BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT

Proposed 2027 VML Legislative Program Items
Items Approved by the Legislative Committee on Sept. 16, 2026

Note: Items are listed in alphabetical order

1. **CSA State and Local Funding Partnership**

Local governments administer the Children's Services Act (CSA) program on behalf of the state, and local governments share in the funding responsibilities with the state. Local governments have consistently supported efforts to contain program costs, particularly the private day special education program. VML adamantly opposes the capping of state funding responsibility for this and any other component of the CSA program, which simply shifts the funding burden for mandated services onto local governments.

2. **Fire/E911 Funding**

VML supports maintaining the current distribution of aid to localities from the Virginia Fire Program Fund until a more complete examination of funding needs, administration, and distributions can be conducted; the current study is not broad enough to serve as a basis for meaningful change.

VML supports the Virginia Department of Emergency Management's request to appropriate the estimated $40M from the E-911 Wireless Fund to localities; an administrative issue in 2026 meant that this money was not appropriated to the detriment of local 911 system operations.

3. **Housing – Tools for Communities to Meet Housing Needs**

Understanding the Commonwealth-wide need for more attainable, low-income and affordable housing, we support legislation and funding that enables localities to better meet their housing needs while respecting the critical role that local conditions and decision-making must play in development and planning.

4. **Local and Regional Juvenile Detention Facilities**

Local and regional juvenile detention facilities play an integral role in the continuum of Virginia's juvenile justice system. A major consideration in maintaining the system of local and regional detention facilities is to serve youth closer to their families, their community support systems, the courts with which they are involved, and their legal counsel.

Any state-level discussion of the future of this system, including efforts involving closures or consolidations, must include the major stakeholders in the system, such as members of the juvenile and domestic relations courts system, detention facility managers, and youth/family advocates.

Discussions should also consider regions looking to open facilities to serve their communities and avoid sending youth long distances for placement; include examination of ways the state can improve investments in facilities to update key infrastructure; address behavioral health needs of youth and their families to improve outcomes; and find ways to effectively address state requirements for educational services.

5. **Local Excise Taxes**

VML supports the statewide authority for local governments to establish an excise tax on the sale of vaping products.

6. **Local Land Use**

Localities must maintain control of local land use decisions. Neither the state nor the federal government should usurp or pre-empt a locality's authority to make such decisions; nor should they impose requirements that weaken planning and land use functions. This includes all types of housing, including but not limited to short-term rentals.

VML also supports local government authorities to promote affordable and mixed-income housing as well as the required infrastructure to facilitate infill development, redevelopment, and mixing of uses. Any mandate from the state should include full funding for the locality.

7. **Local Revenue Sources**

Local tax revenues are primarily derived from real estate, personal property (i.e., car tax), local sales and uses, Business, Professional, Occupational Licensing (BPOL), meals and transient occupancy taxes. These revenues are used to fund each locality's priorities that tend to focus on K-12 education and public safety. VML cannot support initiatives that phase out or eliminate sources of revenue to cities, counties, and towns without a firm commitment of ongoing general fund resources to offset local revenue losses.

8. **Prioritizing State Funding in Response to Changes in Federal Funding**

As the federal government fundamentally changes its funding relationship with states, localities, and organizations that serve communities, VML asks that the state prioritize its resources for vital services to help protect and serve children, families, and the most vulnerable in our communities.

9. **Referendum Authority for Towns**

VML supports inclusion of towns in any legislation authorizing referenda by local governments.

10. **State Assistance to Local Law Enforcement Agencies (HB 599)**

Almost 70 percent of Virginians live in communities served by police departments. The State created a program of financial assistance to local police departments (HB 599) when it imposed an annexation moratorium on cities more than 30 years ago. It has increasingly deemphasized this funding obligation as a priority but has never compromised on the annexation moratorium.

VML calls for the state to honor its commitment to local governments and public safety by funding the program as stipulated in the Code of Virginia or lift the moratorium on annexation.

11. Statewide Building Code - Lis Pendens

VML supports expanding the lis pendens statute to allow a memorandum of lis pendens to be filed when there is an underlying action seeking to enforce the Virginia Statewide Building Code and to amend *Code of Virginia* Section 36-105(C)(4) to provide that if a lis pendens has been filed, a new notice of violation does not need to be issued for the same violation, and any pending non-criminal enforcement action, or enforcement appeal may continue with the new purchaser.

12. State-Mandated Tax Policy Changes and Local Revenue

Locally elected officials understand the needs of their community as well as the burden of taxation on their constituents. The Commonwealth should refrain from encroaching upon the responsibility of local officials by imposing additional exemptions from locally generated revenues or imposing additional red tape that make it more difficult to raise revenue in their communities.

13. Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF)/Water Quality Improvement Fund (WQIF) Full Funding

VML supports the continued full state funding for the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) and the Water Quality Improvement Fund (WQIF) to include projects currently in progress.

14. Sovereign Immunity

Expanding liability and eroding immunities at state levels across the nation have had a chilling effect on the actions of local government officials contributing to local government insurance problems, creating immense financial risks (particularly for legal costs), and posing a substantial obstacle to the provision of needed public services. The Virginia General Assembly should strengthen and must maintain the principles of sovereign immunity for local governments and their officials.

15. Support Establishment of the Virginia Water Affordability Program

VML supports the establishment of the Virginia Water Affordability Program using State general funds to provide support for municipal utility customers with delinquent utility payments,

16. Support for Public Education

A General Assembly joint subcommittee continues to address recommendations from the 2023 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) report on the Standards of Quality (SOQ), including recommendations on updating the SOQ in the short- and long-run.

VML encourages the General Assembly to expeditiously implement and fund the JLARC recommendations to more equitably share the costs of K-12 public education with local governments and to ensure the overall success of students across the Commonwealth.

VML supports innovation in public schools but opposes efforts to limit local authority or to divert state funds from the public education system.

17. Virginia Alcohol Safety Action Program (VASAP)

The *Code of Virginia* requires that individuals convicted of DUI enroll in, and successfully complete, an alcohol safety action program. The financial sustainability of the program, originally intended to be funded completely with client fee revenues, remains an open question. The Commonwealth should provide appropriate funding from its own resources and not shift responsibility for program administration and funding to localities for this state-mandated program.