



LIFT UP YOUR VOICE: TELL LEGISLATORS TO FUND OUR SCHOOLS REGIONAL BUDGET HEARINGS

What are regional budget hearings?

Each January, the General Assembly's House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees hold public hearings to receive comments about the Governor's budget priorities. The purpose of the 2020 budget hearings will be to receive public feedback about the Governor's proposed 2020-2022 state budget.

When and where will the hearings take place?

Regional hearings will take place on Thursday, January 2, 2020, at the following locations:

- **Northern Virginia** – George Mason University, Hylton Performing Arts Center, Gregory Family Theatre (10960 George Mason Circle, Manassas, VA 20109) – Begins at 10:00 a.m.
- **Blacksburg** – Virginia Tech, Classroom Building, Room 206 (1455 Perry Street, Blacksburg, VA 24060) – Begins at 10:00 a.m.
- **Hampton Roads** – Old Dominion University, Virginia Modeling, Analysis, and Simulation Center (1030 University Blvd., Suffolk, VA 23435) – begins at 12:00 noon
- **Richmond** – J. Sargeant Reynolds Parham Road Campus, Workforce and Conference Center (1651 E Parham Rd., Richmond, VA 23228) – begins at 12:00 noon

For more logistical information, check out <http://sfc.virginia.gov>.

How do I sign up to speak?

- People wishing to speak may **register at the hearing site no earlier than one hour prior** to the start of the hearing.
- Speakers will be taken in the order of registration.
- Each person may register only one speaker at a time.
- Speakers are asked to limit their comments to three minutes or less.

Budget Public Hearings – Information

Reminders:

- Limit your comments to three minutes or fewer.
- We recommend identifying one of the demands that are deeply important to you and sharing a personal story that demonstrates why.
- Personal stories are always more compelling than statistics, and too often our Legislators are out of touch with how urgent the needs are on the ground. Help them connect emotionally to our demands.

Sample Statement:

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is _____. I am here today as a (position/role and school).

I am here out of necessity. The needs of my students cannot go ignored another year. Virginia ranks 40th in-state per-student spending. It is unacceptable that one of the wealthiest states in the country (10th in the U.S, in average income) puts such a low priority on our children.

As you and your colleagues work on this budget, it's time to prioritize our kids. It's time to fund our schools. That is why I am asking you to fulfill the basic demands presented by the Fund Our Schools Campaign/Virginia Educators United.

I would like to share with you all some personal perspectives on what these demands mean to me.
Add personal story here....

Thank you for considering my comments.

Talking points:

Strong, well-supported public schools are vital for our children, our families, and our economy. The Governor's office has been touting this as a historic investment in schools. They don't mention that nearly 2/3rds of the money proposed is just adjusting for more students and inflation. They also don't mention that if you give teachers a 3% raise over two years, and inflation is 4% during that time, you have decreased teacher pay.

These demands amount to meeting your constitutional obligations, paying staff an appropriate wage, having safe buildings for children, and ensuring a fair economy. These are not high demands: they are bare necessities. To fall short of them is unacceptable.

Demand #1:**Fully fund the Standards of Quality as adopted by the Virginia Board of Education.**

- Our Constitution requires that we provide equitable and high-quality schools. Our Board of Education determines the specifics of what schools should provide to meet this standard. If the General Assembly fails to fund the Standards of Quality, they are violating the Virginia Constitution.
- The SOQs require \$2 billion NEW dollars. The Governor is only proposing \$392 million.
- Get rid of the cap on support staff from the Recession which is depriving us of \$400 million per year for support staff

Demand #2:**A 20% raise for teachers, and a competitive living wage for support staff**

- Virginia has the 8th best schools in the nation, and yet teachers here are paid \$8,483 less than the national average (14% below the national average)
- We earn 31% less than professionals with similar education and hours worked. One of the largest teacher wage penalties in the entire country.
- The national inflation rate is around 2% annually. If we get the 3% raise over two years that the Governor is proposing, we end up with LESS money than we have now.
- Support staff across Virginia deserve a living wage based on MIT living wage calculations.
- According to Virginia law, teacher compensation is supposed to be reviewed every two years to determine if it meets the State's goal of salaries that are at or above the national average. If these reviews are even being conducted, their intent is being disregarded

Demand #3:**Provide money for renovations and new buildings by restoring the Construction Grant Program and increasing Literacy revenues for school construction**

- A couple of years ago, you all decided that the Capitol Building wasn't safe enough for you all and devoted \$300 million to its renovation. Meanwhile, staff and students in our schools are dealing with literal life-threatening conditions including black mold, leaks, broken heat and air conditioning units, and Legionella bacteria. Why is the safety health of educators and children less of a priority than your comfort?
- This budget contains money for the construction of new prisons, but not new schools. This is a misplacement of priorities.

Demand #4:

Acquire the revenue for these necessities by:

1. balancing our economy, rather than putting more on the backs of working-class families who are already overburdened and under-resourced

- This budget is proposing regressive taxes to secure the little new funding it proposes. It is unacceptable that we are putting more money into an equity fund for low-income students by taking money out of their parents' pockets; the same parents that already pay a larger share of their income in taxes than the wealthiest people in the state. This is unfair and perpetuates a cycle of poverty.
- Virginia prides itself as the 'best state for business' and hasn't raised the corporate tax rate in 40 years, but we rank 40th for state per-pupil spending, and dead last in the nation for worker rights
- The highest tax bracket in Virginia is \$17,000 and up, meaning those who are living below the poverty line are paying the same tax rate as people who make millions of dollars each year
- We let large, multistate businesses shift their profits out of Virginia, so they don't have to pay taxes here that main street businesses pay. If we adopted combined reporting laws, like most states with a corporate income tax, we would put all businesses on a level playing field and have \$80 million more dollars to invest in our schools.
- Tax loopholes are creating an economy where small, main-street businesses are paying more in taxes than large, multi-million-dollar corporations

2. Rolling back school privatization

- The influence of private companies perpetuates over testing which drains our financial resources, causes teacher turnover, and harms our students
- The influence of private companies causes districts to purchase expensive technology that provides poor instructional outcomes and prevents teachers from providing needed differentiation for students.
- Career and Technical Education should be determined by educators who represent the interests of students, not the Chamber of Commerce which represents the interests of private businesses or individual private corporations who stand to profit from student loss of curriculum enrichment.
- Money for charters, vouchers, and Teach for America drain our budget and harm our public-school system as a whole
- We give a tax break so generous to wealthy donors that they can make a profit off it. The Education Improvement Scholarship Tax Credit drains our budget of millions of dollars every year. Let's end this handout and prioritize Virginia's public schools.