

Elizabeth Bennett-Parker

Delegate • Virginia House District 45

Dear Elizabeth,

This week is budget week; on Sunday, the House and Senate money committees each presented their amendments to Governor Northam's budget and yesterday we had a long day on the floor to work through the budget.

Budgets are a clear expression of values and priorities, which are reflected in the differences between the House and Senate budgets. Compared to Governor Northam's introduced budget, the House budget cuts \$344 million from public preK-12 education, including substantial cuts to early childhood education. It also rolls-back progress towards environmental goals in a number of areas, including removing Virginia from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and removes funding for needed combined sewer outfall projects, including a \$40 million cut to Alexandria. Furthermore, it slashes funding for the Housing Trust Fund, gun violence prevention, and voter outreach and education. Finally, by removing the proposed increase to make the Earned Income Tax Credit partially refundable and instead doubling the standard deduction, the budget eliminates tax relief for families who need it the most. You can watch my colleague Delegate Cia Price explain this policy trade-off here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QqVom2YW9U>

Here are some of the amendments the House budget made to Governor Northam's budget:

Item #	Language
4-14 #1h	Removes the proposal to make the Earned Income Tax Credit partially refundable, which helps low-income families at a cost of \$315 million and instead doubles the standard deduction, which leaves low-income families behind and costs \$2.1 billion. 66,700 low-income residents in Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax would have benefitted from the EITC proposal.
4-14 #5h	Repeals the gas tax
86 #1h	Removes \$2.7 million for voter education and outreach
114 #1h	Removes \$190 million for the Housing Trust Fund
114 #4h	Removes funding to reflect the repeal of participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) as passed by the House
136 #10h	Removes \$6.7 million in funding for early childhood education by eliminating a mixed delivery pilot program serving infants and toddlers
137 #13h	Removes \$19.4 million in funding for early childhood education by delaying an increase to the number of Virginia Preschool Initiative slots for at-risk three-year-olds
137 #19h	Removes \$500 million in grants for school construction and modernization and instead provides about \$300 million for a loan rebate program, which forces localities to use debt capacity
137 #3h	Cuts potential salary raises for teachers by 20%
340 #1h	Removes \$8 million that would have created a public benefit navigator pilot program in the Office of New Americans
377 #1h	Delays the phased prohibition on styrofoam containers by five years (to 2028 for certain chain restaurants and 2030 for all food vendors)
386#15h	Removes funding for projects across Virginia, including \$500,000 for the Douglass Memorial Cemetery in Old Town
408 #3h	Removes \$27.5 million in funding for a new gun violence prevention initiative, the Virginia Center for Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention
486 #11h	Removes \$40 million in funding for the CSO project in Alexandria, and removes funding for similar projects in Lynchburg and Richmond.
137 #94	Removes \$200 million for the At-Risk Add-On to public schools
137 #10h	Removes increase in instructional positions for English Learner students
344 #1h	Reduces funding for the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Prevention Fund

For these reasons and more, I could not vote for the House budget.

The Senate budget more closely aligns with Governor Northam's introduced budget and would help the Commonwealth continue to move forward with the progress made over the

last two years. In a time when our most vulnerable families and students are being left further and further behind and we urgently need to address climate change, it is unconscionable to reduce crucial funding for these programs.

Both the House and Senate budgets passed and conferees will now be appointed to produce a final budget.



As always, I am grateful to be working on behalf of the residents of Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax. Continue reading below for updates on my bills, other bills of interest, and some of the visitors I've had the pleasure of meeting.

Legislative Update

This week I had my first bill pass the Senate and presented another one in front of a Senate Committee. Here is the status of the four bills I introduced that have made it past crossover.

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 and help fight the existential threat of climate change.

Status: Passed the Senate 28-12 and is on its way to the Governor's desk.

Ensuring Public Safety and Protections for Victims of Stalking

HB 451 allows Virginians to be protected from stalking that places them in reasonable fear of death, criminal sexual assault, or bodily injury to themselves or a family or household member. Currently, such evidence is only admissible if the conduct occurs at least once within the jurisdiction where the person is tried.

