



WHAT EVERY
VIRGINIA
SCHOOL BOARD
CANDIDATE
NEEDS TO KNOW

Am
AMERICAN MAJORITY

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends,

Few of us realize the true amount of money that goes into public education - partially because the funding sources and calculations are confusing and differ so much state to state. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, total per student spending currently reaches \$12,643, or over \$600 billion annually. That's a 46 percent increase over 20 years. It's also reported that 81% of that goes to staff salaries and benefits -- a striking 75% increase over 10 years.

Frankly, our public education system has financial problems that need real solutions. Despite the arguments of many progressive leaders, the education system doesn't live up to the standards you would expect based on spending levels. Year after year, our students lag globally in math and science rankings. Yet education policy makers continue to increase spending in hopes that enough money will eventually solve our education problems. Instead of recycling tired (and failed) solutions, I believe it's time to bring people with different perspectives and new ideas into the leadership of our education system.

There are over 13,000 school boards in the United States with an average of seven members that control millions of tax dollars. Since most education funding comes from local sources, board members often directly impact local tax rates. If there is any local government entity that needs new leadership and innovative ideas, it is our local school boards.

This manual is not meant to be the end-all for you if you're considering running for school board, or wanting to know more about the system and potential reform. Its goal is to be a gateway to other information, to introduce you to what a school board is, how it works, and potential reform ideas that are needed to bring about positive change.

I'd like to thank you for taking the time to impact your local community. As you read through this manual and work toward improving your education system, keep in touch with us and let us know how your journey progresses.

Keep America Free,

Ned Ryun



President
American Majority



WHAT EVERY VIRGINIA SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE NEEDS TO KNOW

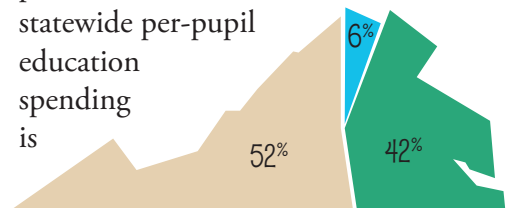
If you are thinking of running for a position on your local school board, you will need to get to know your district: How many schools are in the district? What are the names of the schools? How many students are in each district? Who is the superintendent? What is the total yearly operating budget? Who are the current board members? You will also need to attend board meetings to see how the meetings are conducted, and find out some of the specific issues that your school district may be dealing with. It is not unusual for a school board member to spend 15-30 hours per week on board member responsibilities, including attending many functions throughout the community.

The majority of Virginia's school districts are county-based, with elections and districts that correspond to their respective

county governments. The independent cities in Virginia have city-based school districts with varying structures and elections. Of Virginia's 133 school boards, 103 are popularly elected. The remaining 30 are appointed by their local board of supervisors or city council. Before considering a run for school board, candidates should determine whether their local school board is elected or appointed and act accordingly.

 = 1.26 MILLION

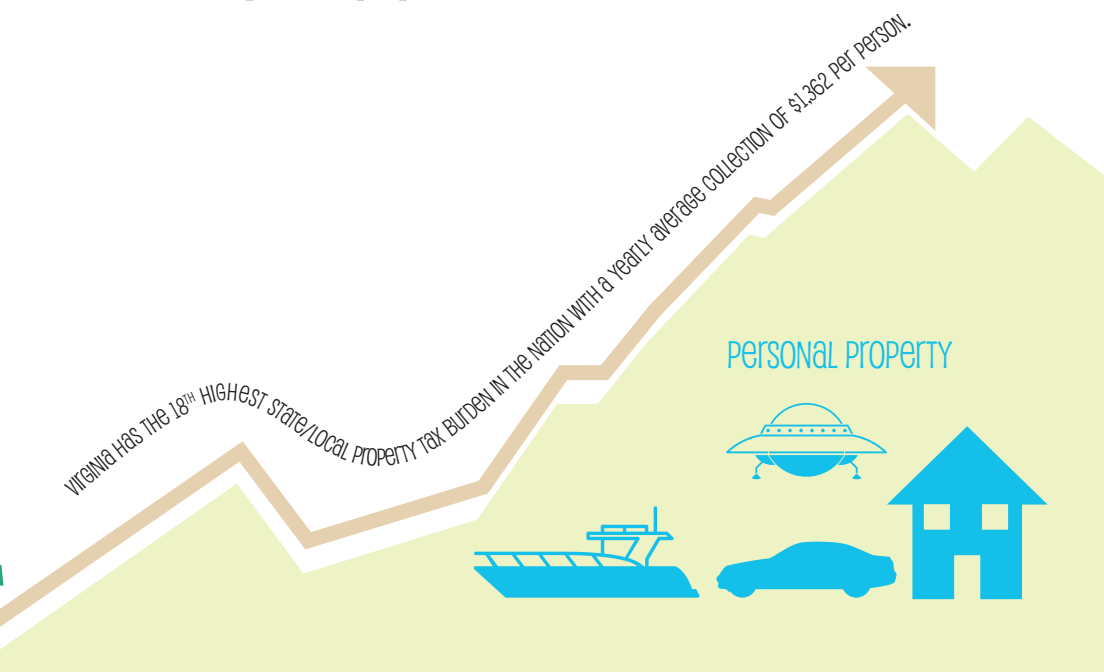
There are currently over 1.26 million students enrolled in Virginia's public schools, and statewide per-pupil education spending is



