



The Virginia General Assembly: The case for improved transparency

The Virginia General Assembly:

The case for improved transparency

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Transparency Virginia (TV), an informal coalition of non-profit organizations that advocate at the General Assembly on behalf of issues important to their members, monitored the 2015 General Assembly session to determine how well lawmakers adhered to a basic set of transparent practices.

Among its observations, TV members found:

- Multiple instances where public notice of upcoming House and Senate committee or subcommittee (“sub/committee”) meetings was so short as to make public participation nearly impossible;
- Scores of bills in the House and Senate that were never given a hearing; and
- In the House, 76% of bills and resolutions killed in sub/committee without a recorded vote or any vote at all, versus 7% of bills defeated in the same way in the Senate.

Though TV members could not attend every one of the meetings held by the 101 committees and subcommittees in the House and Senate,¹ TV members were able to attend approximately 79% of them. In these meetings, TV members observed: (1) sub/committee chairs who refused to take public comment on bills; (2) vote tallies in sub/committee that did not match what was posted online; (3) meetings scheduled at the chair’s desk on the House or Senate floor immediately after adjournment; (4) rescheduled meetings that prevented citizen-witnesses from attending and offering testimony; (5) public scolding of a colleague for bringing too many witnesses; and (6) a House committee that allowed nearly half of the bills that died to do so without any kind of vote being taken.

This report gathers the anecdotes and statistics that TV members observed. A brief introduction to the areas TV members monitored is followed by specific findings, including charts detailing the disposition of bills that were defeated in House and Senate sub/committees. The report’s later sections provide more detail about the general practices and procedures at the General Assembly, including rules adopted by both chambers to guide their activities. The report then examines the reasons why good public policy supports continual examination and monitoring of the three specific areas of concern.

WHAT WERE TV’S THREE AREAS OF CONCERN?

Transparency is a word used frequently during the General Assembly session. Legislators often use it in the context of legislation that requires the proactive publication of some sort of government data. Making government information and data available is certainly one part of what is meant by transparency, and a part that is to be

¹ See Appendix B for a list of standing committees and their subcommittees.

applauded, but complete transparency contains another critical element: The ability of the public to view its government in action. Lawmakers must operate openly, proactively subjecting themselves to public scrutiny and accountability. When lawmakers are pressed for time, they often take shortcuts that prevent the public from monitoring and participating in the proceedings.

Transparency Virginia members met prior to the beginning of the 2015 General Assembly session to identify which practices it would monitor during the upcoming session. The members, most of whom are seasoned advocates of the General Assembly, discussed the importance of tracking those issues that do not depend on a person's intimate knowledge of the practices or peculiarities of the legislative session. That is, TV wanted to track areas of universal appeal, those the public could easily relate to.

Transparency Virginia identified areas that everyday citizens easily recognize and likely agree as constituting best practices. Exactly how these best practices should be carried out was neither identified nor tracked, an acknowledgement that there is room for genuine disagreement about how best to implement these important procedures.

Transparency Virginia eventually decided to track three areas:

1. Meeting notices: Providing adequate notice of meetings and bill dockets;
2. Consideration: Giving every bill an opportunity to be heard; and
3. Votes: Recording votes on the final disposition of bills.

WHAT DID TV OBSERVE?

As noted, there are 101 committees and subcommittees that may meet at least once during each half of the legislative session.²

Transparency Virginia is not a formal organization. Its members are volunteers. Typically they are observing sub/committee meetings as part of their regular job. While there advocating on behalf of their respective organization, they also volunteered to collect data and anecdotes on how that sub/committee performed. Logistically it was impossible for any one individual or TV volunteer to observe all sub/committee meetings. But because TV's members represent a wide variety of causes and issues, they were able to cover a fairly large number of them. Transparency Virginia members reported observing at least 79% of House committees and 64% of Senate committees. Multiple subcommittees within those committees were also observed.

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**Regardless of party affiliation,
every member of a sub/
committee is at liberty to
object to less-than-
transparent procedures.**
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² All bills that originate in a chamber must be disposed of before "crossover," meaning that the House must act on all House bills, and the Senate must act on all Senate bills, before they cross over to the other chamber just over half-way through the session.

In the following summary of the volunteers' anecdotal observations, sub/committee names are occasionally identified but individuals — chairs, co-chairs and members — are not. It is TV's belief that while the transparency issues monitored by the group may ultimately rest at the chair's discretion, every member of a sub/committee is at liberty to object to less-than-transparent procedures.

