



Virginia 2018 General Assembly Legislative Session Wrap-Up

The Virginia General Assembly adjourned its 2018 session sine die on March 10th. Legislators heard 2,778 bills during the 60-day session, less than a third of which passed. Significant accomplishments for the legislature during this period included securing dedicated Metro funding and a sweeping overhaul of Dominion’s consumer rate structure.

The major news of the recent session, however, is the inclusion of Medicaid expansion in the State Budget, which will provide healthcare for 400,000 needy Virginians. Medicaid expansion was deliberated and passed in a series of special sessions in April and May, and ultimately signed into law by Governor Northam on June 7th.

This past session the JCRC monitored and lobbied for multiple pieces of legislation falling under the topics of combating bias, protecting immigrant communities, preventing gun violence and support for Israel, as well as pursued Medicaid expansion and budget funding to support the work of our Jewish agencies.

Fiscal Year 2019-20 Budget

Operating Funds

The JCRC is proud to have secured \$100,000 per year for 2019 and 2020 for the Jewish Social Service Agency’s (JSSA) Holocaust Survivor Program. The funding, allocated via the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, cares for elderly low-income Holocaust survivors living in Northern Virginia. This program enables survivors to age in place, which not only enhances quality of life and enhances dignity at the end of life but reduces the risk of institutionalization.

Medicaid Expansion

Since 2014, JCRC has been working to push the General Assembly to provide affordable health insurance to hardworking Virginians through Medicaid expansion. With the newly expanded Medicaid program, nearly 400,000 low-income Virginia adults will gain coverage. Most of these individuals are in a health coverage “gap,” meaning that they are uninsured and ineligible for existing health insurance programs. The expansion is largely supported with federal funds from the Affordable Care Act. Virginia’s remaining portion will be paid for by a new hospital tax.

2018 Policy Initiatives

Expanding Hate Crimes Protections & Fighting Discrimination

The JCRC supported bills that would have deterred bias-motivated crimes by extending extra protections to all vulnerable groups, including victims who were selected based on their ability, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. These bills would also have aided law enforcement in its work protecting Virginians by ensuring that the Commonwealth is accurately tracking bias-motivated crimes. The JCRC also supported a bill that would have protected individuals' religious identities from being shared with the federal government for the purpose of creating a registry.

- **HB10 (Kory)/HB266 (Turpin): Expanding Hate Crimes Protections** - Adds disability, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation to the categories of victims whose intentional selection for a hate crime involving assault, assault and battery, or vandalism results in a higher criminal penalty for the offense. The bill also requires that these crimes be recorded by the Virginia State Police, and also provides a private right of action to victims of vandalism. **These bills did not pass in 2018.**
- **HJ85 (Plum): Hate Crimes Report** - Directs the Virginia State Crime Commission to study the prevalence of hate crimes in Virginia and the adequacy of the Code in addressing such crimes in comparison with other states. **This bill did not pass in 2018.**
- **HB 1329 (Tran): Government Data Collection & Dissemination Practices Act** – Prohibits any state agency maintaining an information system that includes personal information from disseminating to federal government authorities information concerning the religious preferences and affiliations of data subjects for the purpose of compiling a list, registry, or database of individuals based on religious affiliation, national origin, or ethnicity. **The JCRC supported this bill, which did not pass in 2018 but was continued to 2019.**

Protecting Immigrant Communities

The JCRC worked to protect immigrant communities from discrimination and fought against arrangements with law enforcement that would discourage undocumented immigrants from reporting and coming forward as witnesses to crimes, seeking out protection from abusers, and obtaining medical care – which would endanger the community as a whole.

- **HB1257 (Cline): Prohibits Sanctuary Policies** - Provides that no locality shall restrict the enforcement of federal immigration laws to less than the full extent permitted by federal law. Violating localities will lose state funding. **The JCRC opposed this bill, which passed. Governor Northam vetoed the legislation.**
- **HB953 (Lopez): Crime Victim Immigration Status** – Prohibits law enforcement from inquiring into the immigration status of any crime victim or any witness in a criminal investigation, but does not prohibit police from inquiring into the status of victim or witnesses arrested or charged with criminal violation, when required by federal law or essential to the investigation or prosecution of the crime. **The JCRC supported this bill, which did not pass in 2018.**

Preventing Gun Violence

The JCRC opposed bills that would have lifted the prohibition on dangerous weapons in houses of worship and therefore posed and increased risk to public safety. The JCRC supported a bill that would have prohibited firearms in preschools and day care centers, bills that would have further protected domestic violence survivors, and a bill that would have banned bump stocks.

- **SB372 (Chafin)/HB1180 (LaRock): Weapons in Houses of Worship** – Repeals the statutory prohibition on carrying a dangerous weapon, without good and sufficient reason, to a place of worship. Current Virginia law prohibits weapons in houses of worship barring “good and sufficient reason.” **The JCRC opposed these bills, which were defeated in 2018.**
- **SB79 (Lucas): Firearms in Preschools** – Adds public, private, or religious preschools and child day centers to the list of schools where possessing a firearm on school property or on a school bus is prohibited. **The JCRC supported this bill, which did not pass in 2018.**
- **SB797 (Howell)/HB651 (Murphy): Protecting Domestic Violence Survivors** – Provides that it is a felony for someone with a permanent protective order to possess a firearm. Current law only extends this prohibition to a permanent protective order for *family abuse*. **The JCRC supported these bills, which did not pass in 2018.**
- **SB1 (Ebbin): Banning Bump Stocks** – Prohibits the manufacture, import, sale, possession, transfer, or transportation of any device used to increase the rate of fire of any semi-automatic firearm beyond its intended capability. **The JCRC supported this bill, which did not pass in 2018.**

Support for Israel

The JCRC supported a resolution to commemorate Israel’s 70th birthday and articulating the special relationship between the Commonwealth of Virginia and the State of Israel.

- **HR100 (Filler-Corn): Commending the 70th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel** - Marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the modern Jewish State of Israel.