\$10,930, which is slightly greater than the national average. The funding for Virginia's education system comes from a combination of federal aid, state aid, and local taxes and fees. Education funding is composed of 6 percent federal funds, 42 percent state funds, and 52 percent local funds.¹ Virginia's constitution requires that a formula known as Standards of Quality (SOQ) be used to calculate the amount that the state will provide, and local governments are required to match this amount.

The majority of local funding comes from personal property

taxes under the authority of the city council or county board of supervisors in Virginia Code 22.1-95. Virginia has the 18th highest state/local property tax burden in the nation with a yearly average collection of \$1,362 per person.² As a reminder, the school board does not have the power to raise or lower personal property taxes. It is responsible for crafting the education budget, which in turn may have an impact on taxes levied by the local government; however, no school board has the direct authority to change tax rates.





VIRGINIA SCHOOL BOARD

QUICK FACTS



SIZE OF SCHOOL BOARDS: The number of representatives on each school board usually corresponds to the number of representatives on the local governing body (Board of Supervisors, County or City Council). This varies by county, and may range from 5-12 members.

and laid out in Virginia Code §22.1-32.



TRAINING REQUIRED: None required, but the Virginia School Boards Association does conduct training and seminars for school board members. More information can be found at www.vsba.org.



NUMBER OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN VIRGINIA: 134

CANDIDATE REQUIREMENTS



TERM LENGTH: Varies by school division



MINIMUM AGE: 18

VOTER REGISTRATION REQUIRED: Yes



VOTING PLAN: In most cases, the election patterns of the local governing authority dictate those of the school board: if the governing board has staggered terms, so does the school board.



RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS: The individual must have been a resident within the Commonwealth for one year immediately preceding election and, at time of filing, a resident of the county, city, or town in which he or she is running for election. If seeking a district seat, a candidate must be a resident of that district, and registered to vote at that address.



TERM LIMITS: None specified.



SALARY: School board members are paid a salary within the limitations decided by the General Assembly



RUNNING FOR SCHOOL BOARD

HOW TO FILE FOR CANDIDACY:

A person desiring to run for a seat on a local school board in Virginia must obtain and complete the required paperwork from the State Board of Elections website. Required forms include a Statement of Organization for a Candidate, Certificate of Candidate Qualification, Declaration of Candidacy, Petition of Qualified Voters, and a Statement of Economic Interests. In addition, a school board candidate must collect the signatures of a certain number of registered voters in the district they wish to represent. The required number of signatures is found in Virginia Code §24.2-506. More information about forms and the application process can be found in the Candidate Bulletin for local offices: www.sbe.virginia.gov.



The deadline for filing depends on the date of the election.

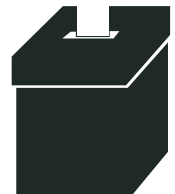
For elections held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, the filing deadline is the second Tuesday in June. For elections held in May, the filing deadline is the first Tuesday in March. These deadlines will be different in the event of Special Elections or elections in which redistricting has occurred.

PRIMARY ELECTION REQUIRED:

None, as School Board candidates must be non-partisan.

