

Elizabeth Bennett-Parker

Delegate • Virginia House District 45

Dear Elizabeth,

It's been a busy week as we countdown until crossover next Tuesday, the day by which bills must pass the House in order to cross over to the Senate (and vice versa).

A number of high-profile issues have been considered over the past week. The Senate has voted to block the nomination of Andrew Wheeler as Secretary of Natural Resources. Bills died in the House that would have allowed for constitutional amendments and voter referendums to [restore voting rights](#) and to [repeal the constitutional prohibition on same-sex marriage](#). That provision is no longer valid as a result of the United States Supreme Court decision in Obergefell v. Hodges.

A bill to repeal the [planned future increases in the minimum wage](#), leaving it at the current rate of \$11/hour passed the House along partisan lines, although the Senate has already killed their version of this bill. A bill to [repeal the local authority to ban firearms](#) from public buildings, parks, and events also passed along partisan lines. Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax have all utilized this authority. Multiple anti-abortion [bills](#) will be heard on the floor this

week that reported out of committee along partisan lines; others have not yet been docketed in committee. A bill that would have [removed protections for transgender students](#) passed out of subcommittee, but failed in full committee 11-11.

On topics most of us agree on, a bill to provide housing [support to children aging out of the foster care system](#) passed unanimously. Bills related to youth hunger, including one to [prohibit barring students with school meal debt from participating in extracurricular activities](#), and one to make sure [college students receive notice about their eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) benefits](#), passed with broad bipartisan support. The bill to [exempt medicine purchased for your pets from sales and use tax](#) passed 97-1.

And finally, if you need a drink after reading this, a bill to make [cocktails-to-go legal for two more years](#) passed with broad bipartisan support. (Please drink responsibly.)

As always, I am grateful to be working on behalf of the residents of Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax. Continue reading below for updates on how my bills are moving through the House, my budget amendments, some of the bills I am working on as a Co-Patron, and some of the visitors I've had the pleasure of meeting.

Legislative Update

Last week started off strong as I became the first Democratic freshman to pass a bill on the House floor, and the following day I passed a second bill. Then, three more of my bills died along partisan lines and two of my bills are still in Committee.

PASSED THE HOUSE

Electronic Meetings

HB444 allows all public bodies, like our many advisory boards and commissions composed of volunteers, to hold some electronic meetings outside of a declared emergency while also ensuring and enhancing access and transparency for members of the public.

Status: Passed the House floor unanimously (98-0). Unfortunately, its Senate companion died 19-21, so I still have work to do to make sure it passes.

EV Parking

HB450 will prohibit a person from parking a non-electric vehicle in a space reserved for charging electric vehicles. It will better prepare our infrastructure to serve a society where more people will be driving electric vehicles.

Status: Passed the floor with broad bipartisan support (73-24)

You can read more about this bill and deliberations in this article:

[Divided General Assembly agrees on one thing: Gas cars parked in EV spots should get tickets](#)

DIED

Flooding - DEQ Workgroup on Stormwater

HB448 would have created a state work group to review and make recommendations concerning the existing limits on local authority to review certain land-disturbing activities for stormwater impacts. The Administration stood up to oppose the bill, which ultimately led to its demise along partisan lines. I have a call with DEQ and will continue working on this issue.

Facilitating Education Through In-School Instruction

HB452, supported by the Virginia Superintendents Association, the Virginia School Boards Association, the Virginia Education Association, and more would have given school divisions the ability to advertise school bus driver openings on the sides of buses. In 2018 and 2019, a bill to allow commercial advertising passed the House with broad bipartisan support (50 Republicans and around 20 Democrats supported it), and it died in the Senate. We now have a critical school bus driver shortage across the Commonwealth, yet this bill died along partisan lines.

Food Delivery Platform Fee Transparency

HB 460 was brought to me by independent restaurant owners in our district who have been struggling throughout the pandemic. Endorsed by the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging, & Travel Association, this bill would have created price transparency for consumers when ordering food via food delivery apps by mandating that food delivery platforms must be transparent about the fees they charge. I had managed to convince some Republicans to vote for this bill, but the lobbyists for Uber made multiple rounds and the bill died along partisan lines. I had many meaningful and productive conversations with my Republican colleagues leading up to the vote in the subcommittee, unfortunately we were unable to reach consensus and the bill ultimately died along partisan lines.

STILL ALIVE



Ensuring Public Safety and Protections for Victims of Stalking

HB 451 allows Virginia residents to be protected from stalking threats that place the victim in reasonable fear of death, criminal sexual assault, or bodily injury to herself or a family or household member regardless of the location of the perpetrator of that conduct. Currently, the prosecution of stalking is limited to circumstances in which a person engages in that conduct at least once in the jurisdiction where the person is tried.

