

2026 Legislative Agenda

Building a Virginia Where Every Family Can Live, Work & Thrive

Virginia Poverty Law Center's 2026 priorities focus on one goal: building an affordable Virginia where families can afford the basics, are protected from exploitation, and can build a better future

Ensure Access to Safe & Affordable Housing

- ▶ Make renting fair and transparent
- ▶ End rental “junk fees” by requiring all unavoidable costs to be included in rent
- ▶ Limit security deposits to one month’s rent
- ▶ Require advance notice of rent increases; allow local rent stabilization options

Support Families & Children

- ▶ Prioritize keeping children safely with their families whenever possible
- ▶ Allow courts to order financial support from perpetrators of domestic violence
- ▶ Expand use of lifetime protective orders following violent felony convictions
- ▶ Improve legal support for families in child welfare matters to improve child outcomes and reduce state costs

Ensure Access to Healthcare & Essential Benefits

- ▶ Prevent large-scale loss of health coverage due to federal changes
- ▶ Protect access to SNAP benefits for Virginia families
- ▶ Support free school meals for all public school students
- ▶ Reduce utility costs and prevent destabilizing service disconnections
- ▶ Require adequate staffing in nursing homes to ensure safe care

Protect Consumer Rights, Economic Fairness, & Workers’ Income

- ▶ Raise Virginia’s low unemployment insurance benefits and give all eligible workers up to 26 weeks of coverage
- ▶ Raise the minimum wage and guarantee paid sick leave and paid family and medical leave
- ▶ End the practice allowing state and local governments to garnish 100% of a worker’s paycheck
- ▶ Protect a meaningful amount of wages from garnishment after they are deposited into bank accounts

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Ensure Fair Treatment in Our Courts

- ▶ Support uniform legislation that addresses some predatory debt collection practices
- ▶ Allow non-attorney use of cellphones in courthouses
- ▶ Prevent evictions driven by excessive landlord attorney fees awarded in court

Prevent Unnecessary Evictions

- ▶ Extend the late-rent payment period from 5-14 days before eviction filings
- ▶ Increase funding for the Virginia Eviction Reduction Program
- ▶ Allow unsafe housing conditions as a defense in eviction cases
- ▶ Strengthen eviction protections for domestic violence survivors

Ensure Safe Housing Conditions

- ▶ Remove barriers to enforcing tenants' repair rights
- ▶ Empower local governments to require repairs and prohibit charging tenants for necessary fixes

Support Manufactured Home Communities

- ▶ Expand opportunities for residents and nonprofits to purchase parks
- ▶ Strengthen protections for manufactured home residents

These priorities move Virginia toward a Commonwealth where families are housed and safe, workers keep more of what they earn, children grow up healthier, and no one is trapped in unfair systems.

Virginia Poverty Law Center will continue advancing policies that make Virginia fairer, safer, and more affordable for everyone.

Virginia Poverty Law Center

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