ELECTION DAY:

There are school board elections in various locations in Virginia every year. Most independent city school divisions hold their elections in even-numbered years; these may be held in either the May (first Tuesday) or November (the first Tuesday after the first Monday) elections. Most county school divisions hold their board elections in November of odd-numbered years.



the Friedman Foundation and the Thomas Jefferson Institute, George Mason University professor Dr. Susan Aud explained it most simply: “To determine the Basic Aid associated with each student in a school division, the state first calculates the maximum number of teachers it will fund for each grade level in each school division, based on the Average Daily Membership (ADM) and pre-determined guidelines for the minimum and maximum number of students per type of teacher. The average salary for each type of position is then multiplied by the number of positions to derive an average Basic Aid dollar amount per ADM, known as the Basic Aid PPA. In other words, the number of students determines the total allowable personnel costs. This number is then divided by the number of students to get an average. This average is then multiplied by the forecasted number of students the division will have in the next year to determine total funding.”

In other words, education funding isn't based on “x” dollars per child; it is based on a formula computing large numbers of children and the cost of the staff needed to teach them.

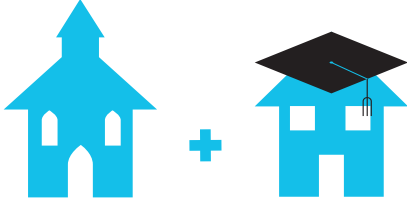
State funding is not the same everywhere

After determining total funding under the SOQ, the state sends money to local school systems on the basis of a locality's wealth by running their calculation through something called the “Local Composite Index” (LCI). The LCI calculates the personal income and property values within a school division. The wealthier a school is, the fewer dollars they receive from the state. In FY 2010, basic state aid could be as little as \$1,356 per student (Falls Church City) to as much as \$7,063 per student (Lee County), and school divisions receiving the least funding were required to spend a greater share of their own money to reach the required funding to meet the Standards of Quality.

NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS CAN COUNT, TOO

While the bulk of state funding comes from the Basic Aid formula, there is an additional revenue stream from the state sales tax, and this is distributed largely on the basis of school-age population. One and one-eighth cent of the state sales tax is distributed proportionately based on the number of school-aged children

residing in a school division (Note the phrase “school-aged population.” This means that children who are home-schooled or attend a private or faith-based school are included in the count and their presence brings additional revenue into a school



system – even though they likely use little of the school system’s resources). One-eighth of the sales tax is distributed on the basis of the Local Composite Index formula.

THEY ALL SPEND MORE THAN THE STANDARDS OF QUALITY



The reality, though, is that nearly every school division spends more than the “basic education” required by the Standards of Quality. For example, the SOQ per pupil funding in FY 2012 was \$6,642. But two years earlier, the *actual* funds spent per student was already much higher than that: In FY 2010, the average actual funds spent per student was \$11,020. The difference between the required SOQ funding and the amount actually spent was raised almost totally by local taxpayers.

STUDENT ASSESSMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

While local School Board members do not control the use of standardized student assessments to meet state accreditation or federal progress standards, it is important for local board candidates to exhibit a familiarity with the issue.

Virginia was one of the first states to “raise the bar” on student achievement by increasing the “Standards of Learning” (SOLs) and creating SOL tests measuring whether students had mastered the subject work. At the time, the battle to create a content-based system was hugely controversial in Virginia.

The federal “No Child Left Behind” NCLB program attempted to build on standards based accountability. The theory was that each state would use its own existing testing system (or create one) to measure student progress. The validity of state-based tests would be measured against



the federal National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), often referred to as “the Nation’s Report Card.”

Student scores would be disaggregated – scores would be

reported for white students, black students, Hispanics, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency, as well as for the student population as a whole.

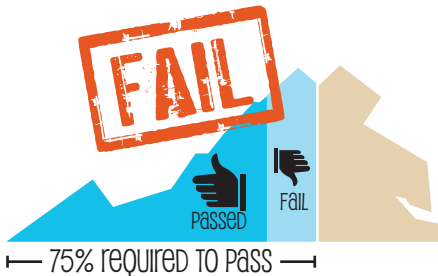
Each school and school division was required to make “Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)” by meeting a rising percentage of students passing each year until 100 percent of students were passing state exams in reading and math by 2014 – not only for the overall student population but for each of the disaggregated student populations. In other words, if 75 percent of students were required to pass math in a particular year and all student segments passed except one, the school or school division would be deemed as not making AYP. For schools that repeatedly failed to meet AYP, the federal government prescribed a set of possible corrective actions.