Status: This bill passed out of subcommittee unanimously this afternoon.

Preventing Food Waste

This bill would decrease food waste by protecting food donors and receivers from penalty or liability for donating or receiving food past the best-by date or other non-safety labels under certain conditions.

Status: A Ranking Republican introduced the same bill; I am now the Chief Co-Patron on the vehicle for this bill, HB1249, and it passed out of the Agriculture Committee unanimously this morning.

Budget Amendments

Last week, I presented my budget amendments to the biennial state budget to the Appropriations Committee.

Douglass Memorial Cemetery

This budget amendment would provide funding from the Department of Historic Resources to help restore the historic African American cemetery to its original vision and help resolve a severe drainage problem. The Cemetery was established in 1895 by the Douglass Cemetery

Association as a segregated, nondenominational African American cemetery and named in memory of Frederick Douglass.

More Accessible Government

I submitted two budget amendments to create grants for local governments and state agencies to update meeting rooms with technology to allow for live-streaming of public meetings and/or remote testimony from members of the public. This removes barriers for people with disabilities, seniors, those who lack childcare, and those who live far from meeting locations. I believe it is important that our constituents are able to witness and participate in our government.

Inland Flooding Workgroup

This amendment would create a work group to address issues related to inland flooding in communities across the Commonwealth. Our district is often subject to extreme flooding that threatens the safety of our roads and homes, causing not only property damage that results in tremendous financial burden, but extreme duress for our residents.

Alleviating Senior Hunger

Over 175,000 seniors in our Commonwealth do not have enough food to eat. Only about 34% of eligible seniors in our community participate in SNAP; they are losing out on federal dollars that could put food on their table. Many seniors do not participate because the household benefit for them is so low; this amendment would increase SNAP benefits by \$25/month per eligible senior to help prevent food insecurity.

School-Based Health Clinics

This amendment would create a school-based health centers joint task force. This task force will assess the current landscape of health services and mental health screening evaluations and treatment in our public schools.

Updates on Other Bills

Here are updates on some of the bills I am sponsoring as co-patron:

Bill	Description	Status
<u>HB596</u>	Allows localities to adopt rent stabilization provisions.	Passed in Committee 20-2

HB1337	Allows localities to regulate the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.	Died in Subcommittee 5-4
HB803	Extends the five day pay-or-quit notice period to fourteen days, which will provide a longer grace period for tenants to pay back late rent owed before getting evicted.	Died in Subcommittee 5-3
HB802	Allows localities to enforce the health and safety provisions of the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, subject to certain conditions.	Passed Committee 21-1
HB602	Creates the Commonwealth Flood Board as a policy board in the executive branch.	Died in Subcommittee 5-4
HB535	Requires that public school teachers be compensated at a rate that is at or above the national average.	Died in Subcommittee 5-3
HB481	Requires every hospital to make information about standard charges for items and services provided by the hospital available on the hospital's website.	Passed Subcommittee 6-0
HB367	Prohibits the operation of a car with an exhaust system that emits noise in excess of 85 decibels measured from a distance of 50 feet.	Died in Subcommittee 4-2
HB142	Changes from a maximum of 25 percent to a minimum of 25 percent the amount of Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) funds that must be used to support programs to reduce the impact of transit fares on low-income individuals.	Passed the House Floor 92-8
HB1220	Repeals right to work.	Died in Committee 18-0
HB1160	Requires employers to provide paid sick leave to health care providers, grocery store workers, and home health workers who provide agency-directed services.	Died in Subcommittee 3-2
HB997	Requires employers to provide paid sick leave to home health workers who provide agency-directed services.	Died in Subcommittee 5-0
HB973	Prohibits the use of campaign funds for personal use.	Died in Subcommittee 5-3
HB851	Requires employers with at least 25 full-time employees to provide 40 hours of paid sick leave, for full time employees who have worked at least 12 months. The amounts are prorated for part-time employees and those who have worked fewer than 12 months.	Died in Subcommittee 3-2
HB825	Establishes the Virginia Center for Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention.	Referred to Committee on Public Safety
HB568	Allows localities to establish regional green banks to promote investment in clean energy technologies and provide financing for clean energy technologies.	Died in Subcommittee 5-4
HB476	Establishes the Retail Small Business Grant Program and Fund to support existing Virginia small businesses, attract new businesses, increase the Commonwealth's tax base, create new job opportunities for Virginia residents, and enhance commercial activity in Virginia.	Died in Subcommittee 3-4
HB141	Establishes the Virginia Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Historic Preservation Fund for the purpose of awarding grants for the eligible costs of acquiring land	Passed Committee 9-0

	or undertaking preservation activities that is of cultural or historic significance to Black, indigenous, or people of color communities.	
HB86	Requires a searchable campaign finance database that allows users to easily search for and sort information.	Passed the House Floor 99-1

Visitors

I continue to meet with many constituents virtually and in-person.



