

Virginia 2026 New Laws Guide

A Community Resource Summarizing Laws Passed by
the 2026 Virginia General Assembly

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Summary

At the beginning of this year, lawmakers in Virginia—the Virginia General Assembly—came together to consider and vote on bills to change Virginia’s laws and the state budget. Thousands of bills were considered across many issue areas. The laws highlighted in this document represent just a small selection of the many measures passed during the session.

This document highlights a selection of new laws that are effective as of July 1, 2026. It features important policies aligned with LAJC’s priorities and practice areas and is intended to serve as an educational resource to help community members, advocates, and partners better understand their rights and protections.

Some of these bills were led by LAJC, meaning that we primarily drafted and/or proposed them to lawmakers. Other bills were led by partners or done in coalition with one or more partner organizations. All were made possible by the brave voices and advocacy of community and organizations.

We began the year with the intention to work hand in hand with clients and community partners to champion policy change to promote justice, equity, and opportunity for all Virginians. Together, we accomplished just that!

Bills are divided into six categories: Criminal Legal Reform, Youth Justice and Education, Healthcare and Public Benefits, Housing and Consumer Justice, Immigrant Rights, and Worker Protections.

Criminal Legal Reform

- **Ensures Failure to Appear Charge is Only Used When Person Intentionally Avoids Prosecution** - [SB 283](#) (Sen. Aird) / [HB 933](#) (Del. Simon) - Defines intentional evasion of court to allow consideration for missed childcare, transportation, and other similar challenges when someone misses court.*** (Pretrial Justice Coalition)
- **Pretrial Data Integration** - [SB 480](#) (Sen. Deeds) / [HB 1084](#) (Del. Hernandez) - Allows local and statewide pretrial data to be shared with the Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS). This will result in researchers being able to understand the effect of pre-trial detention and look for connecting outcomes and variables with other data from the Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Social Services, K-12 data, and higher education data.*** (Pretrial Justice Coalition)
- **Collections on Court Debt** - [SB 180](#) (Sen. Williams Graves) / [HB 17](#) (Del. Price) - Consolidates reforms to reduce long-term harms from unpaid court debt by delaying when delinquent debt is sent to collections from 90 days to 180 days and shortening the statute of limitations for collecting criminal court debt to 10 years.*** (Fines and Fees Coalition)
- **Work Behind the Wall** - [HB 16](#) (Del. Price) - Allows individuals who are currently incarcerated and earning very low-wages for their work to use those hours to count towards their court debt.*** (Fines and Fees Coalition)
- **Expungement of Police and Court Records** - [SB 230](#) (Sen. Surovell) - Permits expungement of police and court records related to an initial charge when the charge is reduced or amended and the person is not convicted of the initial charge; also permits petition for expungement for multiple charges if they all arise from the same transaction or occurrence and are all eligible for expungement.**

Youth Justice and Education

- **Language Access for English Learners** - [SB 685](#) (Sen. Pekarsky) / [HB 1278](#) (Del. Reaser) - Ensures that translation of vital documents and equal access to academic processes are available to students and parents. **This bill will go into effect in January 2027.***

- **Safe Access and Privacy Protections at School** - [SB 491](#) (Sen. Pekarsky) / [HB 836](#) (Del. Rasoul) - Strengthens privacy protections, prevents immigration-based discrimination for students and families, and creates a required process for police arrests at public schools.* (Co-led with CASA)
- **Minimum Age** - [SB 18](#) (Sen. Locke) - Sets age 11 as minimum age for charging children in the juvenile court system.** (RISE for Youth)
- **Youth Diversion** - [SB 70](#) (Sen. Favola) / [HB 438](#) (Del. LeVere Bolling) - Expands diversion of youth from the juvenile court system**
- **Restorative Justice in Schools** - [HB 298](#) (Del. McQuinn) - Requires schools to consider using evidence-based restorative disciplinary practices before suspension or expulsion for minor offenses (except serious or violent offenses). **This will be effective on July 1, 2027.**** (Fund our Schools Coalition)

Healthcare and Public Benefits

- **Privacy in SNAP** - [HB 879](#) (Del. Shin) - Strengthens privacy protections in public assistance programs by requiring public notice when agencies receive large-scale requests for personal data of applicants and recipients of public benefits, such as SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid.*
- **Increased Unemployment Benefits** - [SB 759](#) (Sen. Ebbin) / [HB 1320](#) (Del. Martinez) - Increases all new unemployment insurance claims filed after July 1, 2026 by \$48 per week.** (UI Coalition: VPLC, LAJC, NELP, SALT, TCI)

