



PRESS RELEASE

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Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus Celebrates Accomplishments of the 2024 General Assembly Session

Richmond, VA - The Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus (VAAPIC) proudly celebrates members' significant legislative achievements of the 2024 General Assembly Session.

In 2024, VAAPIC membership grew to an historic eight members. These members represent the geographic diversity of the Commonwealth, as well as the diversity of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities:

- Chair, Delegate Irene Shin (D-Fairfax);
- Vice Chair, Senator Ghazala Hashmi (D-Chesterfield);
- Treasurer, Senator Saddam Salim (D-Fairfax);
- Senator Suhas Subramanyam (D-Loudoun);
- Delegate Kathy Tran (D-Fairfax);
- Delegate Kelly Convirs-Fowler (D-Virginia Beach);
- Delegate Adele McClure (D-Arlington); and
- Delegate Kannan Srinivasan (D-Loudoun)

VAAPIC established a comprehensive approach to addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by AAPI and immigrant communities. Our members successfully championed bills and budget items that mirror the caucus's core legislative priorities: enhancing public education, expanding healthcare access, and safeguarding rights and inclusivity for all Virginians.

2024 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

VAAPIC is particularly proud of the inclusion of certain items in the budget conference report. These hard fought victories represent years of work and leadership from members of the Caucus: VAAPIC is especially gratified to see the inclusion of these items that had been introduced and sidelined in years past, underscoring how elections matter.

- **\$100,00 to create a model curriculum, tools, and resources to teach AAPI history** ([117 # 3c](#), Tran);
- **\$81.6 million to implement revised staffing standards for English Learner students**, based on student proficiency level rather than the current standard of one position per 50 students ([125 # 3c](#), Hashmi); and
- **\$4 million to increase availability of information and services** to people with disabilities and in languages other than English across state agencies ([331 # 4c](#), Hashmi and Tran).

2024 BILL HIGHLIGHTS

VAAPIC is committed to amplifying the unique viewpoints of AAPI Virginians, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are met in legislative discussions and decisions.

VAAPIC urges the Governor to sign these bills to support the Commonwealth’s growing AAPI community.

Language Access & Education:

- Increasing language access in elections ([HB 989](#), Tran);
- Requiring the translation of model rental forms ([HB 1487](#), Tran);
- Recalibrating public school funding to enhance support for English Language Learners and students with disabilities ([SB 105](#), Senator Louise Lucas, D-Portsmouth with Hashmi and Subramanyam as Incorporated Chief Co-Patrons);
- Directing the Department of Education to continue to maintain the learning needs dashboard ([HB 131](#), Convirs-Fowler); and
- Establishing proficiency-based student-to-teacher ratios for our English Language Learner students ([SB 272](#), Hashmi).

Healthcare & Housing:

- Expanding DMAS coverage for remote medical services ([SB 250](#), Hashmi);
- Creating licensure pathways for immigrant and refugee physicians ([HB 995](#), Tran);
- Allowing public schools to enter MOUs with mental health service providers ([HB 919](#), Srinivasan);
- Expanding financial eligibility and continuing pandemic-era regulations for Medicaid waiver recipients with developmental disabilities ([HB 908](#) and [HB 909](#), Shin);
- Establishing the right to contraception as well equity in contraceptive access ([SB 237](#) and [SB 238](#), Hashmi);
- Establishing protections for Virginia residents against utility disconnections during extreme weather and state emergencies ([HB 906](#), Shin);
- Prohibiting retaliatory conduct from landlords to protect tenants ([HB 817](#), McClure);
- Combatting the Commonwealth’s fentanyl and opioid crisis ([HJ 41](#), Srinivasan and [HB 134](#), Convirs-Fowler); and

- Studying options to better support first responders exposed to toxic substances when responding to emergencies ([HB 133](#), Convirs-Fowler).

Firearm Safety and Justice Reform:

- Enforcing a firearm purchase waiting period and increasing the legal firearm purchase age to 21 ([SB 273](#), Subramanyam and [SB 327](#), Salim);
- Closing the "dating partner loophole" ([HB 362](#), McClure);
- Studying the effects of gun violence on our communities ([SB 338](#), Salim);
- Combating voter intimidation by expanding the ban on firearms at polling places ([HB 939](#), Shin);
- Granting judges greater discretion over fines and fees in juvenile traffic cases ([HB 1264](#), Shin); and
- Establishing a Substantial Restraint Order (red flag law) statewide reporting system ([HB 916](#), Srinivasan).

Supporting Small Businesses and Workers:

- Increasing transparency for gig drivers ([HB 924](#), Srinivasan);
- Removes the Jim Crow-era minimum wage exemption for farm workers ([HB 157](#), McClure); and
- Establishing the Blockchain and Cryptocurrency Commission in efforts to study the cryptocurrency industry ([SB 439](#), Salim).

Voter Access:

- Improving curbside voting access for people with disabilities ([SB 605](#), Subramanyam) and requiring additional notice for changes to polling places ([HB 940](#), Shin); and
- Establishing guidelines for localities to follow when determining the number and location of satellite voting offices in efforts to combat voter suppression ([HB 1408](#), Srinivasan).

Uplifting AAPI Communities:

- Designating Nepali American Heritage Day ([HJ 42](#), Shin).

Other Important 2024 Legislation:

- [SB 212](#) (Senator Aaron Rouse, D-Virginia Beach) dealing with the regulation of electronic gaming devices (A.K.A. "skilled games") – a top priority for AAPI small business owners across Virginia;
- [HB 972](#) (Delegate Alfonso Lopez, D-Arlington) prohibiting courts or any other related parties from inquiring about a defendant's immigration status;
- [HB 962](#) (Lopez) striking the term "alien" from the Code of Virginia;
- [HB 955](#) (Lopez) requiring landlords, at a tenant's request, to provide a translated summary page of a potential lease agreement; and

- [HB 1454](#) (Lopez) and [SB 246](#) (McPike) extending the validity of driver privilege cards to be consistent with driver's licenses.

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The Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus (VAAPIC) is a legislative organization recognized by the General Assembly to serve as a collaborative voice for Virginia's Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities by identifying public issues of interest and to develop formal positions, facilitate discussions, and advocate for policy outcomes. Nearly 800,000 Virginians - or nearly 1 in 10 - are AAPI, and AAPI Virginians are the fastest growing racial minority group in the Commonwealth, growing by 45% in the last decade.