill directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to employ in the Department of Education at least one certified public school library specialist.**

SB 115: Concealed Handgun; Reciprocity with other States

→ **This bill requires the Superintendent State of Police to review their reciprocity agreements with other states concerning concealed handgun permits. It also prevents Virginia residents, except for active duty members and their spouse's, from using a concealed handgun or concealed weapon permit or license issued by another state without having a valid resident concealed handgun permit.**

SB 117: Public School Teachers; reemployment of teacher who has not recieved continuing employment status

→ **This bill requires that teachers or the school board provide a written notice of non-continuation of a continuing teacher by June 15th. If this notice is not received by June 15th, the teacher's contract will continue for the following school year.**

SB 126: Primary Election; when filings to be made; extension for incumbents failure to file

→ **This bill states that if an incumbent office holder misses the deadline for filing their necessary paperwork to qualify for a spot on the ballot for a primary election for the office they hold, the deadline is extended for five days for any other filer other than the incumbent.**

SB 137: Obstructing healthcare facility access; penalties

→ **This bill states that any person that is not authorized by the health care facility who knowingly obstructs, detains, hinders, impedes, blocks, or delays another person's entry to or exit from a health care facility will receive a Class 1 misdemeanor. This bill also states that a Class 3 misdemeanor will be given to any person who knowingly approaches another person to protest them going into a health care facility within 8 feet of the person and 40 feet from the facility door, unless the person consents.**

SB 147: Alternative graduation pathways to earn Standard Diploma; development, approval, implementation

→ **This bill creates alternative opportunities for high school students to obtain their diplomas without relying on passing the Standards of Learning (SOL) standardized tests.**

SB 169: Candidates for office; challenges to candidate qualifications

→ **This bill specifies that candidates who are nominated at a primary election cannot later be challenged on the basis of facts that were present prior to the primary election and could have been raised in a challenge to such candidate's eligibility for the primary ballot.**

SB 172: Insurance Claims; electronic attachments accepted

→ This bill requires carries to accept medical record documentation and other claim-related information that is transferred electronically when in connection to a health care claim, remittance advice, prior authorization, referral, eligibility or benefit inquiry, or claim status transaction.

SB 174: Virginia Student Teacher Scholarship Program

→ This bill establishes the Virginia Student Teacher Scholarship program for eligible student teachers currently in training to be awarded a scholarship.

SB 207: SUDEP; Office of Chief Medical Examiner to publish information on its website

→ This bill requires the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to publish information on Sudden Death From Epilepsy to its public website.

SB 258: Virginia Human Rights Act; menopause or perimenopause; discrimination prohibited

→ This bill prohibits the discrimination under the Virginia Human Rights Act on the basis of menopause or perimenopause for purposes of non-discrimination in government programs, public accommodation, employment hiring and reasonable employment accommodation.

SB 305: Kinship Foster Care; barrier crime waiver

→ Establishes a process by which a local department of social services may apply for a barrier crime waiver on behalf of an individual who has been convicted of a Virginia barrier crime that is not included on the list of federal barrier crimes and does not otherwise fall under a barrier crime exception for foster or adoptive homes for the purpose of approval of the individual's home as a kinship foster home.

SB 308: Department of Health; reduction of opioid overdose and opioid overdose deaths

→ **Designates the Department of Health as the lead agency responsible for the coordination of activities to reduce rates of opioid overdose and opioid overdose deaths in the Commonwealth.**

SB 309: Driver Education Programs; voluntary initiatives for drivers with autism spectrum disorder

→ **Requires driver education programs to include information about voluntary initiatives for drivers with autism spectrum disorder, including the driver communication improvement program, the driver's license indicator option, and the registration indicator option. The bill also directs the Board of Education to prepare, publish, and distribute instructional materials about these voluntary initiatives.**

*****Disclaimer: Not ALL of my bills are available to view on the LIS website until early next week as they are working on getting the last few online.***



Other Updates

I spent this week in between committee meetings and floor sessions meeting with constituents and advocacy groups on their legislative priorities. I always love seeing residents from the district make their way to Richmond to meet with me!



Senator Pekarsky meeting with American Legion Post Commander, Randy Young, and others of Centreville to discuss ways we can support our veterans in Virginia.



Senator Pekarsky meeting with advocates from JLC to discuss the Virginia Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program.



Inaugural Ball of Lieutenant Governor-Elect Ghazala Hashmi



On Thursday, January 15th, I had the honor of attending the inaugural ball of my good friend and now lieutenant governor-elect Ghazal Hashmi. I am looking forward to working with her and excited to see her preside over the Senate!



Submit Issues to VDOT

VDOT has an online form that you can complete for a list of issues, including needing a road repaired, something removed from the road, a stop sign installation, and other requests.

You can find that form [HERE](#).



Contact my Office

If you would like to schedule a meeting during the 2026 Legislative Session, contact our office directly at: senatorpekarsky@senate.virginia.gov

I would love to hear directly from you!



Commending & Memorial Resolutions

Continue to submit your Commending & Memorial Resolution nominations by reaching out to my office directly at: senatorpekarsky@senate.virginia.gov

Now Accepting Nominations

Commending & Memorial Resolutions



Know an individual or organizations that has made a difference in your community?

Submit your resolution nominations ahead of the 2026 legislative session.

Please email us directly at SenatorPekarsky@Senate.Virginia.Gov



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As always, it is a pleasure to serve you in the 36th District

Cheers,



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