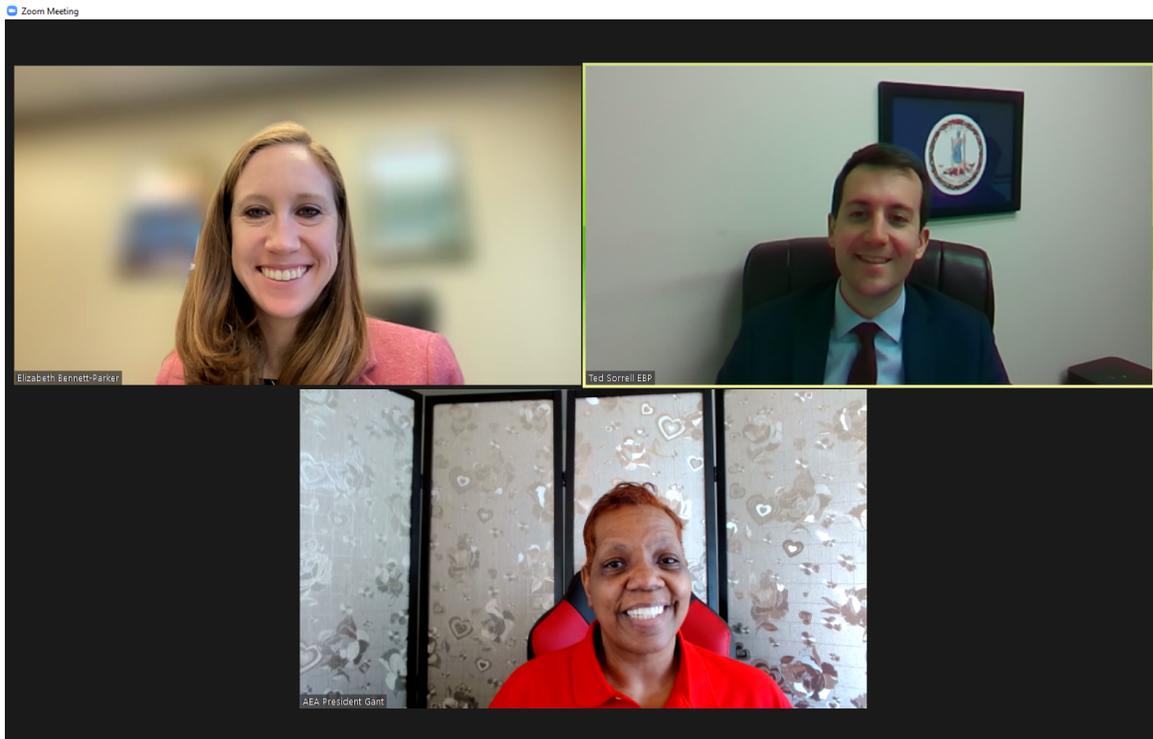
Last week, I had the honor of meeting with members of the Alexandria City Council and the Arlington County Board. They visited Richmond to discuss issues such as affordable housing, flooding mitigation, and other priorities. It was great to meet with my former colleagues and discuss how we can best serve our community.



Earlier this week, I had the pleasure of meeting with Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action (VCCA) They are a network of medical leaders advocating for climate change solutions that protect the health of patients and our communities.

I also met with the Medical Society of Virginia to discuss the issues that are currently affecting the Commonwealth in regard to healthcare access and availability of care. It was great talking with physicians and their crucial role in developing healthcare policy





I met with educators from Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax, as well as the VA Association of Elementary School Principals, and the PTA. We discussed the issues that impact our schools and their legislative priorities which include investing in school infrastructure, standing against cuts of K-12 public school funding, and providing adequate teacher pay.

These are just a few of the many meetings I had with constituents throughout the week, and I really enjoy hearing what each individual or organization is passionate about and how I can best support the 45th District's needs. I truly value feedback from my constituents and consider that feedback during my decision making process, so please feel free to reach out to me with any questions, concerns, or ideas.

Thank you

Thank you.

If you are interested in requesting a meeting with me during session [please use this link](#) and someone from my office will reach out to you shortly. If you'd like to share your feedback on legislation during this session or need anything, please email me at DelEBennett-Parker@house.virginia.gov or call our office at 804-698-1045.

Warmly,
Elizabeth

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