

# 2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

## Protecting Workers' Rights

The VPFF urges the Virginia General Assembly to pass legislation to protect workers' rights through comprehensive collective bargaining legislation.

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### **Background:**

In 2020, the Virginia General Assembly repealed the decades old prohibition on collective bargaining for public employees. However, this repeal contained several restrictive provisions and did not cover a large portion of Virginia's workers. Currently, the law is only applicable with local ordinance approval. Unfortunately, many local governments are unwilling to grant this approval for workers to have the right to join together in partnership regarding the conditions of their employment. In addition, the original legislation lacks a substantive framework to guide the process leading to undue delay, cost and frustration.

This legislation would protect workers' rights in Virginia by providing a detailed process and guideline allowing for meaningful collective bargaining. Cooperation enables public safety workers and their communities to confront budgetary constraints and staffing challenges. Numerous studies and results from other states have shown when public safety workers collaborate with their employers, their communities have lower death rates, more effective fire and emergency services, safer working conditions and improved wages. All together, this improves employee recruitment and retention which is a critical challenge for all Virginia localities. For public safety workers, this legislation would include protections for existing state law and bargaining agreements, prohibit strikes and not force any worker to join a union.

### **Needed Action:**

Pass substantive collective bargaining legislation to ensure all Virginia workers, including firefighters, emergency medical service providers and communications officers, have the right to work with their employers to address issues related to working conditions.

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The Virginia Professional Fire Fighters proudly represents nearly 11,000 firefighters, emergency medical providers and communications officers in over 60 localities across the Commonwealth of Virginia.