MEETING NOTICE

- ✘ On multiple occasions at the close of the House floor sessions, meetings were announced to occur immediately after the floor session, usually at the desk of the chair. While the timing makes it impossible for anyone not in the immediate vicinity to attend, many in the general public do not realize they are even allowed on the floor at the session's end.
 - Example: Calling meetings at the close of the floor session is commonplace, with too many examples to list. However, on one occasion a House Committee that was scheduled to meet later that day in the General Assembly Building was rescheduled for a meeting room at the Capitol, and two bills not previously on the agenda were added.
 - Example: A delegate was given 20 minutes' notice that his bill would be heard by a House committee after adjournment of the floor session.
 - Example: A House Committee that appeared on the calendar as having been cancelled was rescheduled for immediately after adjournment in a room at the Capitol, but because that room was being used for another purpose, the meeting was moved to the chair's desk on the House floor.
- ✘ Despite having regular meeting times published on the Legislative Information System (LIS),³ many standing committees of the House and Senate held additional meetings with very little notice. Often they were announced at the conclusion of the House or Senate floor session.
 - Example: When the House adjourned one day at 12:50 p.m., the clerk announced a standing committee would meet at 2:30. The notice did not appear online until 2:00 and there was no agenda.⁴
 - At 4 p.m., notice of a House subcommittee was given for a meeting to start at 7:15 a.m. the next morning.
- ✘ On at least two occasions, bills that did not appear on the online or printed docket were taken up at that day's meeting.

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Two hours' notice is not enough time for most Virginians to make plans and travel to Richmond to observe or participate in a bill's disposition.

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³ See page 11 for more information on LIS.

⁴ Please see <https://www.richmondsunlight.com/minutes/house/2015/01/20/> and forward to the 47:00 to 50:00 minute mark in the video.

- Example: A bill was scheduled to be heard by a House subcommittee on Jan. 28 but was heard instead two days earlier by the full committee. The patron's request to delay so that a previously scheduled witness could attend was denied, according to the *Virginian-Pilot*.⁵
- ✗ Notice of less than three hours was given for several meetings.
- Example: A notice through Lobbyist-in-a-Box⁶ at 11 a.m. announced a meeting of a Senate committee taking place one half-hour after adjournment. The Senate adjourned that day at 12:55 p.m., meaning the meeting was scheduled to start at approximately 1:25, just less than 2.5 hours after notice.

CONSIDERATION

- ✗ One committee chair announced at the outset of session that the committee would pass no more than five bills in one particular category of legislation. At least one bill was included in that category by mistake, artificially limiting its chances of passage.
- ✗ A House subcommittee chair told a lobbyist who rose to speak on a bill that if he (the chair) took testimony from the lobbyist, he would have to allow testimony from others. No one was allowed to offer testimony.
- ✗ A Senate committee chair did not take public comment on any bills on the agenda except for the testimony from the guests of two senators who were presenting bills.
- ✗ When pressed for time, many sub/committee chairs limited public input by (a) asking that those in the audience in favor of/opposed to a bill simply raise their hand; (b) admonishing speakers to limit their comments to something that has not already been said; and (c) telling speakers that they should or should not address certain aspects of the bill.
- Example: Annoyed that so many citizens came to testify on a Senate bill on Jan. 19, a committee chair chastised a fellow senator for not being able to control his witnesses.
- ✗ Sub/committee members frequently made motions to table bills, a motion that cuts off further discussion and must be voted on immediately, when debate or testimony was ongoing.
- ✗ Bills were “left in committee” without ever being considered.
- ★ Many committee chairs went to great lengths to hear all bills and give the public an opportunity to speak.

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⁵ See hamptonroads.com/2015/02/bill-would-have-forced-vhsl-undo-recent-overhaul

⁶ See page 12 for more information on Lobbyist-in-a-Box.

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- Example: A Senate subcommittee chair managed a long agenda in a cordial, respectful manner. He took testimony from both sides on a bill that was not on the agenda but explained that the bill would not be voted on until notice of a hearing on the bill could be given.
 - Example: At a House subcommittee, the chair let a Commonwealth Attorney from Southwest Virginia testify on a bill that was not on the agenda because that was the only day the attorney could travel to Richmond. The chair made clear, however, that the bill would not be debated until it was added to the agenda of a future meeting.

