



BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT

1 2025 DRAFT General Laws Policy Statement

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3 The basic purpose of local government is to provide essential services and protection for the community  
4 that citizens cannot provide for themselves. Local governments should decide which services and  
5 programs are of primary importance to the community. Virginia’s counties, cities and towns need  
6 legislation that provides the maximum opportunity to foster improved quality of life and high-quality  
7 growth.

8 **I. EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT**

9 **GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE**

10 The General Assembly should allow significant diversity among municipal charters and not impose  
11 uniformity. Charter amendments requested by the local governing body should be supported by state  
12 government.

13 The General Assembly should promote the sharing of the economic, social, cultural, fiscal and  
14 educational benefits and burdens of urbanization and gentrification among all local governments  
15 involved.

16 The addition of sub-state and special district governments should be controlled. New districts should not  
17 be created by the General Assembly unless local governments are unable to furnish services. In addition,  
18 no sub-state districts, including planning district commissions, should be granted real or quasi-legislative  
19 authority to undertake other functions except when expressly directed by their member jurisdictions,  
20 including those towns not directly represented in the entity. Local government officials are elected by  
21 their citizens; decisions made should be respected by state officials.

22 VML urges a careful review of the statutes concerning consolidation of local governments to ensure (a)  
23 that citizen-initiated petitions are signed by a reasonable number of affected citizens who reside in the  
24 jurisdiction, and (b) adequate periods of time elapse between consolidation or annexation actions. The  
25 Virginia Municipal League supports the General Assembly’s provision of financial incentives to promote  
26 consolidation of local government services and cooperative agreements among local governments. The  
27 General Assembly should respect the reversion process as outlined in the state code.

28 **INTERGOVERNMENTAL ISSUES**

29 Local governments have a vital role in the Commonwealth. They must have sufficient powers and  
30 flexibility to meet this role. The General Assembly should adopt legislation to promote and expand, to  
31 the extent necessary, municipal powers, to (a) enhance the ability of local governments to provide  
32 services required by their citizens, and (b) allow local governments to meet their responsibilities in  
33 state/local partnerships. In addition, local governments who provide redundant services should work  
34 together so the citizens receive the ~~necessary services~~ necessary services necessary.

35 VML opposes intrusions into the way local governments conduct their business, including burdensome  
36 regulations relating to:

- 37 1. meetings of governing bodies;
- 38 2. purchasing procedures;
- 39 3. matters that can be enacted by resolution or ordinance;
- 40 4. procedures for adopting ordinances; and
- 41 5. procedures for filling vacancies on local governing bodies.

42 State intervention in local affairs is only warranted in significant matters where regional or statewide  
43 issues that are of great importance exist. No changes should be made in the laws or regulations affecting  
44 local government without substantial local input from affected jurisdictions and participation in  
45 developing those changes.

46 VML opposes legislation that:

- 47 1. bars courts from awarding attorney's fees to local governments when a frivolous suit is filed; and
- 48 2. eliminates the notice of claim requirement found in Va. Code, § 15.2-209.

49 Membership on all state and regional commissions or committees dealing with matters affecting local  
50 governments must include local officials who represent a demographic and geographic cross-section of  
51 counties, cities, and towns.

52 VML supports legislation to transfer responsibility from local governments to the state government for  
53 the liability, administration, and cost of community service options for persons upon whom court costs  
54 and fines are levied.

## 55 **TOWNS**

56 The General Assembly and the executive branch should recognize towns as essential units of local  
57 government, with important roles in providing services to citizens living in a concentrated environment.  
58 As such, towns with their centrality and economic efficiency represent the future of the urbanizing areas  
59 of the Commonwealth. Towns should have clear and full authority to be formed and to act in a timely  
60 manner on matters which protect public health, safety, and welfare.

61 The General Assembly should respect and support the sovereignty, utility, and urban powers of towns.  
62 No legislation should be enacted that allows counties to usurp or diminish the authorities of towns nor  
63 dissolve a town unless at their own request. Excise taxes that counties are authorized to levy generally  
64 must not apply within towns without the explicit approval by the town's governing body.