Status: Passed the Senate Judiciary Committee 14-1

Preventing Food Waste

HB1249, which became the vehicle for my bill on the same topic, 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: Referred to Senate Committee on Agriculture

Electronic Meetings

HB444 allows public bodies, like our many advisory boards and commissions comprised 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: Will be heard in Senate General Laws next week

Updates on Other Bills

Bill	Description	House Status	Senate Status
HB34	Repeals the provisions of law providing for the establishment of drop-off locations for the return of absentee ballots.	Passed 52-47	Died in Privileges & Elections 8-6
HB39	Limits absentee voting in person to the two weeks immediately preceding an election. During these two weeks, the bill requires that absentee voting in person be available Monday through Saturday, from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. each day.	Passed 52-48	Died in Privileges & Elections 9-6
HB46	Requires presentation of a form of identification containing a photograph in order to vote. The bill repeals the provisions of law permitting a voter who does not have one of the required forms of identification to vote after signing a statement, subject to felony penalties for false statements, that he is the named registered voter he claims to be. Instead, the bill provides that such voter is entitled to cast a provisional ballot.	Passed 52-48	Died in Privileges & Elections 9-6
HB58	Prohibits local governments from requiring contractors to provide compensation or benefits beyond those required under state or federal law.	Passed 52-48	Died in General Laws 8-7
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 or undertaking preservation activities that is of cultural or historic significance to Black, indigenous, or people of color communities.	Passed 100-0	Passed 40-0
HB185	Repeals same-day voter registration.	Passed 52-47	Died in Privileges & Elections 9-6
HB196	Repeals Permanent Absentee Voter List	Passed 52-48	Died in Privileges & Elections 9-6
HB320	Repeals the planned future increases in the minimum wage leaving it at the current rate of \$11/hour.	Passed 52-48	Died in Commerce & Labor 12-3
HB323	Increases the amount of a grant that may be made to a political subdivision for projects that support local food production and sustainable agriculture.	Passed 99-0	Passed Agriculture 15-0
HB337	Repeals local authority to authorize collective bargaining for their employees.	Passed 52-48	Died in Commerce &

			Labor 12-3
HB426	Allows cocktails-to-go for two more years.	Passed 94-3	Passed 37-3
HB802	Allows localities to enforce the health and safety provisions of the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, subject to certain conditions.	Passed 59-41	Passed General Laws 14-1
HB956	Requires that an absentee ballot be received before the closing of the polls on election day in order to be counted	Passed 52-48	Died in Privileges & Elections 9-6
HB1053	Studies the fees charged to individuals in local jails, including commissary rates, telephone rates, and fees associated with work release employment or participation in an educational or rehabilitative program.	Passed 99-0	Passed with substitute 28-12
HB1090	Requires presentation of a form of identification containing a photograph in order to vote	Passed 52-48	Died in Privileges & Elections 9-6
HB1301	Repeals key provisions of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)	Passed 52-48	Died in Agriculture 8-7
SB15	Establishes paid family leave as a class of insurance for employers.	Passed Energy and Commerce 22-0	Passed 37-2-1
SB108	As introduced and passed the Senate, would have ended solitary confinement. The substitute amendment creates a workgroup to review restorative housing in correctional facilities.	Passed Public Safety Subcommittee with Substitute 8-0	Passed 21-18
SB441	Creates a work group to review and make recommendations regarding the reduction or elimination of costs and fees charged to inmates in state correctional facilities	Passed Public Safety Subcommittee with Substitute 8-0	Passed 31-9

Visitors

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



Girl Scouts of America

I was happy to meet with Girl Scouts of America as they shared their legislative priorities with the General Assembly. Of course, I also bought some delicious cookies.



VCU Student Government

I met with members of the Virginia Commonwealth University Student Government Association. They had a robust agenda of resolutions that the students wrote and passed in their Undergraduate Senate. We talked about issues such as harm reduction, Adam's Law, and other issues that impact university students. It is always great meeting with passionate and enthusiastic students, it makes me hopeful for the future!



SEIU

It is always nice to speak with SEIU members as they advocate for all working families to have dignity, respect, family-sustaining pay, benefits, and a voice on the job. Among other priorities, they have been working on legislation that would ensure a living wage, paid leave and health care for the essential home care workers who support Virginia families and who make all other work possible.

National Coalition of Public Safety Officers and the Communication Workers of America

It was great to meet with members of the Communication Workers of America. We discussed the difficulties in recruiting and retaining corrections officers and the discrepancy between their pay and that of other frontline state employees.

Thank you

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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