VOTES

- ✘ In House sub/committees, motions to table a vote were followed by unrecorded voice votes in favor or opposition. It was difficult to assess the strength of majority or minority support since members often tried to drown out the other side with louder shouts of “aye” or “nay.” Also, as everyone voted “aye” or “nay” at the same time, it was difficult for the public to ascertain who voted for which option. Finally, anyone not in attendance had no way of ascertaining how his or her elected official voted.
- ✘ The votes taken at a sub/committee meeting sometimes did not match what appeared on LIS.
 - Example: The chairman of a committee stated that a bill had been approved and confirmed its passage later in the meeting. Yet LIS reported that the bill failed, confusing many who had been present. At the committee’s next meeting, the bill was reconsidered; and this time it failed.
 - Example: At a Senate committee meeting, a motion was made to pass a bill by indefinitely (which would kill the bill). The chair restated the motion as one to pass by for the day (temporarily) and that was the motion that was seconded. Yet, on LIS, the bill was shown as having been defeated by being passed by indefinitely.
 - Example: A bill died on a tie vote in a House committee. However, LIS showed the bill reported by a two-vote margin.
- ✘ In one instance, many citizens attended a committee meeting to observe action on a bill that impacted them personally. After extensive discussion, debate, and testimony on both sides of the issue, no member of the committee offered a motion on the bill. The lack of action permitted all members to avoid a recorded vote on the bill, to the disappointment of those who had traveled far to be heard on the legislation.

DIFFERENCES: CHAMBERS, COMMITTEES AND SUBCOMMITTEES

Do some sub/committees operate more openly than others? Are there differences in the way things are done in the House than in the Senate? In a word: Yes.

In an analysis of the bills considered by each standing committee in each chamber, TV found a remarkable number of bills defeated without the benefit of a recorded vote or any vote at all.⁷ The House committees considered 1,892 bills and resolutions; the Senate took up 1,652.