65 Towns should retain the right to annex lands and otherwise expand their boundaries. Towns over 5,000  
66 population should have the right to become independent cities; and cities, as stipulated in the Code of  
67 Virginia, should have the right to revert to town status.

68 The General Assembly should scrutinize bills dealing with laws of general applications to local  
69 governments, to avoid enacting any laws that could be sources of possible conflicts between counties and  
70 towns. The following list provides examples of conflicts between towns and counties exacerbated by  
71 legislative action:

- 72 1. taxation of town residents by county governments at the same rate as that applied to those living  
73 in the county's unincorporated areas, when comparable benefits and services are not provided;

- 74 2. county imposition of a merchants' capital tax on businesses located within the town at the same  
75 rate as that applied to businesses located in unincorporated areas of the county, when the town  
76 levies a business, professional and occupational license tax;
- 77 3. unequal town zoning and planning authority for land straddling or abutting town corporate  
78 boundaries and unincorporated county areas;
- 79 4. funding of county sheriffs' and deputy sheriffs' salaries by the State Compensation Board and  
80 other state-funded amenities not provided to town police departments; and
- 81 5. unequal statutory authority of towns in relationship to that of cities and counties.
- 82 5-6. Towns should retain the right to hold their own referendum

83 The General Assembly should recognize the unintended consequences of inadvertently omitting towns or  
84 cities or counties from legislation. The state laws on local taxes must allow towns to determine how tax  
85 dollars collected from residents and businesses of the town will be used.

## 86 ELECTION LAWS

87 **Non-partisan local elections.** VML opposes attempts to require that candidates nominated by political  
88 parties for local elections be identified by party labels on ballots. Nationwide, about 75 percent of  
89 municipalities have non-partisan elections. Virginia is not unique in this regard.

90 There is not a partisan way of responding to public safety, street improvements, enforcing the codes, or  
91 taxation required for the numerous services that the state requires localities to offer (and to pay for). The  
92 result of requiring party identification will be increased partisanship at the local level, which will not  
93 improve local governance.

94 In addition, requiring party identification will further hinder the ability of Federal Employees including  
95 our Military to participate as local elected officials.

96 **Administration of election laws.** Cities and counties have very little control over the administration of  
97 elections, yet pay the majority of costs, including office overhead, voting equipment, equipment storage  
98 and security maintenance, training of staff, safety of staff, and printing of ballots. Cities and counties also  
99 pay a portion of the costs of the salaries for registrars and members of electoral boards, to include salaries  
100 for staff other than the registrar, but have no direct connection to the appointment of these officials. The  
101 state should provide an adequate level of funding for local election administration that is commensurate  
102 with the State's extensive control of the process. The General Assembly should not increase the cost of  
103 election administration without providing state funding to pay for the increased expenditures.

104 Rank Choice Voting. VML recognizes that as technology continues to advance, the capability and types of  
105 voting machines available on the market and in localities will continue to adapt. Not every machine can  
106 currently accommodate rank choice voting and purchasing new machines can be expensive. Regardless  
107 of availability, VML believes that cities and counties should maintain the authority to decide if the  
108 locality will use rank choice voting.

## 109 STATE AND FEDERAL MANDATES

110 The state and federal governments must provide adequate funding for any local programs or  
111 responsibilities that are mandated or expanded by state and federal laws or regulations.

112 The federal and state governments should not use project funding as a means of forcing local land use  
113 decisions in contravention to local land use plans. These actions violate the principles of local authority  
114 and weaken the local tax base.

115 Federal and state mandates must be reduced when funding is reduced, so that localities are not required to  
116 spend additional local dollars to comply with the mandates. Further, funds should be distributed in the  
117 most efficient way possible with the least regulatory control.

118 The Governor and General Assembly should promote state-local partnerships by requiring:

- 119 1. A review of mandates in specific program areas to (a) establish the full cost to local governments  
120 of implementing mandates and (b) develop an equitable basis for determining state-local funding  
121 responsibilities.
- 122 2. Completion of cost estimates for proposed legislation prior to its first full review by a legislative  
123 committee, with legislation negatively affecting local governments' revenue-raising ability being  
124 submitted to the Commission on Local Government "COLG" for a fiscal impact analysis.
- 125 3. Use of a performance-based approach to mandates that (a) focuses on outcomes, (b) offers  
126 incentives for achieving state objectives, and (c) gives local governments autonomy to determine  
127 the best way to achieve the desired result.
- 128 4. Simplification of state reporting requirements associated with mandates, greater efficiency and  
129 coordination, and making better use of reporting technology.

