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25 reasons the Va. General Assembly session mattered - bey the budget

From staff reports Feb 25, 2017



JAM

Virginia State Capitol building photographed from the roof of the SunTrust Bank building.

The state budget was the marquee issue of the General Assembly session, but here are 25 reasons the session mattered.

Airbnb

Lawmakers backed a bill to give local governments more authority to regulate Airbnb and other rental platforms. The measure would let local governments adopt ordinances requiring people to register if they want to offer property for short-term rentals.

Alcohol

Legislators sent Gov. Terry McAuliffe a bill to permit the sale of 151-proof liquor in the state. McAuliffe vetoed a similar bill in 2016, citing concerns about potential harm to underage drinkers and students at Virginia colleges and universities.

Birth control

Lawmakers approved a bill to require health insurance companies to cover a 12-month supply of prescription birth control.

Bullying

School principals would notify the parent of any student involved in a bullying incident about the status of any investigation within five school days of the allegation, under a bill that cleared the legislature.

Coal ash

Dominion Virginia Power would be required to compile information on existing contaminated sites containing coal ash ponds under a defanged bill that cleared the legislature. Dominion would have to evaluate options for closing the ponds and "demonstrate the long-term safe units, which the utility intends to cover with a synthetic liner and turf.

Coal tax credits

McAuliffe vetoed a bill that would have restored tax credits for coal industry employment a production, saying the tax credits have been ineffective.

Colleges

Legislation to provide a consumer bill of rights for student loan borrowers failed, as did sev sought to put limits on tuition increases.

Public colleges and universities would annually be required to report to the State Council o Education for Virginia the value of investments under a bill that passed as the result of con University of Virginia's Strategic Investment Fund, which is worth more than \$2.2 billion. Th would have to give advance notice of plans to increase tuition and fees.

Easily passing both chambers was a bill prohibiting public institutions from abridging free s campus, including for invited guests, and legislation to broaden SCHEV's access to wage da outcomes of various degree programs.

Driver's license suspensions

Under a bill heading to the governor, judges must consider an individual's finances when p together a payment schedule for unpaid fines. Another approved bill would give a judge di to suspend a driver's license for a first marijuana offense. McAuliffe says license suspensioi harder for people to pay court fines because it is harder for them to get to work.

Explicit school materials

The General Assembly went where the Virginia Board of Education refused by passing a bil parental notification of sexually explicit material in classrooms. It includes an opt-out optio and defines sexually explicit as any material that deals with rape, incest, or bestiality. The g to veto the bill.

Felons' voting rights

The House blocked a proposed constitutional amendment that would have required felons restitution, fines, costs and fees associated with their convictions before their voting rights

restored. The proposal would have required violent felons — as defined by the legislature — years after completing their sentences to get their rights back.

Guns

McAuliffe vetoed a bill that would expand eligibility for concealed-handgun permits. The bill would allow military service members who are between the ages of 18 and 21 and on active military duty who have been honorably discharged, to apply for a permit. Under current law, residents and nonresidents must go through a standard permit application process to carry a concealed handgun.

The legislature passed another gun bill that McAuliffe is likely to veto. It would allow any of the military, reserves or Virginia National Guard to carry a concealed weapon without going through the standard permit application process.

Harvard

Legislation heading to the governor would provide \$1.55 million in compensation to Keith / who was wrongly convicted of a 1982 rape and murder in Newport News.

Howell

Speaker of the House William J. Howell, R-Stafford, announced that he would not seek re-election and he would step down after 30 years in the House, 15 as speaker. House Republicans design a new leadership team for 2018: Speaker M. Kirkland Cox of Colonial Heights, Majority Leader C. 7 of Shenandoah, Caucus Chairman Timothy D. Hugo of Fairfax County and Majority Whip Jacks of Manassas.

Immigration

Lawmakers backed a bill meant to bar so-called “sanctuary” localities. The bill says “no locality may enact any ordinance, procedure, or policy that restricts the enforcement of federal immigration laws. If a locality plans to veto the bill.