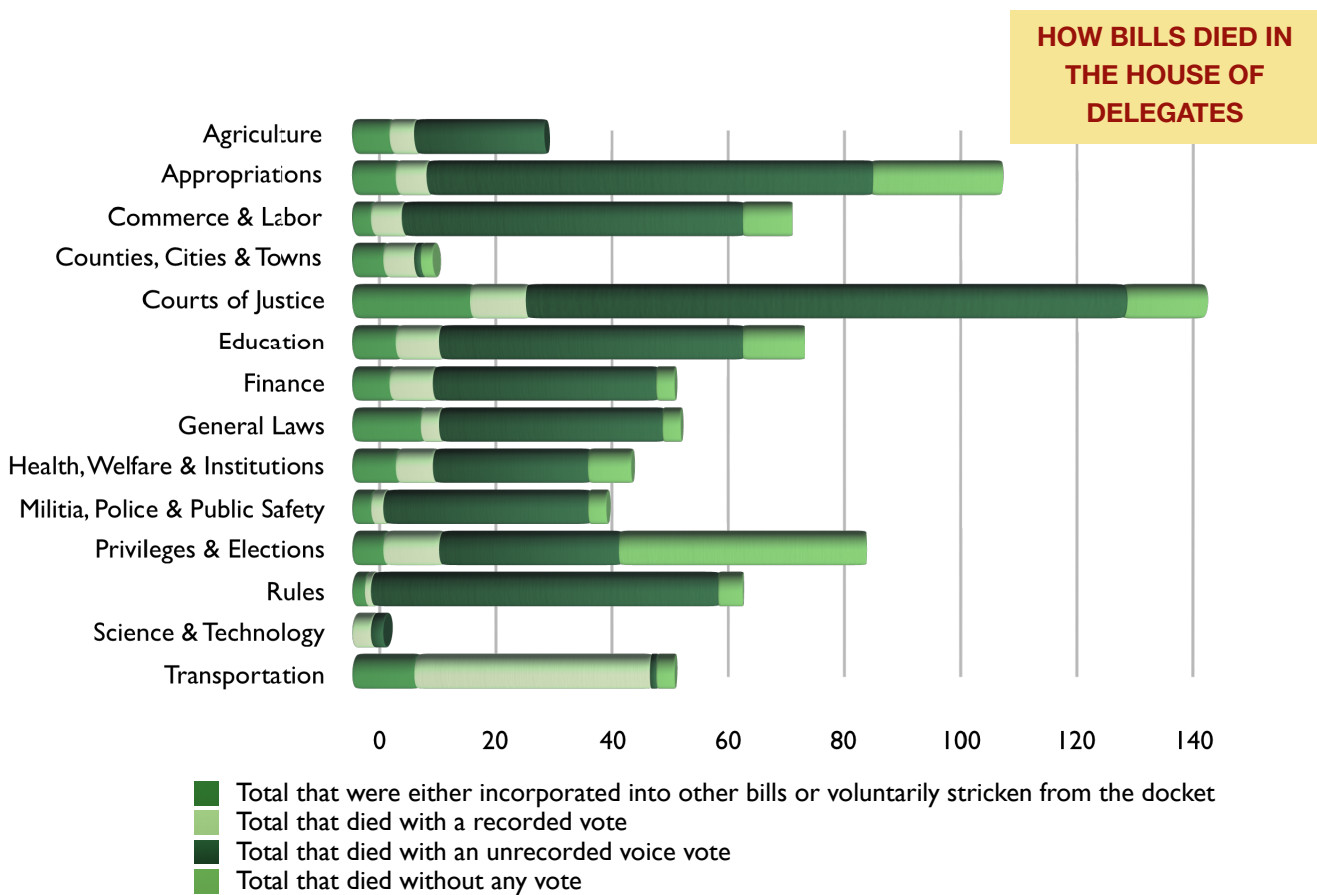


CHART 1

⁷ See Appendix A for a complete breakdown.

In the House, 825 of the 1,892 bills (44%) died in sub/committee. Of those 825, 104 died *with* a recorded vote, while 513 died *without* a recorded voice vote and 117 died without *any* vote at all.⁸ All told, the House defeated 76% of its bills without going on record. Only 24% of bills killed were done so with each member accountable for his/her own vote. (See Chart 1)

The Rules Committee killed the largest percentage of bills in this way: 95%. Eighty-nine percent of the bills killed in the Appropriations and Commerce & Labor Committees did not have a recorded vote or any vote at all. The Militia, Police & Public Safety Committee followed with 88%, the Privileges & Elections Committee was next with 83% and the Education Committee had 81% of its killed bills disposed of this way. By sharp contrast, only 8% of the Transportation Committee’s bills were eliminated by this method. Only one of 52 bills in the Transportation Committee died on an unrecorded voice vote.

Of the 83 bills that were defeated in the Privileges & Elections Committee, 40 of them (48%) were left in the committee without any vote being taken. By contrast, the General Laws Committee let just three bills die this way.

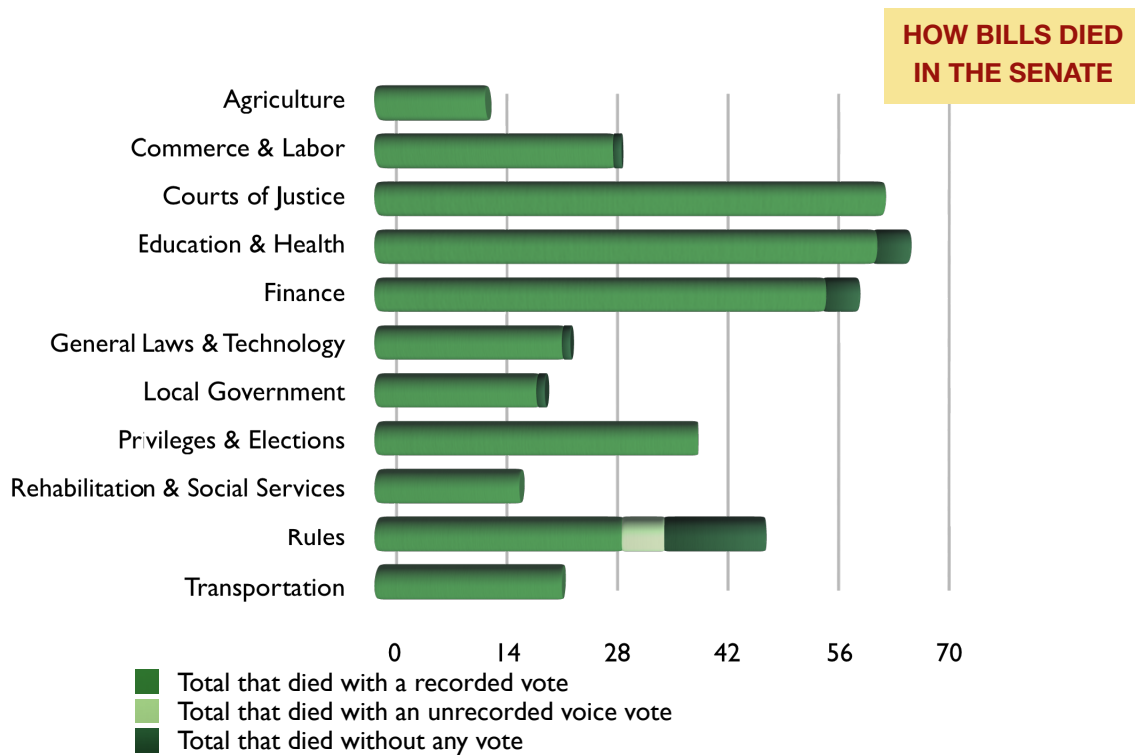


CHART 2

⁸ In the House, 91 bills were eliminated when they were incorporated into other bills or voluntarily stricken from docket; their numbers are included in the chart figures, but not in the percentages discussed in this section.

