



Virginia Young Democrats

Composed of dozens of high school, college, and city/county Young Democrat chapters from across the Commonwealth ages 13-35, the Virginia Young Democrats are the largest partisan youth organization in Virginia. We train leaders and fight for progressive values and equal opportunity for all.

2015 Legislative Agenda

Institutions of higher education; sexual assault; memorandum of understanding and policies. HB 1508 (Sullivan) / SB 981 (Favola)

Bill Summary: Requires the governing board of each public or private institution of higher education to (i) establish a written memorandum of understanding with a local sexual assault crisis center or other victim support service and (ii) adopt policies that mandate the referral of a sexual assault victim to the sexual assault crisis center, provide clear guidance on linking victims to other community resources, provide options for victims who do not want to make an official report to make an anonymous report, and provide amnesty for victims who are concerned that an official report might jeopardize their academic status.

Justification:

- One in five women will be a victim of sexual assault during their college career. Many more acts of sexual assault and violence against men and women go unreported.
- This is a simple step to provide more support services to survivors.
- Mandatory reporting, which is required by other bills, will likely make reporting less likely and prevent survivors from seeking critical services.

Minimum wage; increases to \$15.15 per hour. HB 1512 (Simon)

Bill summary: Increases the minimum wage from its current federally mandated level of \$7.25 per hour to \$15.15 per hour effective July 1, 2015, unless a higher minimum wage is required by the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. The \$15.15 rate shall be adjusted annually thereafter to reflect increases in the consumer price index. The measure also eliminates provisions that address determinations of the wages of tipped employees.

Justification:

- Far too many Virginians are working full time yet still living in poverty.
- Despite increases in productivity and record corporate profits, wages have remained stagnant.
- It's time to raise the minimum wage and put more money in the pockets of Virginians

Sexual orientation change efforts prohibited HB 1385 (Hope) SB 988 (Lucas)

Bill Summary: Prohibits any health care provider from engaging in sexual orientation change efforts with any person under 18 years of age. The bill defines "sexual orientation change efforts" as including the provision of treatment, interventions, counseling, or services intended to change a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expressions, but not including treatment, interventions, counseling,

or services provided to persons seeking to transition from one gender to another or that provide acceptance, social support, and identity exploration and development.

Justification:

- A 2007 special task force of the American Psychological Association found little scientific research to support the claims of sexual orientation change efforts. Conversion therapy is opposed by most major professional health and mental health organizations.
- In fact, scientific research has found that sexual orientation change efforts are detrimental to personal and public health.
- Research from the University of San Francisco found that young people who experience "shame" because of their sexual orientation were:
 - 8 times more likely to attempt suicide
 - 6 times more likely to report high levels of depression
 - 3 times more likely to use illegal drugs
- Minors deserve special protections from abuse and other negative actions that put them at long-term risk of endangering themselves or others. Hence, the scientific evidence is clear that conversion therapy should be banned on minors.

The Virginia Young Democrats would like to reiterate our strong and unwavering support for: equal rights; common sense gun violence prevention; Medicaid expansion; women's reproductive rights; environmental protection; funding for education; a strong social safety net; and voter protection. For more information, contact VAYD's Political Director at political_director@vayd.org.