130 The alarming tendency of state and federal agencies to treat guidelines authorized by enabling legislation  
131 as having the stature of law itself must cease. In addition, the state should avoid unessential and arbitrary  
132 implementation of federal regulations.

### 133 **STATE AND LOCAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

134 The state requires local governments to provide certain services, such as education, corrections, social  
135 services, health, and community mental health. The local government does not have the option of not  
136 being the state's service provider in these areas. "State aid" to localities is the state's payment for the  
137 implicit contractual arrangement for this assignment of duties. In addition, local governments must  
138 contribute local funding to these services.

139 In addition to the state-mandated services, localities provide other services that are either necessary (water  
140 and sewer, police and fire protection, etc.) or desired by residents (parks and recreation, cultural activities,  
141 etc.). Local governments need the flexibility and resources to collect revenues to meet all their  
142 responsibilities.

143 Two fundamental problems in Virginia's intergovernmental structure are first, the state does not fund at  
144 adequate levels, existing services, particularly education and law enforcement, that it requires local  
145 governments to provide; and second, local officials have very limited revenue options, which forces them  
146 to rely heavily on real estate, personal property taxes and other local revenue sources to pay for services.

147 Further, to improve the relationship of the state and local governments, the state should:

- 148 1. Not restrict the taxing authority and revenue sources of local governments without local  
149 concurrence.
- 150 2. Strengthen the partnership of the state with local governments by granting local government full  
151 authority to deal effectively with issues affecting their own locality.
- 152 3. Participate as a financial partner with local governments in the costs of education, including  
153 school construction and renovation, and, as an active partner, fully fund the state's fair share of  
154 the costs of education.
- 155 4. Follow specific procurement procedures before purchasing property, including adequate inquiry  
156 into the purchase, public hearings and notice, and notice of intent to settle sent to the locality. In

157 addition, the state should consider remuneration to the locality for the loss of real estate taxes as  
158 well as any loss in economic development potential. The state should not interfere with the  
159 procurement tools currently available to local government including cooperative procurement.

## 160 **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF GOVERNMENT**

161 VML strongly supports the free flow of information to citizens and the media through the conduct of  
162 governmental affairs at all levels in the open, in good faith compliance with the Freedom of Information  
163 Act (FOIA). VML also supports efforts to educate local government officials about the Act, and the  
164 importance of extensive and accurate reporting of government affairs.

165 Any proposed FOIA legislation should be reviewed by the FOIA Council prior to being enacted.

166 The use of electronic meetings should be allowed during a state of emergency when social distancing is a  
167 necessity. VML supports the option of local and regional bodies to meet electronically with public  
168 participation without a state of emergency in place. ~~VML supports amending Virginia Code Section 2.2-~~  
169 ~~3708.3 and the definition of “remote participation” in Virginia Code Section 2.2-3701 to allow members~~  
170 ~~of public bodies who meet the definition of a “person with a disability” (51.5-40.1) to both participate~~  
171 ~~remotely in meetings of public bodies and be counted toward the quorum when they participate in a~~  
172 ~~meeting.”~~

173 Citizens have the right to have personal information protected. Government also must be able to control  
174 its work processes so that public business can be conducted. It is in the public’s interest to conduct some  
175 matters outside public view prior to official action. Accordingly, VML strongly opposes extending  
176 limitations on closed meetings and exempt records, which would upset the Act’s careful balance among a  
177 fully informed public, the protection of individuals’ privacy, the ability of government to conduct its work  
178 and those matters for which the premature release would not be in the best interest of the locality or its  
179 citizens. VML opposes legislation that would require localities to record closed session in any manner.