Housing and Consumer Justice

- **Manufactured Home Lot Rental Act** - [HB 374](#) (Del. Krizek) This bill increases transparency for manufactured housing residents about charges and requires park owners to fix code violations related to habitability before raising lot rents. It also protects residents by requiring that manufactured park owner automatically renew lot leases unless the lease termination is justified because the resident is in violation of the lease.** (VPLC, AHA)

- **Manufactured Home Lot Rental Act - Right of First Refusal** - [HB 375](#) (Del. Krizek) This bill updates the Virginia's manufactured home lot rental rules to give residents and local governments a right of first refusal to purchase the park when a park is sold, along with required notice and timelines. The bill also gives residents an opportunity to purchase the park at any time, even if the park has not been offered for sale, and the park owner must consider residents' offer and negotiate in good faith.** (VPLC, AHA)
- **Warranty of Habitability** - [SB 373](#) (Sen. Boysko) and [HB 281](#) (Del. Callsen): This bill strengthens tenants' rights to a habitable property by allowing tenants to raise unsafe and hazardous conditions as part of a nonpayment eviction case. Prior law did not allow courts to consider unsafe conditions when determining how much rent a tenant owes unless the tenant pre-pays all rent alleged due into escrow. This bill would allow courts to resolve conditions and rent issues at the same time by removing the escrow requirement, leading to more efficient and fairer results.** (VPLC, AHA)
- **Appeal Bond** - [HB 221](#) (Del. Hope) - This bill allows all tenants who lose an eviction case based on their failure to pay rent to appeal their cases. In general, civil litigants appealing a case from general district court to circuit court must pay an appeal bond. Prior law allowed indigent litigants to waive the bond requirement, unless the case was for failure to pay rent. This bill expands the ability to waive the appeal bond to indigent tenants, ensuring access to justice and the appeal process more equitably.** (VPLC, AHA)
- **14 Day Notice** - [HB 15](#) (Del. Price) and [SB 48](#) (Sen. Rouse) - This bill allows tenants a fourteen-day grace period (instead of five under current law) to catch up on their rent before their landlord can proceed with an eviction case.** (VPLC, AHA)

Immigrant Rights

- **Driver Privilege Cards** - [SB 446](#) (Sen. McPike) / [HB 911](#) (Del. Lopez) - Extends Driver Privilege Card (DPC) duration to match standard licenses.*
- **ICE Out** - [HB 1441](#) (Del. Lopez) / [SB 783](#) (Sen. Salim) - Limits 287g contracts, the ability for jails or prisons to hold people for ICE, and when law enforcement can assist in federal civil immigration enforcement.*** (CASA, ACLU, VACIR)

- **Special Immigrant Juvenile Status to 21** - [HB 667](#) (Del. Maldonado) - Aligns Virginia code with federal law so that young vulnerable immigrant youth ages 18-21, who have been neglected, abused or abandoned, can find a pathway to protection and stability through Special Immigration Juvenile Status (SIJS).*

Worker Protections

- **Farm Worker Minimum Wage** - [SB 121](#) (Sen. Carroll Foy) / [HB 20](#) (Del. McClure) - Includes farmworkers in the minimum wage protection. **This bill goes into effect on January 1, 2027.***
- **Heat Stress Protections** - [SB 288](#) (Sen. Aird) / [HB 1092](#) (Del. Hernandez) - Requires the Health and Safety Codes Board to develop and implement heat stress protections for workers.***

Worker Bills LAJC Supported:

- **Minimum Wage Increase for All Workers** - [SB 1](#) (Sen. Lucas) / [HB 1](#) (Del. Ward) - Increases Virginia's minimum wage, incrementally, \$15 per hour by January 1, 2028.**
- **Paid Family Medical Leave** - [SB 2](#) (Sen. Boysko) / [HB 1207](#) (Del. Sewell) - Provides 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave to all Virginians. Benefits will become available December 1, 2028. Virginia is the first state in the South to pass mandatory paid leave.**
- **Sick Days** - [HB 5](#) (Del. Convirns-Fowler) / [SB 199](#) (Sen. Favola) - Expands paid sick leave requirements to cover all employees (private and public), granting at least 1 hour of paid sick leave per 30 hours worked.**
- **Protection of Employees** - [HB 675](#) (Del. Maldonado) - Protects vulnerable workers, especially immigrants and those with mixed-status families, from employer intimidation and exploitation. This bill empowers the Virginia Department of Labor to investigate complaints and assess escalating civil penalties.**
- **Labor & Employment Omnibus Bill** - [HB 238](#) (Del. Lopez) - Protects vulnerable workers from wage theft, empowers state agencies to better enforce various wage laws & protects the taxpayers by preventing misclassification and other violations that allow employers to evade paying taxes.**