

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RICHMOND

For Immediate Release:

October 16, 2012

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Virginia General Assembly Launches New Website

viriniageneralassembly.gov

- Revamped Website provides More Content, Easier Navigation & Better Access for Users –
- New Information Tool to build on 2,000 Daily Visits Average of Old Homepage –

RICHMOND, VA (October 16, 2012) – The Clerks of the Virginia House of Delegates and Senate of Virginia today announced the launch of a new website for the Virginia General Assembly – viriniageneralassembly.gov. Seeking to build upon the average of 2,000 daily visits to its old homepage, the collaborative effort took to heart Mr. Jefferson’s admonition that “an enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic.”

Over 18-months in the making, the new website for the Virginia state legislature offers a clean and contemporary look and streamlined user experience. It features enhanced resources and an ease of navigation, with more content and options presented on the homepage. New to viriniageneralassembly.gov is the incorporation of social media feeds and an “At-a-Glance” widget where citizens can access more conveniently legislative meetings held any day throughout the year and video feeds with close captioning during legislative floor sessions as well as determine more quickly who represents them.



Through the new website's state-of-the-art navigation, citizens can browse a treasure-trove of useful information without getting overwhelmed. Relevant topics and related links are presented through six main topic areas, which create a broad overview of Virginia's General Assembly, current events and the Capitol. Answers to “Frequently Asked Questions” are present at all times, and change to reflect the topics being browsed by users. There also is a quick reference tool on the new homepage – viriniageneralassembly.gov – to connect citizens to the Legislative Information System, which promotes open government through easy access to bills and resolutions, Virginia laws and legislative histories. Along with improved navigation, the new site is driven by a content management system (CMS). The CMS was developed with help from the Division of Legislative Automated Systems and allows both House and Senate Clerks Office staff to update the website in a consistent manner, delivering more quickly accurate information that citizens want and need.

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“Active citizen awareness of and easier participation in their state government is essential for a healthy and vibrant representative democracy,” said G. Paul Nardo, Clerk of the Virginia House of Delegates. “By embracing advanced technologies and fashioning them in dynamic new ways that are relevant and convenient to use, viriniageneralassembly.gov promotes a more informed citizenry and gives them new tools to stay attuned to the legislative business being conducted by state lawmakers in their name.”

“Like so many, I am confident that this new website will become a widely recognized ‘must use’ portal for citizens,” said Susan Clarke Schaar, Clerk of the Senate of Virginia. “Helping the public know and participate more in the work of senators and delegates, and engage them more effectively and interactively, is a key goal we expect viriniageneralassembly.gov to help us realize.”

A key responsibility of the General Assembly is civics education for students and life-long learners. To better accomplish that mission, the “Capitol Classroom” section of viriniageneralassembly.gov has been revamped completely. It now provides a far more robust array of legislative information about Virginia in an educational and entertaining setting for K-12 students and adults. Crafted in ways that fully complement Virginia’s Standards of Learning, the civics education portion of the new website helps visitors learn about Virginia’s symbols and emblems, history, members of the General Assembly, the Virginia State Capitol, and “How a Bill Becomes a Law.”

Virginia’s State Capitol, designed by Thomas Jefferson and where the Senate of Virginia and House of Delegates have been meeting since 1788, is a national historic landmark and working office environment. Viriniageneralassembly.gov offers new multimedia resources highlighting the Capitol, the General Assembly Building and Capitol Square. In particular, new and engaging resources provide practical information for citizens interested in visiting our nation’s second oldest working Capitol in Richmond, following a comprehensive, three-year restoration of both its exterior and interior rooms. Between 2004-2007, Virginia’s historic Capitol was fully restored to its early 20th Century appearance and its working space was increased by about one-third through construction of an underground extension. This new space features many visitor amenities, including an exhibit gallery, gift shop and a café. The new website even has an application that allows citizens to take a “virtual” tour of the Capitol if an in-person visit is not possible.

The Virginia General Assembly, the oldest English-speaking legislative body in the Western Hemisphere, held its first session in 1619 and has been serving the people of Virginia for almost 400 years. Having first met in Jamestown (1619-1699), then Williamsburg (1699-1780) and finally in Richmond since 1788 in the Jefferson-designed State Capitol which is the first public building in the New World constructed in the classical Roman temple design that has served as a prototype for countless other capitols, courthouses and other buildings, the Virginia General Assembly consists of two chambers. With 40 members elected to the Senate of Virginia every four years and 100 members elected to the Virginia House of Delegates every two years, the General Assembly currently serves more than eight million Virginians.

Again, the new website for the state legislature can be accessed at <http://viriniageneralassembly.gov>.

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