180 VML supports legislation that allows the redaction of email addresses furnished in confidence to a local  
181 governing body with respect to complaints in local investigations to include local public health and safety,  
182 nuisance, waste and recycling complaints.

183 In addition, localities should be able to continue charging reasonable fees for any and all records,  
184 including for research time and for computer records that must be provided under the Act to avoid shifting  
185 the cost of copying from the requestor to the general taxpayers. The Act should continue to limit rights to  
186 documents to citizens of the Commonwealth and news organizations that publish in the Commonwealth.

187 VML opposes any further legislation that would control the time allotted for public comment at public  
188 meetings. While VML supports public comment, localities should have the discretion to determine  
189 procedures for when public comment should be taken.

190 VML opposes legislation to limit the use of any legitimate means of communications from one elected  
191 official to another, including letters, emails and conversation. The General Assembly should not exempt  
192 itself from anything that it imposes on a locality. The “working papers” exemption should continue to  
193 remain in place.

194 State policy must assist local governments to contact and notify their citizens in the most efficient and  
195 cost-effective manners possible. Ads required by the *Code of Virginia* are increasingly more expensive to  
196 run in the newspaper and often are only seen by a decreasing number of citizens. The current trend is for  
197 local newspapers to reduce the number of times they are published weekly and/or going to an online

198 platform. This has resulted in localities needing to meet certain advertising requirements with only  
199 expensive newspapers available for legal notices.

200 A locality's internet presence, social media, local cable access channels, local radio, and TV provide  
201 alternative methods to contact the citizens much more broadly and effectively than newspaper ads in  
202 many areas of the Commonwealth. The state code should be amended to allow local governments  
203 electronic and other alternative means of communicating with their citizens when providing required legal  
204 notices.

205 In addition, small towns should be allowed to use first class mail instead of newspaper advertising to  
206 notify the citizens of government actions such as advertising a budget hearing or advertising a land use  
207 hearing.

## 208 **GOVERNMENTAL & MUNICIPAL OFFICIAL LIABILITY**

209 VML calls upon Virginia's congressional delegation to support legislation to restore suits brought under  
210 42 U.S.C. Section 1983 to traditional civil rights actions, and to preclude the award of damages if the  
211 court finds that the government or its officials were acting in good faith.

212 Expanding liability and eroding immunities at the state level across the nation have had a chilling effect  
213 on the actions of local government officials contributing to local government insurance problems, creating  
214 immense financial risks (particularly for legal costs), and posing a substantial obstacle to the provision of  
215 needed public services.

216 The Virginia General Assembly should strengthen and must maintain the principles of sovereign  
217 immunity for local governments and their officials.

218 VML strongly opposes bringing local governments under the Virginia Tort Claims Act. This action would  
219 seriously erode the sovereign immunity doctrine and lead to a substantial increase in frivolous suits.

220 The tort reparations system in the U.S. creates many difficulties in the administration of justice. VML  
221 supports efforts at the national and state levels to address tort reform, such as limitations on the tort  
222 liability of local governments in areas where local governments do not enjoy sovereign immunity.

223 The General Assembly should adopt legislation to codify the proposition that real property of local  
224 governments shall be exempt from liens created by statute or otherwise. This proposition has already  
225 been recognized by the Virginia Supreme Court for mechanics liens.

## 226 **PERSONNEL**

227 Management has the responsibility to ensure that employment, training, and promotional opportunities  
228 are provided without regard to any unlawful discriminatory factor, qualified persons with disabilities or  
229 any other factors not related to job performance.

230 VML supports:

- 231 1. the current injury by accident definition in the Virginia Workers' Compensation Act.
- 232 2. the current Workers' Compensation Act provisions for use of an employer selected panel of  
233 physicians to treat injured workers.
- 234 3. maintenance of the exclusive remedy provisions of the Virginia Workers' Compensation Act.
- 235 4. local governments' authority to establish hours of work, salaries, and working conditions for  
236 local employees.

237 5. VML continues to support the current rules for work-related disability benefits.

238 VML opposes:

- 239 1. Any attempt to require collective bargaining or ‘meet and confer’ requirements for public  
240 employers or employees; and
- 241 2. Any attempt by the federal government to stipulate grievance procedures for state and local  
242 employees or additional state government procedures, such as the police officers bill of  
243 rights.