Because making AYP is based on SOL passage, the public has easily

become confused between the two. While NCLB had both virtues (disaggregating students meant schools could no longer “hide behind” high performing students giving the school a high average while ignoring low performing students) and disadvantages (having all segments result in 100 percent passing rates is virtually a statistical impossibility unless the tests are “dumbed down”), the key measure for Virginians is the Standards of Learning exams.

Local school board candidates should be aware that the state will soon be administering new SOL exams based on revised math and reading standards considered more rigorous than those currently in place. The State Department of Education is predicting that, as a result of greater rigor, test scores are likely to drop for the first year or two.

School Board candidates should know that creating a standards-based accountability system requires a three-part process: development of academic standards (“Standards of Learning”), creating the student assessments (“SOL Tests”) and setting the “cut scores” (determining what defines a “passing grade”). Strong academic standards are not useful if the



exams are “dumbed down” to be too easy. Similarly, high standards and challenging exams are of little use if a passing grade is set too low.

THE FEDERAL “COMMON CORE”

Local school board candidates would benefit from knowing about the Common Core and the national standards movement. In 2010-11, 44 states adopted Common Core standards.



Supporters of the Common Core claim that the national standards were created “to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce.” While

it is the case that the Common Core standards are higher than many state standards, the Virginia Board of Education (at the time consisting of members appointed by both Governors Kaine and McDonnell) unanimously rejected adoption of the Common Core standards and instead chose to benchmark the Virginia Standards of Learning against the Common Core so that it could retain SOLs the Board felt were higher than those offered by Common Core. As an example, in revising the Virginia reading and math standards, the Board chose to align standards with the Common Core

so that they were of equal, and in some areas, greater rigor.

While adoption of the Common Core is claimed to be voluntary, language and actions coming from the Obama Administration have suggested a movement toward making them mandatory. As an example, states applying for federal Race to the Top funding were required to have adopted Common Core or some other nationalized standard. Many feel that adoption of Common Core will lead states and local boards to the same overly burdensome adherence to federal rules as currently exists with No Child Left Behind – and with potentially the same consequences (see above).

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND UNIONS

Virginia is a “Right to Work” state – meaning that teachers do not have to belong to a teacher’s union in order to work and that the local teacher’s union does not have the right to bargain collectively for a uniform contract or to go on strike. While many school divisions engage in something called “meet and confer” in order to obtain a sense of teachers’ preferences in



a contract, a school division is under no obligation to negotiate a contract under a typical collective bargaining agreement.

MERIT PAY FOR TEACHERS

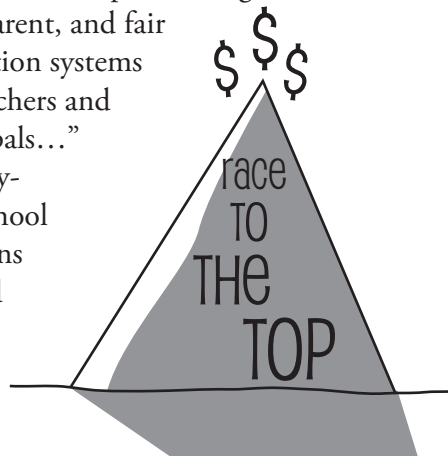
Most Virginians will agree that if a teacher is successful in teaching students, he or she should be paid more than a teacher who is unsuccessful. But creating a system that rewards teachers based on their accomplishments has been difficult for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the challenge of comparing a teacher who teaches (for example) high poverty, limited English students vs. a teacher who teaches in a community of upper class Virginians: One teacher clearly has a greater uphill climb.

But, with the technological ability to track individual students and better use of assessments, some of these challenges are being overcome. In the spring of 2011, the Virginia Board of Education approved new revised guidelines for uniform performance standards and evaluation criteria for teachers. Developed by a working group that involved a significant number of teacher leaders, administrators and professional staff, the new guidelines require that at least 20

percent of a teacher evaluation be comprised of student growth and academic progress measures – using both standardized tests and alternative measures, where appropriate.

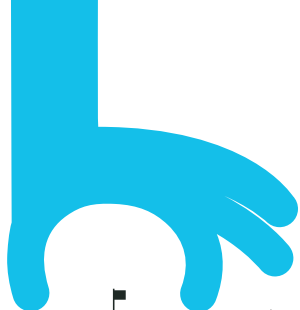
Even better, Governor Bob McDonnell created a pilot program in which school divisions willing to use the new guidelines could receive up to \$5,000 per exemplary teacher in schools considered “hard to staff.” The result? A grand total of 25 schools in 13 out of Virginia’s 134 school divisions signed up for the extra funding.

