



NEWS RELEASE

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The Virginia General Assembly Passes Historic Comprehensive Collective Bargaining Legislation

March 17, 2026, Richmond, VA - The Virginia Professional Fire Fighters (VPFF) celebrates the passing of historic collective bargaining legislation in the Virginia General Assembly. A long fought victory, it will provide Virginia's public service workers the ability to collectively bargain with their employers for wages, benefits and working conditions.

Virginia had previously banned public sector collective bargaining in 1946 and again in 1977. In 2020, collective bargaining was partially reinstated as a "local-option" due to legislation initiated by Delegate Elizabeth Guzman (D-Prince William) and Senator Jennifer Boysko (D-Fairfax). While this partial repeal granted eight different VPFF local affiliates their first collective bargaining agreement, many other fire departments were not successful in obtaining a local ordinance from their elected officials. This was a problem not just for firefighters, but for many Virginia workers in other public service industries.

This year, successful legislation (SB378/HB1263) by Senator Scott Surovell (D-Fairfax) and by Delegate Kathy Tran (D-Fairfax) removes the local option for collective bargaining and provides a comprehensive framework for implementation and governance. The result is nearly a half million Virginia workers now cannot be denied collective bargaining and representation rights based simply on their zip code.

"I applaud the General Assembly for passing this bill," said Kurt Detrick, a Portsmouth firefighter and President of Portsmouth Professional Firefighters and Paramedics IAFF Local 539. *"The problem right now is that firefighters, teachers and other public service workers cannot even begin the process of deciding whether or not we want to collectively bargain unless a few politicians decide that we are worthy of this right. This legislation would put that decision in the hands of the workers, which is where it belongs, and I am glad it is headed to Gov. Spanberger's desk."*

The General Assembly must still pass a complete budget that funds this legislation and all Virginia operations. The VPFF is confident the General Assembly and Governor Abigail Spanberger will fund and approve collective bargaining as part of their larger commitment to affordability for all Virginians.

The Virginia Professional Fire Fighters is a labor organization representing over 10,000 firefighters, emergency medical providers and 911 communications officers across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Established in 1955, the VPFF supports 67 local affiliates of the International Association of Fire Fighters.

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