#### 244 **LINE OF DUTY ACT**

245 The cost of the current Line of Duty Act is not sustainable for either the state or local governments.

246 VML supports recommendations and options made by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review  
247 Commission for the Line of Duty Act program that would ensure the fiscal sustainability of the program  
248 and ensure that the benefits are available to those who need and deserve them. Further, VML supports a  
249 new, dedicated funding source to pay for LODA benefits, but opposes any funding approach that would  
250 rely on or adversely affect existing local revenue sources. Adding additional members to the Line of Duty  
251 Act would further burden the state and local governments.

#### 252 **TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND BROADBAND - LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRINCIPLES**

253 VML sets forth the following principles to guide any federal or state legislative action regarding  
254 telecommunications issues.

255 VML supports legislation that promotes and protects the ability of localities to establish, operate, and  
256 maintain sustainable and affordable broadband authorities to provide essential broadband to all  
257 communities throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

- 258 1. **Public Rights-of-Way.** Local rights-of-way are public property. The rights-of-way contain  
259 numerous utility and other facilities. Proper management and maintenance of rights-of-way  
260 are essential to ensure public safety, to protect the integrity of the property, to guarantee the  
261 safety of workers and to maintain the efficiency of local streets, utility systems, and  
262 transportation facilities and networks. Private use of public rights-of-way significantly  
263 increases management responsibilities and maintenance costs. Any private use of public  
264 rights-of-way should be valued at fair market value.
- 265 2. **Franchise authority.** Neither the federal government nor the state should enact any laws to  
266 shift the award of franchises to use the public rights of way from the local governing body to  
267 any state or federal agency. Individuals and businesses in the community help to buy and  
268 maintain rights-of-way through their taxes. Rights-of-way should not be used for private  
269 purposes without approval by and compensation to the local government for the right to use  
270 the space, and local governments must have authority to control the rights-of-way. The  
271 procurement process for franchise authority should be streamlined.
- 272 3. **Equitable Taxation.** Telecommunications providers are valued members of our corporate  
273 community. All members of the corporate community must pay taxes on an equitable basis,  
274 as appropriately determined by the local government. No legislation should restrict the  
275 ability of local governments to impose equitable taxes on telecommunications providers.
- 276 4. **Universal Service and Consumer Access.** Important educational and community services  
277 are provided via telecommunications. Telecommunications providers must be responsive to  
278 citizen needs and concerns and provide appropriate customer services to all segments of our

- 279 community so that disparities due to income or geographic location affecting citizen access to  
280 new technology are minimized.
- 281 5. **Competition.** Local governments are interested in healthy competition in the field of  
282 telecommunications. To ensure a competitively neutral and non-discriminatory market, all  
283 service providers must pay fair compensation for the use of public property. Governments  
284 should not be forced to subsidize some participants in this free-market competition through  
285 lower-than-fair-market charges or any other means.
- 286 6. **Local Government as Customers.** Local governments are important consumers of  
287 telecommunications services. In many communities, the local government is the single  
288 largest customer of telecommunications services through its government offices, education  
289 facilities and emergency communications. As valuable customers, local governments should  
290 be treated equitably.
- 291 7. **Private Equipment placed on Public Facilities.** Local governments should continue to  
292 have the authority to approve the location and fees for any attachment or co-location of  
293 communications infrastructure on local government buildings and facilities.
- 294 8. **Broadband and Local Governments.** VML supports efforts to make affordable broadband  
295 access available to all Virginians. VML believes there are several ways to achieve this goal  
296 and no one technology or method of delivery should be chosen as the answer for our  
297 geographically diverse state. While public-private partnerships between a local government  
298 and a broadband provider may be the right approach for some communities, a municipal  
299 government broadband authority owning and operating a new project may be better for  
300 others. State grants should allow localities, groups of localities, municipal broadband  
301 authorities and public-private partnerships to submit applications for state grants without  
302 prejudice to the applicant.
- 303 9. **5G.** The current 5G statutes have eroded the authority of localities to charge fair market  
304 value, add appropriate screening, and control placement of these facilities along with added  
305 undue burdens in the form of shot clocks and limited review of applications. VML supports  
306 the ability of localities to ensure that their communities retain their unique character to  
307 include regulating these structures, particularly in historic areas.