In the Rules Committee, 89% of the defeated bills died on an unrecorded voice vote, while 80% of the Militia, Police & Public Safety Committee and 77% of the Commerce & Labor Committee bills did. Only 2% of the Transportation Committee votes died this way and 8% of the Counties, Cities & Towns Committee.

A different picture emerged in the Senate, where rules state that votes must be recorded.⁹ A smaller percentage of bills died in Senate sub/committees: 388 of 1,652 (23%), and of those, just 7% of bills died without a recorded vote or any vote at all. (See Chart 2)

Only one standing Senate committee used the practice of killing a bill on an unrecorded voice vote: the Rules Committee disposed of five in this manner. Of the 46 bills that died in the Rules Committee, 12 were left in the committee without a vote. That amounts to 37% of that committee's bills being killed without accountability. The Finance Committee was a distant second, with 7%, followed by the Education & Health Committee at 6% and the Local Government Committee with 5%.

HOW DOES THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS WORK?

The 25 standing committees of the General Assembly (14 in the House of Delegates and 11 in the Senate) all have regularly scheduled meetings. For example, the House Education Committee met on Mondays and Wednesdays this session at 8:30 a.m. The Senate Education and Health Committee met Thursdays at 8:30 a.m. The exception to the committees' set meeting times are the Rules Committees of both House and Senate, the former of which meets "on the call of the chair" on Fridays, and the latter which meets "on the call of the chair," but on no set day of the week.

Every standing committee in the House has at least one subcommittee (some as many as eight), and all but three standing committees in the Senate have subcommittees, too, for a total of 101 sub/committees that are meeting during any given week, and most meet multiple times during a session. It is also not unusual for sub/committees of both chambers covering the same areas (e.g., Courts of Justice) to meet at the same time in different parts of the General Assembly Building.

The Speaker of the House makes the decisions about which bills will go to each House standing committee. In the Senate, that decision is made by the Clerk of the Senate. The chairs of the standing committees then decide which bills will go to which subcommittees (if any). The list of bills assigned to a sub/committee is called the docket.

In addition to having regularly scheduled meetings, sub/committee chairs provide information to [LIS](#), the online clearinghouse for bills, General Assembly members, committees, minutes and calendars, about the time and place of an upcoming meeting. The Legislative Information System employees do not track down the information. It must be provided to them so they can enter the data online for the public to see.

⁹ See pages 13-14 for more information on House and Senate rules.

The public can determine which meetings have been scheduled by looking at the “Meetings” section of the LIS website, which shows the calendar for that day and beyond. They can also go to the informational page for each standing committee to see whether a meeting has been scheduled.

Some professionals and citizens sign up for what is known as Lobbyist-in-a-Box, a subscription-based bill-tracking service that provides notifications on when bills that subscribers have previously identified will be heard.

Some lobbyists and advocates know to go to the chair’s office to ask when a meeting will be held or when a particular bill will be heard. But for those without direct access to members of the General Assembly, the best resource is LIS.

When a meeting is posted to LIS, it usually includes an agenda: a list of bills that will be heard at that meeting. A printed agenda is often available at the committee meetings but less frequently at the subcommittee meetings.

When a sub/committee meets, the expected practice is that bills identified on the agenda for that day will be heard, and those not on the agenda will not. There is not always enough time for the committee to hear and act on all of the bills on the agenda for that day, but it is expected that all bills will be heard by a sub/committee by the date the sub/committee’s work must conclude.

When bills are on the agenda for a particular meeting, the standard practice is for the bill number to be called, and for the bill’s chief patron to explain the purpose of the bill. The chair asks if there are questions from the sub/committee members. Sometimes the chief patron will have experts standing by to assist with these questions. The chair then usually asks for those in support of and in opposition to the bill to come forward to speak. Individuals who offer testimony may be questioned by sub/committee members.

