

Elizabeth Bennett-Parker

Delegate • Virginia House District 45

Dear Elizabeth,

Please find below information on how to ensure you receive your state tax rebate, this weekend's sales tax holiday, the upcoming metro closure and free rides on VRE, monkeypox vaccinations, and a recap from the abortion town hall we held last month.

Tax Rebate Checks and Sales Tax Holiday

State rebate checks are headed your way this fall! Everyone who paid and filed taxes for the 2021 tax year will be eligible. Single filers will be eligible for up to \$250 and couples filing jointly will get up to \$500. (You will get back the taxes you paid up to those amounts.)

The rebates will be sent by mid-October and should arrive by October 31st. If you got a state tax refund by direct deposit, your rebate will be deposited, as well. All other filers will get a paper check by mail. If your mailing address has changed since you filed your taxes, you will need to **update your address [here by August 15.](#)**

Additionally, Virginia's **sales tax holiday starts today and runs through Sunday, August 7th**. You can buy qualifying school supplies, clothing, shoes, hurricane supplies, and Energy Star™/WaterSense™ products without paying sales tax.

Eligible items

School supplies, clothing, and footwear

- Qualified school supplies – \$20 or less per item
- Qualified clothing and footwear – \$100 or less per item

Hurricane and emergency preparedness products

- Portable generators – \$1,000 or less per item
- Gas-powered chainsaws – \$350 or less per item
- Chainsaw accessories – \$60 or less per item
- Other specified hurricane preparedness items – \$60 or less per item

Energy Star™ and WaterSense™ products

- Qualifying Energy Star™ or WaterSense™ products purchased for noncommercial home or personal use – \$2,500 or less per item

See the full guidelines for the combined sales tax holiday and a complete list of qualifying items, [at this link](#).

Ride the VRE for Free + Metro Closure

Enjoy free rides on the [Virginia Railway Express](#) (VRE) this September and October. Fare-free rides in September will be systemwide. In October they will be limited to travel between the six VRE stations most impacted by the Blue Line station closures – Alexandria, Crystal City, L'Enfant Plaza, Union Station, Backlick Road, and Franconia-Springfield.

WMATA will be shutting down the Blue and Yellow lines south of Reagan National Airport beginning on September 10th; service at these stations is expected to resume on October 22nd. You can learn more about this work and free shuttles at:

<https://wmata.com/about/news/Blue-Yellow-fall-travel-alternatives.cfm>

Find VRE schedules and more information at: <https://www.vre.org/>

Monkeypox Vaccinations

Monkeypox is a serious viral disease with outbreaks in our community. Cases have been found in DC, Maryland, and Northern Virginia. The most common symptoms are rash, bumps,

or sores that can look like pimples or blisters that appear on the face, inside the mouth, and on other parts of the body like the hands, feet, chest, or genitals.

MONKEYPOX

Follow these Do's and Don'ts to Prevent Getting Monkeypox

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.✓ Talk to a healthcare provider about your risk of getting monkeypox and available vaccines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Have close, skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like monkeypox.✗ Touch the rash, cuddle, kiss, or share utensils and cups of a person with monkeypox.✗ Handle or touch the bedding, towels, or clothing of a person with monkeypox.

Learn more: www.cdc.gov/monkeypox

CS 333184-A 07/29/2022



People who meet certain criteria can now sign up to get a monkeypox vaccine, but because supply is limited, appointments will be made as supply allows. You can learn more about the certain requirements and request a vaccine by following the link to your locality's website below:

- [Alexandria Health Department](#)
- [Arlington Health Program](#)
- [Fairfax County Health Department](#)

Abortion Town Hall Recap

Last month, I held an abortion town hall with Jamie Lockhart, the Executive Director of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Virginia, Delegate Alfonso Lopez, and Benny from the DC Abortion Fund.

I know that there are members of our community who agree with the SCOTUS decision to overturn Roe and efforts by politicians to restrict abortion access. However, the overwhelming majority of our community is outraged and deeply concerned by these attempts to take away people's power over their own bodies, their lives and their futures. People in many different circumstances need access to abortion, and those health decisions are best made by an individual, their doctor, and their families - not politicians.

Below is a recap of the information that we shared on the current status of abortion rights, recent legislation, and how you can support abortion rights.

There will also be another town hall with advocacy organizations and a panel discussion this Sunday, August 7th at 2:00 PM at the Charles Houston Rec Center in Alexandria. Unfortunately, I will be unable to attend, but you can register to attend [here](#).

Current Legal Status

According to Virginia Code § 18.2 Article 9, abortion is legal during the first and second trimesters. During the first trimester, nurse practitioners (including certified nurse midwives) and physicians may perform abortions. After the first trimester, only physicians may perform abortions. Abortion in Virginia is restricted during the third trimester (starting at 27 weeks of pregnancy) to cases where three doctors confirm that there is a health risk to the pregnant person. People under the age of 18 require parental notification and consent to receive an abortion unless they obtain a judicial bypass.

Recent Legislation on Access to Abortion Care

1. Reproductive Health Protection Act - SB 733/HB 980 (2020)

- When Virginia's legislature passed RHPA in 2020, it greatly expanded access to abortion care in the Commonwealth.
- RHPA repealed medically-unnecessary obstacles to abortion like biased counseling, mandatory ultrasounds, and a 24-hour waiting period which makes it harder for people who live far from existing clinics to receive care, since it requires multiple trips or overnight stays.
- Additionally, RHPA removed several TRAP provisions that were designed to force centers that provide abortions to close.
- Further, RHPA expanded who can perform first-trimester abortions to include nurse practitioners, including certified nurse midwives.