This shouldn’t be surprising. The Obama Administration’s “Race to the Top” grant application required state applicants to get “buy in” from local school districts in areas like “improving teacher effectiveness based on performance.” Yet, in Virginia, 75 of the state’s 134 school divisions refused to agree to “Design and implement rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals...” Seventy-two school divisions refused



to support conducting “annual evaluations of teachers and principals that include timely and constructive feedback” and, as part of those evaluations “provide teachers and principals with data on student growth for their students, classes, and schools.” For updates on Virginia school policy go to: www.thomasjeffersoninst.org.

This is a potential issue for local school board candidates. Not only should the position taken by their local school board members be a subject for public discussion, but local school boards get to decide whether or not they will actually *use* the performance guidelines developed by the State Board of Education.



EDUCATION CHOICE



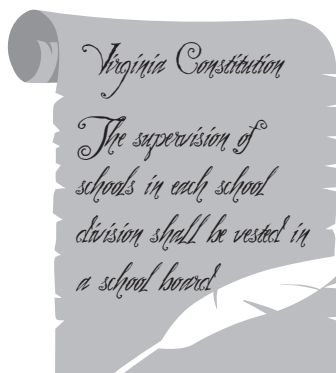
For many parents, the right to choose what school their child attends is paramount. But while legislation is frequently introduced to expand parental options, Virginia has a limited number of educational choices ... for a variety of reasons.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Throughout America, the most successful charter schools are those in which the charter operators are given the maximum freedom to operate, released from many school district regulations. It is also the case that quality charter schools proliferate where there are authorizing bodies other than the local school boards or a robust appeals process (having local boards exclusively approve charters is comparable to asking McDonald's to authorize a Burger King across the street).



The problem in Virginia is that the state constitution declares:



Over the years, this has been repeatedly interpreted by the courts as giving local school boards absolute authority over property, curriculum and personnel – key elements of a quality charter school.

Nothing can force a local school board to invite a quality charter school operator to create and run a quality charter school in their school division. But nothing can stop a local school board from

extending that invitation, either, and creating an opportunity that would serve the students in their school division. A school board candidate can potentially make that a winning issue – particularly if the targeted charter school population is one that is frequently underserved in public schools, such as low-income students or special education students.

VOUCHERS AND TAX CREDITS

Vouchers will likely not be approved in Virginia. Virginia is what is called a “Blaine Amendment” state. Named after a 19th century Congressman who first



crafted the amendment, Virginia’s “Blaine amendment” prohibits state support for “any church or sectarian society, or any association or institution of any kind whatever which is entirely or partly, directly or indirectly, controlled by any church or sectarian society. “ More than 45 years of court decisions affirm this prohibition to any school that might be faith-based in nature.

Perhaps as importantly, there are significant reservations among private schools concerned that acceptance of vouchers directly from the state will submit them to a series of educational regulatory entanglements they do not wish to have and many oppose direct vouchers on these grounds.

The “Blaine Amendment” and state control issues do not exist for a tuition tax credit that might be given for contributions to scholarship programs. In those cases, funds do not pass through the state government and are not considered state funds.



AMERICAN MAJORITY OVERVIEW AND RESOURCES

As the organizing arm of the Right, American Majority serves new leaders and activists in a variety of ways. We believe in lowering the barrier to entry for citizen participation in our republic. Our political training programs bring the expertise and knowledge of national politicians, campaign strategists, communication consultants, and seasoned organizers directly to your community.

American Majority trainings are divided into four tracks: New Leaders Campaign, Activist, Social Media, and Campus Training. The unique courses in each of these tracks put years of political experience at your disposal and equip you to get involved in politics. Visit us at AmericanMajority.org to access the resources below:

Training Manuals: We currently offer Campaign, Effectivism, Campus, Twittivism, Blogging for Freedom, and Facebook manuals online, as well as state-specific manuals on running for county commission, city council, and school board.

Video Tutorials: Whether you're a new leader, activist, or social media enthusiast, our short YouTube clips will give you the tools to be effective.

Podcasts: Our podcasts include a 21-part series on everything you need to know to effectively run for office.

Pamphlets: In tribute to the pamphleteers of the American Revolution, we are once again reviving this art form to educate and inspire a new generation.

Presentations: Many of our most popular training presentations, including "The System" and "Precinct Power," are viewable online.

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