McAuliffe vetoed a separate bill that would require the Department of Social Services to publish “identifiable reports” on refugees, saying “it does not reflect Virginia’s values.”

Jail deaths

A revamped Board of Corrections would review suspicious deaths in Virginia's local and regional jails. The legislation approved Saturday on the session's last day.

Earlier in the session, the General Assembly refused to reappoint Inspector General June J. J. with her investigation of Jamycheal Mitchell's death. He wasted away in the Hampton Road Jail. He was jailed for stealing \$5 in snack food from a convenience store.

Larceny

Legislators defeated a bill to raise Virginia's grand larceny threshold from \$200 to \$500, leaving it among the nation's strictest.

Lead

Lawmakers passed a bill to require school systems to create and carry out a plan to test for lead in school buildings that were built "in whole or in part" before 1986.

Left-lane dawdlers

Legislators passed a bill increasing the fine for failing to drive on the right side of highways. The bill initially would have called for a mandatory fine of \$250 for failing to drive on the right side of the road or failing to observe traffic lanes. Legislators accepted a change suggested by McAuliffe during the session.

Mental health

The General Assembly included \$7.5 million in state and other funds for so-called "same-day" mental health services. The bill requires the state's Community Services Boards to screen people who are in mental health crisis and walk into the clinic, not days or weeks later. Lawmakers also included \$5 million for permanent housing for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless because they suffer from mental illness.

Opioids

McAuliffe signed four bills meant to counter the state's opioid epidemic. They put into act programs; initiatives to increase access to the overdose-reversal drug naloxone; changes to policies; and processes for providing services to infants exposed to opioids in utero.

Planned Parenthood

McAuliffe vetoed a measure that would restrict Planned Parenthood from contracting with prevent the Virginia Department of Health from providing funds to clinics that provide abortion who are not covered by Medicaid.

The House of Delegates on Saturday failed to override the veto. Its vote of 62-33 fell short of threshold. Overriding a veto requires a two-thirds vote in each chamber. With the Senate could never have overridden any of McAuliffe's vetoes.

Redistricting reform

A House panel defeated anti-gerrymandering bills aimed at creating what supporters said a competitive electoral process. Lawmakers and the next governor will sign off on new boundaries legislative and congressional districts after the 2020 census.

School suspensions

Legislators scuttled several measures to curtail the length of school suspensions. Opponents would take away too much authority from school officials to keep potentially dangerous students. Proponents said worst-case scenarios are exceptions and that lengthy suspensions impeded

Tebow bill

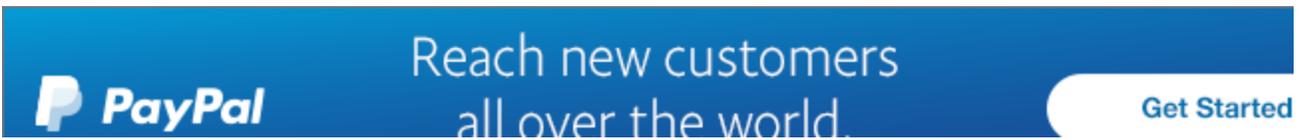
For a third straight year, McAuliffe vetoed the so-called "Tebow bill" that would allow home public school sports. The bill is named for Tim Tebow, who was homeschooled before he became a winning quarterback at the University of Florida.

Utilities

Former Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli joined a small, bipartisan group of lawmakers in urging

2015 legislation that halted utility rate reviews by the State Corporation Commission. A spec
McAuliffe would consider sending down a new bill if Sen. J. Chapman Petersen, D-Fairfax Ci
would face better prospects than Petersen's previous, unsuccessful effort. Petersen said th
court, saying: "I've done everything I could do."

Legislation allowing some electric utility substations to avoid local planning and zoning app
An amendment carved out a section of Northern Virginia where some residents oppose a p
transmission line.



A blue banner advertisement for PayPal. On the left is the PayPal logo, consisting of a white 'P' inside a blue circle followed by the word 'PayPal' in white. To the right of the logo, the text 'Reach new customers' is written in white, with 'all over the world.' below it. On the far right, there is a white button with the text 'Get Started' in blue.