After public testimony, the sub/committee members often continue to debate among themselves until someone makes a motion on the bill’s fate. Common motions are:

- Motion to report: if a majority agrees to the motion, the bill advances to the next level (from subcommittee to committee, or from committee to the House/Senate floor); if a majority disagrees with the motion, or the vote is evenly split, the bill dies, though it remains with the sub/committee unless/until another motion is made;
- Motion to lay upon the table: if a majority agrees, the bill dies. If a majority disagrees, the bill remains with the sub/committee unless/until another motion is made. A motion to table cuts off further discussion and must be voted on immediately; or
- Motion to pass by indefinitely (PBI): if a majority agrees, the bill dies, though technically it can be reconsidered at a later meeting; if a majority disagrees, the bill remains with the sub/committee unless/until another motion is made.

There are also motions to report and refer to another committee (a frequent practice with bills that have a fiscal impact), and there is the possibility that no one will make a motion of any sort. In that case, the bill is “left in sub/committee” and dies. Similarly, if no one offers to second a motion to report, the bill dies.

HOUSE AND SENATE RULES

Senate Rule 20(d) says that all votes must be recorded. The House does not have a comparable rule.

The current rules governing the House for the 2014 and 2015 sessions were adopted Jan. 8, 2014.¹⁰ The rules of the 2015 Senate were adopted Jan. 20, 2015.¹¹ Both set out the rules governing committees, business on the floor, membership, etc. Rules governing the House and Senate are established by the Joint Rules Committee and approved by a majority vote of each chamber.

Of relevant note in the House rules:

- Rule 17. “A majority shall constitute a quorum for committees. Each committee shall meet pursuant to a regular meeting schedule as approved by the Speaker. In addition to a committee’s regular scheduled meeting(s), a committee chairman may call additional meetings. It shall be the duty of a committee to meet on call of a majority of the committee’s members if the chairman is absent or declines to call a meeting. However, additional committee meetings may not be scheduled that are in conflict with another committee’s regularly scheduled meeting time.”
- Rule 18: “The chairman shall have discretion to determine when, and if, legislation shall be heard before the committee. The chairman, at his discretion, may refer legislation for consideration to a subcommittee. If referred to a subcommittee, the legislation shall be considered by the subcommittee. If the subcommittee does not recommend such legislation by a majority vote, the chairman need not consider the legislation in the full committee. “
- Rule 18(a): “The vote of each member voting on any question shall be recorded upon the call of the chairman or the desire of one-fifth of the members present.”
- Rule 19: “The chairman or, in his absence, the vice chairman, or the majority of the membership of the committee, may call meetings of the committee to study, call hearings, and consider any bill or resolution, or to consider such other matters as may be germane to the duties of the committee.”

Of relevant note in the Senate rules:

- Rule 20(c): “The standing Committees shall meet at such time and place as shall be designated by the Committee on Rules, after consultation with the respective Committee Chair, and the fixed time and place of Committee meetings shall be published. All committees shall be governed by the Rules of the Senate.”
- Rule 20(d): “All Committee meetings shall be held in public. All votes on bills shall be recorded. However, executive sessions may be held pursuant to applicable provisions of law upon a recorded vote. Except as provided herein, a recorded vote of members upon each measure shall be taken and the name and number

¹⁰ 2014-2015 Rules of the House of Delegates: <http://hodcap.state.va.us/publications/2014-2015-HouseRulesText.pdf>

¹¹ Rules of the Senate: <http://hodcap.state.va.us/publications/SenateRules.pdf>

of those voting for, against or abstaining reported with the bill or resolution and ordered printed on the Calendar.”

- Rule 20(k): “The Chair of any Committee may appoint subcommittees to consider a particular bill or resolution or to consider matters relative to a portion of the work of the Committee. Such subcommittees shall not take final votes and shall only make recommendations to the Committee. The Chair of the full Committee shall be an ex officio member of all subcommittees and entitled to vote, but shall not be counted as a member for purposes of a quorum. All subcommittees shall be governed by the Rules of the Senate. “

Neither House nor Senate rules require the taking of testimony from the public.

WHY ARE THE AREAS OF OBSERVATION IMPORTANT?

MEETING NOTICE

Notice of when and where a meeting will take place is critical to the democratic process. Meetings are where debate and discussion are heard, where votes are taken, where decisions are made on issues that will have direct and indirect impact on members of the public. If the public is unaware of a meeting’s time or place, decisions are essentially made in a vacuum.

Advance notice informs the public not only when a meeting will take place but what will be discussed. Armed with this knowledge citizens can decide whether to attend the meeting. Some will take the additional step of preparing comments or written material to present to the public body. Some will contact their representatives. Some will attend the meeting to identify allies and opponents, thus furthering the democratic conversation. Some members of the public will have a more general interest in the transactions of a governmental body. The way some people follow baseball team standings, others watch with keen interest how the public body prioritizes and disposes of issues. Actions taken in meetings will influence the public’s decision on Election Day.

