

VAIB | Virginia Voice

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General Assembly 2021

The pressure is on the General Assembly to complete its work in short order—just thirty days! This seems to be the driving factor as those controlling committees institute strict limits on testimony. Therefore, I've resorted to providing written testimony to ensure each committee hears our voice. Below are some of the issues of concern to us this session:

- Education vouchers or student accounts (HB1742; HB1770) These bills were designed to help parents whose children have been negatively impacted by virtual learning. Parents would have been able to use state education funds to access in-person educational options. Both bills failed in sub-committee.
- Insurance coverage for abortions (HB1896; SB1276) Insurance companies would be permitted to allow health insurance plans to include abortion coverage if these bills pass. The bills do not require people to purchase this coverage. Both bills are currently moving through the House and Senate.
- Exemptions to being vaccinated (SB1116; SB1117) Virginia law has an exemption to vaccinations “on the grounds that the administration of immunizing agents conflicts with his religious tenets or practices, unless an emergency or epidemic of disease has been declared by the [State] Board [of Health.]” These bills would remove the underlined portion of the law. Some legal authorities doubt removing the underlined portion would be allowed as it is in line with the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Jacobson v. Massachusetts* (1905). Both bills failed in committee.
- National Popular Vote Compact (SB1101; HB1933) The National Popular Vote Compact would put Virginia into an interstate compact known as the Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote. Do you want other states to control how Virginia delegates its electoral votes for president? Absolutely not! This would violate the Virginia Constitution, which states that only Virginia citizens can choose Virginia's electors. Let's not cede the will of the people of Virginia to larger states that may not represent our concerns. Both bills are still active in committee.

Changes in Federal Regulations

President Joe Biden has signed over thirty executive orders impacting federal regulations. One order deals with protecting sexual orientation and gender identity from discriminatory practices. This was already protected in Virginia under legislation passed in the 2020 General Assembly session. With this being applied by the federal government, does this now put our churches in jeopardy? The short answer is no. I suggest you listen to an update by Dr. David Gibbs III of the NCLL for an excellent explanation on the matter. Go to <https://www.ncll.org/news-alerts/times-are-changing-ministerial-employees>.

In Conclusion

As always, I'm here to answer any questions you might have. The easiest way to contact me is at califf@vaib.org. You can also call the office at 804-789-1278. Please leave a message when you call.

I want to again express my deepest appreciation for those churches and individuals who continue to give in support of VAIB's mission. As with so many things this year, adjustments must be made to carry out our work. Whatever the challenge, we must continue to trust God while working with all our ability to minister to people.

Sincerely,

Eddy Aliff

Rev. Eddy Aliff
Executive Director