

**Handout**

**Materials**

**Failing to plan is planning to fail!**

*Author unknown.*

# State Legislation Training Materials

## Virginia Federation of Chapters

### NARFE

#### 1. Introduction to Training

Self introductions

Purpose of Training

Agenda

- Introduction, Organization and Responsibilities of the Chapter State Legislation Chairperson
- Current VFC State Legislation Program (or Current Issues to Be Addressed)
- VFC Political Fund
- Virginia General Assembly
- How a Bill Becomes A Law
- Computer Use in State Legislation Activities
- Communicating with Your State Legislators
- Role of VFC Member in State Legislation Efforts

#### A. Chapter Organization and Goals

Chapters often have one member who serves as both State Legislation and National Legislation Chairperson.

- Separate chairpersons for these two Legislation positions are preferable in order to monitor fully the activities in these two important areas and to keep the Chapter members fully informed.
- Chapter needs are best served if 2 or 3 members, in addition to the Chairperson, are appointed to the State Legislation Committee. Individual committee members can be assigned to study and monitor different legislative issues and report to members. Individual committee members could visit and develop working relationship with individual legislators.
- Committee members can acquire legislators as speakers at Chapter meetings through their personal working relationship.
- Other responsibilities could be assigned to committee members depending on Chapter needs.
- Committees should establish goals consistent with the VFC State Legislation Program established annually at the State Convention. Goals provide purpose and direction to achieving the State Legislation Program for the year.
- Goals should be:
  - **Specific**---What does VFC or the Chapter expect to accomplish?

- **Relevant**---What are the pertinent and current issues that are important to the success of the Chapter State Legislative Program?
- **Attainable**—Is success in achieving the established goals possible and likely? (This can often be difficult depending on the uncertainty in the political arena.)
- **Time Oriented**—Can established goals be completed within the prescribed time frame?
- **Flexible**—Are goals set so they can be modified or adjusted to provide for changing situations?

Example of Chapter State Legislation Program goals:

- Prepare at least four articles pertinent to State Legislation matters for the Chapter newsletter during the year.
- Visit all members of the General Assembly who serve Chapter members at least annually.
- Hold one Chapter meeting each year in which all local General Assembly members are invited to discuss matter of concern to members.

## **B. Chapter State Legislation Chairperson Responsibilities**

Responsibilities of the Chapter State Legislation Chairperson include:

- Assist Chapter President in appointing State Legislation Committee members.
- Provide leadership in developing a Chapter State Legislation Program, with appropriate goals.
- Work with State Legislation Area Coordinator in monitoring pertinent bills in the General Assembly.
- Use information, included in quarterly summaries prepared by the VFC State Legislation Chairperson, when preparing reports for the Chapter newsletter and in giving reports at Chapter meetings on the status of pertinent bills and issues.
- Work with Chapter members in contacting State Legislators on specific issues and bills—reports are often needed on short notice.
- Provide leadership in setting up visits with State Legislators.
- Encourage Chapter members to contribute to the VFC Political Fund.
- Secure members of the General Assembly to speak at Chapter meetings.
- Participate in training programs and meetings devoted to State Legislation.

## 2. Current VFC State Legislation Issues

**Annual SL plan is adopted at the July board meeting and can be found on the VFC web site**

## 3. VFC Political Fund

The VFC Political Fund was established several years ago to provide a source of funds to support candidates for the General Assembly who support of the VFC position on various issues.

- Growth of the fund has been disappointing for the first several years. A special fund raising campaign in 1999 increased the fund more than all the previous years. The VFC originally set a contribution goal of \$1.00 per member per year.
- For the fund to be an effective political tool it must reach the size where a distribution to a legislator will be meaningful and have an impact on achieving the VFC Legislation Program.
- Contributions to the VFC Political Account Fund are sent to the VFC State Legislation Representative, for the required recordkeeping. Contributions are forwarded to the VFC Treasurer.
- Current VFC State Legislation Representative is Carroll Graham 1307 Forest Avenue, Richmond VA 23229.
- VFC Political Account Contribution form, must accompany every individual contribution. Copies of this form may be obtained from your Chapter Treasurer or Chapter State Legislation Chairperson.
- Distributions from the VFC State Political Account Fund are made by submitting written recommendation, identifying the candidate and his record of support for VFC issues. The recommendation should be sent by the Chapter President to the Area Vice President. The form is then sent to the VFC State Legislation Chairperson for discussion during the June SL meeting.