As famously stated by Virginia’s own James Madison:

Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.

The Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) states that the meetings of all local and state governments are presumed open to the public. Every meeting must be preceded by “notice of the date, time, and location” posted in a prominent location and in a place where notices are regularly posted.¹² Regularly scheduled meetings require

¹² See Code of Virginia, §2.2-3707(C).

notice at least three working days in advance of the meeting, and specially called meetings require reasonable notice under the circumstances given to the public and the public body's members at the same time.¹³

Agendas, while not required by FOIA, are routinely used to give shape to the exact contours of the upcoming meeting.

FOIA's meeting requirements for state and local government do not apply to the General Assembly session. The reason is obvious: just 46 or 60 days to usher through thousands of bills and resolutions (3,008 in 2015, according to RichmondSunlight.org). Instead, what FOIA says is that public access to any meeting of the General Assembly "shall be governed by rules established by the Joint Rules Committee and approved by a majority vote of each house."¹⁴

House and Senate rules do not stipulate how much notice should be given before each sub/committee meeting. But too little notice will affect the debate when those who want to observe or participate in the discussion are not afforded enough time to attend. While most of Virginia's lobbyists and advocates are never more than a few minutes away from the statehouse halls, citizens and groups without an advocacy presence may need to travel long distances. Some may need to rearrange work or family obligations in order to attend. Two hours' notice is not enough time for the many Virginians living more than a two-hour drive from Richmond to make a quick trip to the General Assembly.

CONSIDERATION

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**Every bill deserves the
dignity of the debate.**
.....

If a bill or resolution has gone through the preliminary drafting stage, been assigned a number and been assigned to a committee, someone, somewhere must have thought it was a good idea. At least one person or group has an interest in having this bill pass. A bill does not have even a hope of passing unless it is considered by the sub/committee it is assigned to. At the sub/committee stage, it might be determined that the bill is not such a good idea after all and the bill may fail to report. At least it was heard.

Every bill deserves the dignity of the debate. Supporters and opponents of a measure expect a bill to be debated on its merits, not disposed of without explanation or ignored for unknown reasons. The failure of a sub/committee to give consideration to a bill may be frustrating to lobbyists and advocates, but it is downright perplexing to those following from home who are unaware of or unfamiliar with a process that leaves docketed issues unresolved.

¹³ See Code of Virginia, §2.2-3707(D).

¹⁴ See Code of Virginia §2.2-3707.01(A).

RECORDED VOTES

Recording an elected official's vote on a matter of public business is so fundamental that it is incredible it is not done consistently.

Recording an elected official's vote on a matter of public business is so fundamental that it is incredible it is not done consistently.

Virginia's FOIA states that unless otherwise provided by law, "no vote of any kind . . . shall be taken to authorize the transaction of any public business, other than a vote taken at a meeting conducted in accordance with the provisions of this chapter." That section goes on to say, "no public body shall vote by secret or written ballot."¹⁵

As noted above, however, FOIA's meeting rules apply only to state and local governments. The act specifically states that nothing in FOIA shall be construed as prohibiting "the House of Delegates or the Senate of Virginia from adopting rules relating to the casting of votes by members of standing committees."¹⁶

Senate Rule 20(d) says that all votes must be recorded. The House does not have a comparable rule.

Unrecorded votes deny the public accountability. Elected officials vote on legislation that affects the public. They owe the public a record of their votes so members of the public can assess the performance of their representatives.

Letting a bill die without recording the vote does two things:

- First, it gives legislators cover from any backlash that might follow from a recorded vote one way or the other. They are absolved of responsibility.
- Second, it robs other lawmakers of the opportunity to take such responsibility. They cannot direct constituents to a vote in favor of a measure that was killed.

¹⁵ See Code of Virginia §2.2-3710(A).

¹⁶ See Code of Virginia §2.2-3710(B).

CONCLUSION

Despite a House rule that all bills shall be considered, not all are. Despite a Senate rule that recorded votes are required, not all are. Again, there is an understanding that time constraints are not always conducive to 100% transparency 100% of the time. Nonetheless, TV believes legislators can do better.

Increasing transparency takes collective will, collective action. It takes open and engaged sub/committee chairs; it takes open and engaged sub/committee members. The public is aware that they will never be privy to some conversations and negotiations, but when lawmakers are in sub/committee meetings, that is the time they must show themselves and their work to the public. Without these basic measures — notice of meetings, recorded votes, consideration of all bills — the public is blocked from observing the process, and its ability to monitor its elected officials is effectively eliminated. This is unacceptable.

