VirginiaGrassroots

December 2, 2022

Dear Virginia General Assembly Senators and Delegates,

As you prepare for the 2023 General Assembly session, the Virginia Grassroots Coalition, a statewide coalition of more than fifty grassroots groups and 15,000 voters, would like to share with you our legislative priorities. We have focused on legislation that fits at least one of the following categories: 1) legislation that has a chance of bipartisan support, 2) legislation that can be used for messaging during the 2023 elections, and 3) existing legislation that needs to be protected from repeal and amendment.

In January, we will identify the specific bills that the Virginia Grassroots Coalition will work to support through various advocacy strategies, as well as those bills we urge you to oppose.

We would also like to meet with you to discuss your priorities for the legislative session and find ways to work together to protect our Virginia democracy and promote the health, safety and prosperity of all Virginians.

2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Clean Energy and Climate

- Defend the Virginia Clean Economy Act, Clean Car Standards, and Virginia's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).
- Advance fair, just energy prices and access to clean energy.
- Ensure that Virginia makes full and timely use of federal resources from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the bipartisan Investment and Infrastructure Jobs Act (IIJA) to address clean energy transition and climate resilience, combat inflation and create good jobs.
- Support climate-smart agriculture initiatives and funding.

Public Education

- Increase funding for English language learners in Virginia public schools.
- Allow school boards and local governing bodies to designate the use of unexpended local funds for school maintenance.

Protect Human Rights

- Protect rights to full reproductive health care choices including safe and legal abortion.
- Remove the prohibition of same sex marriage from the Virginia Constitution and promote non-discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation in the issuing of marriage licenses.
- Enact legislation condemning violence against women and children in all forms and commit to holding perpetrators accountable.

Support Families and Workers

- Support equity and the advancement of all women in the workforce.
- Reduce legal costs, protect corporations from liability and workers from harassment by mandating regular harassment prevention training across industries to cover all forms of unlawful harassment related to federal and state-protected characteristics.
- Prevent the enforcement of nondisclosure agreements in all instances of sexual assault and harassment.

- Know Your Rights: Employers must inform workers of the EEOC/EEO statute of limitations (180 - 300 Days) to file claims of discrimination.
- Establish a comprehensive statewide Paid Family & Medical Leave program to ensure that all working Virginians can take paid time away from work to welcome a new child or when a health emergency arises.

Campaign Finance Reform

- Improve disclosure bills related to independent expenditures and public disclosure.
- Restrict personal use of campaign funds.
- Limit campaign contributions from specific sources and ban foreign money in campaigns.
- Adopt a resolution supporting an amendment to the U.S. Constitution allowing Congress and the states to regulate election spending.

Good Governance

- Standardize and clarify the process for removing local Virginia elected officers without increasing the cost burden on localities or the state
- Expand electronic meeting access for state, regional, and local public bodies.
- Provide the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council (VCOIEAC) with authority to investigate complaints and assess penalties for violations of the Virginia code of ethics.
- Criminalize intentional violations of the Virginia ethics code that prohibit certain gifts and conflicts of interest.
- Return permitting approval to the environmental citizen boards: the Air Pollution Control Board, the Water Control Board and the Waste Management Board.

Criminal Justice Reform

- Ensure pay parity for Public Defenders.
- De-felonize drug possession.
- Adopt preliminary hearing protections.
- Defend probation and pretextual policing reform.

Gun Violence Prevention

- Prohibit the sale or possession of assault weapons, or at a minimum, increase the age for buying assault weapons and limit the size of magazines.
- Require safe storage of firearms, with increased penalties for non-compliance that leads to harm.
- Close the “boyfriend loophole” so that access to firearms can be denied to all perpetrators of domestic violence.
- Prohibit the manufacture, sale or possession of ghost guns.

We ask that you support these important legislative goals in the upcoming General Assembly session. Thank you for your good work on behalf of the Commonwealth and all of its people.

The groups that endorse this letter include:

Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy
Fairfax Indivisible
Fairfax Grassroots

VirginiaGrassroots

We of Action (WofA)
Defend Democracy NOVA
Our Revolution Falls Church
Generation Ratify Virginia
Progressive Democrats of America - Virginia
Grassroots Alexandria
4 Public Education
BigMoneyOutVA
Earth Rise Indivisible
Indivisible Northern Virginia
Williamsburg JCC Indivisible
Network NOVA
Vienna Neighbors United
They See Blue, Virginia
The Chitthi Brigade, Virginia
350 Alexandria
Virginia Democracy Forward
Virginia National Organization for Women (NOW)
Lewinsville Faith in Action
Loudoun Climate Project
Charlottesville NOW
Together Hanover
Postcards4VA
Herndon Huddle
Indivisible Virginia
Protect Our Commonwealth
The Rural Project
Hunter Mill Huddle
Our Revolution VA
Herndon-Reston Indivisible
New River Valley Indivisible
Justice Forward Virginia

The following individuals who endorse this letter include:

Harriet Hirsch, Alexandria
Mary Kranz, Louisa
Matt de Ferranti, Arlington
Patricia Ranney, Mineral
Lisa Sales, Alexandria