## 4. Virginia General Assembly

### A. Description

The General Assembly consists of 100 Delegates and 40 Senators. The General Assembly meets annually, beginning on the second Wednesday in January, for 60 days in even-numbered years and for 30 days in odd-numbered years, with an option to extend annual sessions for a maximum of 30 days.

The Governor may call a special session when it is deemed necessary or advisable, or when petitioned by two-thirds of the members of both Houses. A reconvened session is held on the sixth Wednesday after adjournment of each regular or special session for the purpose of considering the Governor's recommendations and vetoed legislation.

General Assembly responsibilities are to represent citizens in forming public policy, enacting laws of the Commonwealth, approving the budget, levying taxes, electing judges and confirming appointments by the Governor.

#### B. House of Delegates

- House of Delegates consists of 100 members. Each member represents approximately 70,000 citizens of the Commonwealth. The House membership is a diverse group consisting primarily of attorneys, business executives, educators and farmers.
- Term of office for a member of the House of Delegates is two years. Each member currently receives an annual salary of \$17,640.
- Speaker of the House is the presiding officer of the House. The Speaker is elected by the House members in even-numbered years for a two-year term. The Speaker's duties are dictated by the Rules of the House. Duties include assigning bills to committees and appointing the members to the 20 House Standing Committees.
- Clerk of the House is elected by the House in even-numbered years for a two year term. The Clerk of House is responsible for the administration of the House under the direction of the Speaker.

#### C. Senate

- Senate of Virginia consists of 40 members. Each member is elected for a term of four years and currently receives an annual salary of \$18,000.
- Senators represent approximately 175,000 citizens of the Commonwealth. Membership of the current Senate is a diverse group consisting largely of lawyers, business executives, farmers, educators, and CPAs.
- Lieutenant Governor is the Presiding Officer of the Senate and is elected in a statewide election for a four-year term. In the event of his absence, the President Pro Tempore carries out the duties of the Presiding Officer. The President Pro Tempore is elected by the Senate for a term of four years.
- Clerk of the Senate is elected by the Senate. The Clerk's duties are overseeing the daily operations of the Senate, keeping all Senate records, keeping the daily Journal and referring bills to Committees.
- Senate Chamber is located in the west wing of the State Capitol Building and is open to the public when the Senate is not in session.

## 5. How a Bill Becomes a Law in Virginia

### A. Normal Procedure for a Non-Controversial Bill Becoming Law

- Bills may originate in either the House of Delegates or the Senate.
- For example, Delegate Lee, as requested by constituents, prepares to introduce legislation permitting the governing bodies of localities to prohibit the sale and use of certain fireworks.
- Delegate Lee explains the proposal to a staff attorney in the Division of Legislative Services. The staff attorney researches existing law and the constitutionality of the proposed legislation.
- A bill is then drafted by the Division of Legislative Services. Draft copies of the bill are delivered to Delegate Lee.
- Delegate Lee signs the bill and introduces it by laying the original and duplicate copies on the desk of the Clerk of the House of Delegates.
- Bill is ordered printed and referred to the Committee on Counties, Cities and Towns. The members of the Committee on Counties, Cities and Towns -- in public session -- familiarize themselves with the bill and decide to approve it without amendments.
- The Committee then reports the bill favorably to the House.
- **First Reading:** The bill title is printed in the calendar or is read by the Clerk and the bill advances to second reading. The bill is referred to committee for consideration.
- **Second Reading:** After the bill passes out of committee the bill title appears in the printed calendar on second reading. Bills are considered in the order in which they appear in the calendar. The Clerk reads the title of the bill a second time. A bill on second reading is amendable. The bill is explained by its patron (Delegate Lee) who answers any questions that may be asked. By voice vote the House votes to advance the bill to third reading.
- A bill that has passed second reading with or without amendments is engrossed. If amendments are adopted the bill is reprinted in its final form for passage.
- **Third Reading:** The next day, the engrossed bill title appears in the House calendar on third reading. The bill is read by title a third time by the Clerk. By recorded roll call vote the bill is passed by the House of Delegates.
- **Communication:** When passed, the bill is sent to the Senate either by the Clerk in communication or by a member in person, informing the Senate that the bill has passed the House and requesting the concurrence of the Senate.
- **In the Senate:** The bill goes through substantially the same procedure as it did in the House. The bill is read by title a first time, referred to a standing committee, considered and reported by the committee, read a second time and a third time before passage by a constitutional majority.