Transparency Virginia would like to be an irrelevant coalition. Its members wish there were no need to take note of opaque practices and that the Virginia General Assembly stood as a model for all 50 states of what an open and accountable legislature looks like. Until that happens, TV will continue to monitor the openness of the General Assembly.

We urge all 140 members of the body to improve transparency at the General Assembly in the coming years. Transparency Virginia stands ready to help.

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True openness is a collective issue and a cultural one. It is up to all members of a body to embrace the principles of open and accountable government and to put those principles into practice.

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APPENDIX A

Source: Legislative Information System data for the 2015 legislative session

HOUSE BILLS THAT DIED

	Total number of bills referred to committee	Bills that died in committee	Incorporated into other bills or stricken from the docket	Died with a recorded vote	Died with an unrecorded voice vote	Died without any vote	Percentage that died without a recorded vote or any vote at all
Agriculture	100	31	6	4	21	0	68%
Appropriations	186	105	7	5	72	21	89%
Commerce & Labor	140	71	3	5	55	8	89%
Counties, Cities & Towns	62	13	5	5	1	2	23%
Courts of Justice	313	138	19	9	97	13	80%
Education	177	73	7	7	49	10	81%
Finance	119	52	6	7	36	3	75%
General Laws	164	53	11	3	36	3	74%
Health, Welfare & Institutions	146	45	7	6	25	7	71%
Militia, Police & Public Safety	80	41	3	2	33	3	88%
Privileges & Elections	131	83	5	9	29	40	83%
Rules	128	63	2	1	56	4	95%
Science & Technology	13	5	0	3	2	0	40%
Transportation	133	52	10	38	1	3	8%
TOTAL	1892	825	91	104	513	117	76%

SENATE BILLS THAT DIED

	Total number of bills referred to committee	Bills that died in committee	Died with a recorded vote	Died with an unrecorded voice vote	Died without any vote	Percentage that died without a recorded vote or any vote at all
Agriculture	85	13	13	0	0	0%
Commerce & Labor	101	29	28	0	1	3%
Courts of Justice	281	60	60	0	0	0%
Education & Health	243	63	59	0	4	6%
Finance	256	57	53	0	4	7%
General Laws & Technology	140	23	22	0	1	4%
Local Government	68	20	19	0	1	5%
Privileges & Elections	105	38	38	0	0	0%
Rehabilitation & Social Services	75	17	17	0	0	0%
Rules	190	46	29	5	12	37%
Transportation	108	22	22	0	0	0%
TOTAL	1652	388	360	5	23	7%

APPENDIX B

The Standing Committees of the Virginia General Assembly

The number of subcommittees are noted for each. There are 101 standing committees and subcommittees in the House of Delegates and Senate of Virginia.

House of Delegates Standing Committees	– subcommittees	Senate Standing Committees	– subcommittees
Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources	3	Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources	0
Appropriations	8	Commerce and Labor	1
Commerce and Labor	5	Courts of Justice	0
Counties, Cities and Towns	2	Education and Health	5
Courts of Justice	6	Finance	9
Education	3	General Laws and Technology	2
Finance	3	Local Government	0
General Laws	4	Privileges and Elections	4
Health, Welfare and Institutions	3	Rehabilitation and Social Services	1
Militia, Police and Public Safety	3	Rules	1
Privileges and Elections	4	Transportation	1
Rules	3		
Science & Technology	1		
Transportation	4		
14	52	11	24



TRANSPARENCY VIRGINIA IS

AARP Virginia
AAUW of Virginia
AAUW of Greater Richmond
ACLU of Virginia
Alliance for Progressive Values
Rebecca Bowers-Lanier
Brady Campaign Richmond Chapter
April A. Cain, Esq.
Coalition to Stop Gun Violence
Fair Elections Legal Network
League of Women Voters of the Richmond Metro Area
League of Women Voters of Virginia
Robin Lind, Chair Goochland County Electoral Board
NARAL Pro-Choice Virginia

National Active & Retired Federal Employees Association —
Virginia Federation
New Virginia Majority
OneVirginia2021: Virginians for Fair Redistricting
Richmond First Club
Virginia Center for Public Safety
Virginia Civic Engagement Table
Virginia Coalition for Open Government
Virginia Education Association
Virginia Independent Consumers & Farmers Association
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
Virginia NOW
Virginia Organizing
Virginia Poverty Law Center
Women-Matter