## 308 **TECHNOLOGY**

309 Local government should maintain its authority to address and implement its unique cybersecurity plan  
310 without state interference.

311 When a local government has a cybersecurity incident it should have the time and ability to consult with  
312 their own consultants and law enforcement prior to any state involvement.

313 Local governments should have authority to regulate the use of unmanned aerial vehicles in their  
314 jurisdictions insofar as is consistent with FAA regulations. Especially when such systems are utilized to  
315 support a local governing body or authority authorized under title 15.2 for purposes of inspecting their  
316 own facilities, assessing damage caused by natural or manmade disasters, and by fire and rescue  
317 personnel for purposes of assessing an emergency to which they are responding.

318 Artificial Intelligence. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) has become commonplace in daily life and  
319 local operations. Local governments have become reliant on AI and should retain the ability to continue  
320 utilizing the technology. The State should not mandate or squander the ability of all localities to  
321 determine how best to use AI nor should the State require unreasonable reporting requirements.

## 322 **UTILITIES**



323 Fundamental policies should be honored by the state in promoting the delivery of utility services by local  
324 governments and the authorities they create:

- 325 1. Each provider of service must be free to set its rates without interference from other local  
326 governments or the state.
- 327 2. Each local government providing utility services must be able to compete fairly with any  
328 other providers without state interference.
- 329 3. Each local government that provides utility services must be able to manage its revenues and  
330 expenditures related to the services without state interference.

331 Virginia’s localities and water and sewer authorities must retain the ability to enforce liens against  
332 landlords’ properties for the unpaid water and sewer bills of their tenants by having the ability to collect  
333 monies owed. No further limits should be placed on this authority.

334 Municipal utility systems must continue to have the authority to set their own rates. Any attempt by the  
335 State Corporation Commission to regulate rates for utility services furnished by local governments would  
336 violate the Virginia Constitution.

337 Local governments that provide utility services must continue to have the authority to negotiate the rates,  
338 terms, and conditions for any attachments to or joint use of municipally owned utility infrastructure. The  
339 safe and efficient operation of the municipal utility requires that final approval for any joint use or co-  
340 location on its facilities remain with the utility.

341 The State Corporation Commission should develop a structure to ensure that the amounts that utilities can  
342 charge localities and other entities for placing electric utility lines and other facilities underground are  
343 based on the most cost-effective, competitive, yet safe methods.

344

## 345 **II. PUBLIC SAFETY**

346 VML supports legislation that preserves law and order and promotes the safety, quality of life and  
347 administration of justice within our communities. The Commonwealth should provide funding for  
348 programs that prepare our youth to be productive, responsible, self-reliant members of society by  
349 enhancing its efforts to prevent juvenile crime, minimize violence, and reduce the formation and  
350 operation of gangs.

351 The state should continue to assist localities in their efforts to coordinate public safety activities including  
352 emergency services.

353 VML supports legislation that will clearly establish the relationships between State and localities to assure  
354 efficient and appropriate command, control, and communications during local emergencies.

355 State law should allow all counties, cities, and towns to make full and appropriate use of modern  
356 technology to promote public safety. Localities should have maximum flexibility to contract with the  
357 private sector to implement all aspects of such technology. ~~VML supports the General Assembly  
358 reviewing the ability of law enforcement to stop vehicles for expiration of registration stickers, illegal use  
359 of defective and unsafe equipment, taillights, brake lights and the suspension of objects or alteration of  
360 vehicle to obstruct a driver’s view to promote the safety and security of all persons on the road.\*~~

361 Next Generation 911 is vital to public safety in the Commonwealth; we support this technology as a  
362 funded mandate.

363 Greater latitude should be given to localities in encouraging innovative methods of combating traffic  
364 violations and crime. This includes reviewing the current traffic violation code sections to include a  
365 review of equity of safety.