- If the Senate amends a House bill or the House amends a Senate bill, and the body of origin disagrees with the amendment, a Conference Committee, usually three members from each legislative body, is formed to resolve differences.
- After the bill has been passed by both Houses of the General Assembly...
  - It is printed as an enrolled bill, examined and signed by the Presiding Officer of each House.
  - The bill is then sent to the Governor for approval.
  - After being signed by the Governor, the bill is sent to the Clerk of the House (Keeper of the Rolls of the State) and is assigned a Chapter number. All Chapters of a session are compiled and bound as the Acts of Assembly.
  - Bills enacted at a regular session (or 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 4th month following the adjournment of the special session, unless another date is specified.
  - General Appropriation Act is usually effective July 1st and Emergency Acts become effective when signed by the Governor.

## B. Role of the Governor

- For any bill presented, the Constitution of Virginia provides the Governor with three options: sign, veto, or offer amendments.
- The Governor may also veto one or more items in an appropriation bill. If the Governor does not act on a bill, it becomes law without his signature.
- During the regular or special session, the Governor has seven days to act on bills presented to him. If there are fewer than seven days remaining in the General Assembly session, or if the General Assembly has adjourned, the Governor has thirty days after adjournment to act on bills.
- When the Governor recommends amendments to or vetoes a bill, and the General Assembly is still in session, the General Assembly can consider the Governor's action.
- When the General Assembly receives recommended amendments or vetoed legislation from the Governor, it is sent to the House of origin, i.e. House bills are sent to the House of Delegates and Senate bills are sent to the Senate. There are various constitutional options available to the General Assembly:
  - Governor's amendments can be agreed to or rejected. If the amendments are agreed to by both houses, the amended bill is reenrolled and becomes law. Governor's amendments may be

rejected and the original bill sent back to the Governor where it may be signed as originally presented or vetoed. The house of origin, having rejected a Governor's amendment, can pass the bill as originally presented to the Governor by a vote of two-thirds of the members of each House.

- Governor must submit amendments in a form that allows the General Assembly to act on each amendment individually. The General Assembly may accept or reject part of the amendments. The bill is then returned to the Governor with the amendments agreed to by the General Assembly. The Governor may approve or veto the bill as amended. If the Governor does not act, the bill will become law without his signature.
- When either House of the General Assembly determines that the Governor's amendments are not specific and severable (able to be acted upon individually), that House may refer the bill to committee and the bill will be treated as if it is just introduced. If the bill is then passed by the General Assembly, it is enrolled and sent back to the Governor for approval or veto.
- Governor's vetoes may be upheld or overridden. If the veto is upheld, the bill dies. The vote to override a Governor's veto requires a two-thirds vote of both the House of Delegates and the Senate.

### C. House of Delegate Committees

Agriculture  
 Appropriations  
 Chesapeake and Its Tributaries  
 Claims  
 Conservation & Natural Resources  
 Corporations, Insurance and Banking  
 Counties, Cities and Towns  
 Courts of Justice  
 Education  
 Finance  
 General Laws  
 Health, Welfare and Institutions  
 Interstate Cooperation  
 Labor and Commerce  
 Militia and Police  
 Mining and Mineral Resources  
 Privileges and Elections

Rules  
 Science and Technology  
 Transportation

#### D. Senate Committees

Agriculture  
 Commerce and Labor  
 Courts of Justice  
 Education and Health  
 Finance  
 General Laws  
 Local Government  
 Privileges and Elections  
 Rehabilitation and Social Services  
 Rules  
 Transportation

### 6. Computer Use in State Legislative Activities

#### A. Tracking General Assembly Activities

To track and learn more about General Assembly activities, use the following web sites:

Virginia General Assembly Home Page: <http://legis.state.va.us/>

Legislation before General Assembly: <http://leg1.state.va.us/>

Senate Web Site: <http://senate.state.va.us/>

House Web Site: <http://hod.state.va.us/>

Governor's Web site: [www.state.va.us/governor](http://www.state.va.us/governor)

Gateway Virginia Home Page: <http://www.gateway.va.com>

#### B. Tracking a Bill

- Division of Legislative Automated Systems (DLAS) provides hints for using Legislative Information Systems (LIS), commonly called Bill Status. Below are the hints for using the Legislative Information System (LIS) to aid your tracking a bill.
- If you know the bill or resolution number, click on [Bills and Resolutions](#), key the legislative type and number in the box, and press enter. For example: to look up House Bill 1, key in HB1 and press enter.
- Legislative types are:
  - HB** = House Bill; **HJ** = House Joint Resolutions;

**HR**= House Resolutions

**SB** = Senate Bills; **SJ** = Senate Joint Resolutions;  
**SR** = Senate Resolutions

- If you don't know the bill or resolution number there are several ways to find it. If you know the name of the Delegate or Senator who sponsored the legislation, click on [General Assembly Members](#) and view the list of legislation sponsored by the member. Each list displays the number and a brief description of the bill or resolution. Once you locate the specific legislation, click on the line to display the summary and history. The text history entries will be displayed and you can then click on the desired version to see the full text.
- [Comprehensive Index](#) locates a bill or resolution by subject. Scroll through the Index Table of Contents, click on the desired subject and view the index entries. Once you locate the legislation, click on the bill number to view the summary and history. The text history entries will be displayed and you can click on the desired version to view the full text.
- Searchable database (for Bills and Resolutions) provides another way to locate legislation by searching for key word(s) or code section(s). Click on [Search: Bills and Resolutions](#) and key in a word or phrase in the box and press enter. A list of bills satisfying your search will be displayed. Click on the desired bill to display the full text. The full text display will link to the summary and status display.
- To see a list of all legislation introduced, click on Bills & Resolutions and then click on [All](#). This list will be displayed in numerical order with House legislation being displayed before Senate legislation. Once you locate legislation of interest, click on the legislation number to display the summary and history. You can select the full text version from this display.
- To see a list of legislation introduced for a specific day, click on Bills and Resolutions and then click on [Introduced](#). The most recent day will be displayed. You can select any day by keying a date (in month-day format) in the box.
- Budget Bills may be found under [By subject](#) on the Bills and Resolutions display. Choose Appropriations and then select the appropriate bill. From the summary page, you can search the budget bill by clicking on Presented and Ordered Printed.
- [Standing Committees](#) provides a list of all standing committees for the House and Senate. The information available for each committee consists of Committee Members, Dockets and separate listings of legislation

referred to committee, currently before the committee, reported out of committee, and failed.

- [Meetings](#) provide a list of standing committee and subcommittee meetings during the General Assembly session. During the interim, all meetings held in the Capitol and General Assembly Building are listed as well as related meetings held around the state.
- [Minutes](#) provides a daily record of House and Senate floor sessions.
- [Statistics](#) displays totals of bills introduced, passed, failed, vetoed and continued, as of the current date and time.
- [Calendars](#) (from Bills and Resolutions) list legislation to be considered by the House and Senate for a specific day. Click On Calendar and then choose a specific date. Click on the desired calendar category to display a list of legislation.
- [Code of Virginia](#) searchable database contains the laws (statutes) of the Commonwealth. You can perform a search by using key word(s), phrases or section numbers. You can also use the Table of Contents to view all Titles, Chapters, Articles and Sections. Click on a title to display the chapters, click on a chapter to display the articles and click on an article to display the sections.
- [Virginia Administrative Code](#) (regulations of state agencies) is also searchable. You can use the Table of Contents to view all Titles, Agencies, Chapters and Sections. Click a title to display the agencies, click on agency name to display the chapters and click on chapter number to display the sections.