2. Abortion coverage on the state-based exchange - SB 1276/HB 1896 (2021)

- In 2021, Virginia passed SB 1276 and HB 1896, which allowed the Virginia health care exchange to sell health insurance plans that provide abortion care, which had been previously outlawed.
- However, Virginia does not require that its state health care exchange plans contain coverage for abortion care; those plans are now simply allowed to be sold.

Recent Legislation on Access to Birth Control

1. Contraceptive Access Program - Budget Item 294 F

- In 2018, the Long-Acting Reversible Contraception Program (LARC) passed, allocating \$3 million a year to fund free hormonal intrauterine devices (IUDs) and implants to Virginians whose income is below 250% of the federal poverty level.
- The funding comes from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grant.
- The Virginia Contraceptive Access Program aims to reduce unintended pregnancy and improve birth spacing.
- Poverty is strongly correlated with unintended pregnancy, thus the program prioritizes low-income patients who are underinsured or uninsured.

2. 12-month supply of birth control (Medicaid recipients) - SB 1227 (2021)

- Designed to increase health equity and reduce unintended pregnancies, this policy allows Medicaid recipients in Virginia to now receive a full year's supply of birth control at once.
- Before this bill passed into law, Medicaid recipients only received one month's supply at a time.

- The availability of one-year supplies of contraceptives is associated with fewer unintended pregnancies, as compared to those who received a 1-month or 3-month supply at a time.

3. 12-month supply of birth control pills (private insurance) - HB 2267 (2017)

- Before this law was passed, private insurers allowed pharmacists to supply only 3 months of hormonal birth control pills at a time.
- This law allows pharmacists to now supply patients with private insurance a full year of oral contraceptives at once.

4. Dispensing bill - SB 1074/HB 1654 (2020)

- This law authorizes the Board of Pharmacy to issue limited licenses at a reduced fee to prescribers in nonprofit facilities to dispense certain drugs, syringes and needles.
- Before this law, there was an additional barrier to health care access, either by introducing an extra step to get prescriptions, like birth control pills, by leaving the provider and going to a pharmacy, or by increasing costs by forcing health providers to employ pharmacists.
- Now, the dispensing of medications can occur directly at non-profit clinics, allowing patients to obtain medications on-site from their provider's offices.
- The result is reduced systemic barriers, and improved health care by preventing unintended pregnancies and reducing sexually transmitted infection spread and severity.

Future of Abortion Access in Virginia

Governor Youngkin has announced his support for a 15-week abortion ban and has asked a group of legislators to lead this effort and prepare legislation to introduce. He has also stated that he will ["happily and gleefully" sign any piece of legislation that bans abortion access.](#)

Let's be clear: a ban is a ban, plain and simple. Banning abortion after 15 weeks denies a person the fundamental right to control their own body and health care decisions. A ban will stop people from accessing essential health care and take away people's power over their own bodies, their lives and their futures. People in many different circumstances need access to abortion, and those health decisions are best made by an individual, their doctor, and their families - not politicians.

In addition to blocking efforts to restrict access to abortions, there are additional steps we can take to continue to reduce barriers, including:

1. Introducing and passing a constitutional amendment to protect access to safe, legal abortion for years to come.
2. Passing the Reproductive Health Equity Act & expanding access to abortion funding
3. Repealing state restrictions and removing abortion from the criminal code

Barriers to accessing abortion, and other health care services have always existed even before Roe fell. People face many hurdles to access care, like finding child care, time off of work, and the costs of transportation and lodging associated with traveling hundreds or even thousands of miles for care. These barriers and abortion bans almost always disproportionately harm Black, Latino, Indigenous, and other people of color because of this country's legacy of racism and discrimination.

How to Support Abortion Rights

- If you have a story or experience with Planned Parenthood you would like to share, [use this link to share your story](#). You can also take [ReproRising's virtual storytelling training](#) to provide you with all the tools you need to write letters to the editor, legislative testimony, and more.
- Join [ReproRising's Task Force](#) and PPAV's [rapid response team](#) to get frequent and urgent updates on what's happening in the repro freedom space in Virginia.
- Volunteer with [DC Abortion Fund](#) to help support their ability to make grants to pregnant people in the DC area who cannot afford the full cost of an abortion. (Note: They may be at capacity for taking on new volunteers)
- Sign up for [REPRO Rising's Practi-Cab Program](#) to provide transportation to and from clinics when abortion funds reach out in need of assistance.
- Volunteer with [ARCH Fund](#) to help increase access to reproductive health care and health education resources in the NOVA area.
- Knock doors for [Planned Parenthood Action Fund-endorsed candidates](#).
 - [Abigail Spanberger](#)
 - [Jennifer Wexton](#)

In the Community



I was excited to welcome our tunnel boring machine, named in honor of Hazel Johnson, with Alexandria Renew Enterprises. This 380-ton machine will create a 2-mile tunnel that's 12' in diameter, helping us prevent 120 million gallons of sewage from entering our waterways each year.



I had a great time celebrating the newest class of Alexandria's 40 under 40. These individuals are outstanding leaders in Alexandria's business and nonprofit community. You can read more about them [here](#).



I had the great honor of joining Vice President Kamala Harris for a round-table discussion on reproductive rights.



Less than an hour of your time can save up to 3 lives. You can schedule your appointment at <http://inovablood.org> or call 1-866-BLOODSAVES. If you want to donate with me, I'm eligible again in September!



I've spent this week at the National Conference of State Legislatures summit in Denver, deepening my relationships with fellow Virginia legislators, meeting other state legislators from across the country, and learning from each other.

Thank you

If you would like to share your feedback on legislation or need anything, please feel free to email me at DelEBennett-Parker@house.virginia.gov or call our office at 703-239-3155.