366 VML supports expanded legalization of speed cameras if the area in which they are placed has been  
367 documented as an area of concern; a speed study, crash data, etc. -on all roads at all times. VML supports  
368 the establishment of School Crossing Zones as defined in 46.2-873 for highways located within the  
369 grounds of a public institution of higher education as defined in 23.1-100 or within one-half mile of the  
370 grounds of a building or property used by the Public Institution of Higher Education.

371 VML supports full restitution for any law enforcement response that is a hoax.

372 VML supports local jurisdictions efforts to maintain animal shelters in a fiscally responsible manner and  
373 does not support any state or federal mandate that would provide a financial burden on local animal  
374 shelters.

375

### 376 **MARIJUANA-RELATED POLICE TRAINING**

377 VML is concerned that the Commonwealth may experience sky-rocketing roadside fatalities and  
378 accidents with injury, as evidenced in states where marijuana became legal prior to 2021. The  
379 ramifications of legalization of marijuana for personal use make it imperative that resources for  
380 marijuana-related police training be prioritized for the following reasons:

- 381 • There are not enough qualified DREs (Drug Recognition Experts) in the state of Virginia. To be  
382 certified for DRE, officers must attend a combination of approximately 120 hours of classroom  
383 instruction and apprenticeship in the field.
- 384 • Due to staffing shortages, agencies lack time to send officers to the required DRE classes even if  
385 funding and training are available.
- 386 • Ambiguous laws on legal traffic stops and field sobriety will likely result in prosecutorial  
387 challenges due to lack of training in roadside testing methods, no per se limit for presumption of  
388 impairment for drugged driving, and the absence of an approved instrument to test levels of drugs  
389 in the blood. Additional training is also needed for prosecutors to achieve successful outcomes in  
390 court for drugged driving offenses.

391 VML supports significant and immediate resources for marijuana-related police training.

392

### 393 **SKILL GAMES**

394 VML supports a local referendum for Skill games that provides counties, cities and towns to hold  
395 their own. VML also supports local taxation of Skill Games and the retention of local zoning authority.

### 396 **COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS**

397 VML requests both increased funding and an equitable distribution formula for services provided under  
398 the Comprehensive Community Corrections Act (CCCA) and the Pre-Trial Services Act (PSA). Since the  
399 advent of these programs in 1995, caseloads have effectively doubled at the local level, while state  
400 resources have failed to meet the caseload increases. These resources are allocated to localities on a

401 discretionary grant basis. Given the statewide character of this program, it is now time to allocate these  
402 funds through an equitable formula that recognizes regional costs and benefits of these services.

#### 403 **COURT FEES**

404 A user of the court system should not force increased costs on the general population. VML supports  
405 legislation to increase court fees to pay for courthouse maintenance, security, renovation and construction  
406 and other court-related projects.

#### 407 **COURT SECURITY**

408 The General Assembly should adopt legislation making it clear that local judges do not have the authority  
409 to order localities to fund more deputy positions for court security than are provided for in the State Code  
410 and Appropriations Act.

#### 411 **INTERNAL AFFAIRS INVESTIGATIONS**

412 Legislation should be enacted to restrict the use, in civil matters, of information gathered in internal  
413 investigations.

#### 414 **OVERCROWDING/STATE SUPPORT**

415 The state should honor its commitment to remove state prisoners from local jails.

416 The state should fully fund the per diem reimbursement for all state prisoners.

417 Jails built by a single large locality should be eligible for the same state reimbursement rate for  
418 construction as a regional jail facility.

419 Local governments should not be forced to pay for state prisoners. The state reimbursement rate must be  
420 restored to an amount that is fair to localities reflecting actual costs.

#### 421 **TRAINING ACADEMIES**

422 The state should fully fund all mandated criminal justice training provided through certified academies.

#### 423 **VIOLENCE/TERRORISM**

424 The General Assembly should enable localities to help communities deal with criminal issues by:

- 425 1. expanding state and local cooperative efforts in neighborhoods and localities,
- 426 2. promoting additional prevention and intervention programs to deal with youth who may adopt a  
427 violent way of life, and
- 428 3. granting localities more flexibility to handle problems of abandoned and blighted structures.