## 7. Communicating With State Legislators

### A. Effective Letters to Your Senator or Delegate

- Your letter should be personal, polite and concise.
- Limit a letter to one page, preferably typed, but if not, written legibly.
- State purpose of letter in first paragraph.
- Cite bill by name and number if known.
- Avoid emotions.
- Show how legislation will affect you.
- Suggest a better approach.
- Cite likely adverse effects.
- Letter written in long hand often get more attention than form letters.
- Use email whenever possible.

### B. Effective Meetings with Your State Senator or Delegate

- Legislator's method of operation is an extension of his personality. As a manager, one legislator may direct his office and staff quite differently from another. It is to your advantage to discover such variances before your first meeting.
- Preparations that should be made for a meeting:
  - Call his/her office to schedule an appointment.
  - Carefully select Chapter members who will participate.
  - Brief members and assign discussion topics.
  - Knowledge of your subject(s) is required for success. Do your homework!
  - Call or write to confirm the appointment shortly before the appointment date.
- During the meeting things that should be done are:
  - Appoint a key spokesperson.
  - Be brief, knowledgeable and polite.
  - Follow your agenda and always stick to the facts.
  - Avoid wild speculation and overstatements.
  - Be prepared to answer, as well as to ask, questions in areas of concern or disagreement.
  - Determine whether a compromise or new idea can be brought forth when there is disagreement.
  - Leave a fact sheet.
  - Leave a good lasting impression.
  - Follow up your visit with a thank you letter.

## **8. Role of the VFC Members in the State Legislation Program**

Successful VFC State Legislation programs will be achieved when Chapter members plays an active role.

Developing the state Legislative plan

- Members should contact their chapter officers and area vice president with ideas on legislative issues for the plan.
- Area vice Presidents should collect ideas in the spring to take to the annual SL meeting in June for planning a draft legislative agenda
- Members should suggest appropriate local members of the General assembly or opposition candidates for aid in compiling a list of recipients for the semiannual distribution from the VFC PAC

### Supporting the VFC Legislative plan

- Members must meet directly with Senators and Delegates to discuss VFC issues and to let them know our position.
- Members must contribute regularly to the State Political Fund so VFC can support candidates who will stand with us on issues.
- Candidates and legislators for the General Assembly must be informed of the VFC programs so they know we are serious about the issues.
- Members should take an active part in political rallies and other political events.
- Encourage other organizations to join with VFC on issues of mutual concern.

#### Organization such as:

- Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- Virginia Coalition on Aging
- AARP State Legislation
- Retired Officers Association
- State Board of Elections Office
- Senators and Delegates favorable to our issues
- Virginia Retired Teacher Association
- Maintain a continuous vigilance of activities in the General Assembly.
- Be prepared to react to issues of concern to senior citizens.

A message from VFC State Legislation Chair Bill Schmidt:

The two most important things you can do for protecting our interests are to help build the account balance in the VFC State Political Fund, and to get to know your legislator. This fund helps to strengthen our contact with our Virginia legislators. "...everyone has one member of the House of Delegates and one State Senator who represent them...get to know him or her." Please help support the legislators who support NARFE, and contribute to the VFC-PAC fund.

<p>VFC STATE POLITICAL ACCOUNT CONTRIBUTION          AREA _____ CHAPTER _____ DATE _____</p>
<p>Amount: \$5_ \$10_ \$25_ \$50_ Other____          Name _____          Address _____          City, State, Zip _____          e-mail address _____          Retired Y/N ____ If working show employer</p>
<p>Required by State Bd of Elections</p>
<p>Employer Name _____          Employer Address _____          Make check payable to:          VFC STATE POLITICAL ACCOUNT and mail to          J. Carroll Graham          VFC State Legislative Representative          1307 Forest Ave.          Richmond, VA 23229</p>

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<p>VFC STATE POLITICAL ACCOUNT CONTRIBUTION          AREA _____ CHAPTER _____ DATE _____</p>
<p>Amount: \$5_ \$10_ \$25_ \$50_ Other____          Name _____          Address _____          City, State, Zip _____          e-mail address _____          Retired Y/N ____ If working show employer</p>
<p>Required by State Bd of Elections</p>
<p>Employer Name _____          Employer Address _____          Make check payable to:          VFC STATE POLITICAL ACCOUNT and mail to          J. Carroll Graham          VFC State Legislative Representative          1307 Forest Ave.          Richmond, VA 23229</p>

