



## VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE - 2025 SESSION PREVIEW

### ***Fall and Special Election Results:***

The Fall 2024 elections saw Virginia again vote blue at the Presidential level, but with smaller margins in most areas than they had in 2020. The Congressional elections saw three new members of our delegation, replacing the retiring Cong. Wexton (D); Cong. Bob Good (R), who lost in a primary; and Cong. Spanberger, who is running for Governor. These departures and November's results caused three special elections to fill two House of Delegates seats and one State Senate seat. These special elections occurred January 7<sup>th</sup>. Republican Luther Cifers won in the 10th Senate District, while Democrats Kannan Srinivasan and JJ Singh won in the 32nd Senate District and the 26th House District, respectively. And while we have three new faces, the balance of power in both the House (51-49) and the Senate (21-19) remains the same and very tight.

### **The 2025 Session**

The 2025 Session has had an auspicious beginning. As a result of water issues in the City of Richmond, the Session did not really get started until Monday, January 13<sup>th</sup>. However, both Speaker Scott and the Senate leadership have vowed to finish the Session on time (Feb. 22). As they look to craft the amended budget, all seem to agree that there is a notable amount of one-time funds available, but concerns remain about providing a lot of resources to on-going commitments over the next two years.

### ***Governor Youngkin:***

This is Governor Youngkin's final session of his four-year term. Before the holidays he released his proposed amendments to the current two-year budget. As he looks to his legacy, the amendments reflect his priorities of tax cuts, expanding educational opportunities through scholarships for low-income families to use at private schools, public safety, and investments in healthcare, economic development, and the Commonwealth's technology infrastructure.

### ***House and Senate:***

Both the House and Senate have also indicated an interest in tax relief, though unlikely to the degree and in the form that the Governor has proposed. They too are interested in providing additional support for K-12 education. However, they are looking at a recent JLARC report as a guide to potentially adjust the funding formula and provide additional resources. Lastly, there will be a focus on passing three constitutional amendments (voting rights, marriage equality, and choice). It is worth noting that the Governor does not have an opportunity to amend or veto Constitutional amendments. Such amendments must pass two years in a row and then go to the voters for their approval.

***Higher Education:***

In his proposed amendments to the budget, the Governor has offered a number of key items. The first is to fully fund, using several sources, the Virginia Military Survivor and Dependents (VMSDEP) program. We expect the legislature to support funding the program, though they may alter the funding mechanism. The Governor also included language that would first limit, then cap tuition at the public colleges and universities. While it is too soon to tell how that will be received by the House and Senate, traditionally the House has included additional funds to help mitigate tuition increases and the Senate has included additional financial aid dollars. The Governor's amendments did include some support for capital projects at institutions as well as other areas of state government. These issues, along with Name, Image and Likeness (NIL); data transparency; mental health; dual enrollment among others will be on top of legislators' minds this session. It is also worth noting that after the Session, a Joint Subcommittee charged with reviewing and updating the current higher education funding formula will begin its work in earnest. The final recommendations are expected late in the fall.

**Looking Ahead*****Fall 2025 elections:***

Looking ahead to the November 2025 elections, they include all three statewide races (Gov, LG and AG) and all 100 House of Delegates members. Several candidates have come forward for the three statewide races, including Cong. Spanberger (D) and the current LG, Earle-Sears (R), both running for Governor. There are a number of candidates on both sides for the Lieutenant Governor's race, including sitting members of the state legislature. The current Attorney General, Jason Miyares, is running again, with two Democrats announcing their run so far. Given the very tight margins in the House and Senate, and the changes in leadership at the federal level, the results of these elections could have notable policy implications for higher education, as well as the Commonwealth as a whole.

***VBHEC Update:***

The Virginia Business Higher Education Council (VBHEC), is a coalition of higher education and business leaders whose mission is to enhance the performance of Virginia's public colleges, universities, and community colleges and their funding so they can produce the greatest possible positive impact on Virginia's economy. VBHEC has been focused on the state's goal of providing a paid meaningful internship for every college student for the last several years. There was intense work this summer and fall bringing together all the stakeholders to develop metrics to track progress, and definitions to help guide the effort. During the session VBHEC and its board members will engage with the House and Senate in support of higher education. Additionally, as it does every major election cycle, the VBHEC undertook a poll on Virginians' views about its higher education system. Given the importance of the statewide elections this fall, they moved up the timing and completed the poll in December. These poll results are currently being shared with the statewide candidates and then with the leadership of both parties, as well as House and Senate members and staff and the administration. Beginning in the spring a policy plan will be released and an advocacy program will commence as the campaigns get into full swing.