



TO: Members, Virginia House Rules Studies Subcommittee
FROM: Virginia League of Conservation Voters
DATE: January 24, 2023
RE: VaLCV Bill Positions | H Rules - Studies Subcommittee

Tomorrow, January 29, the House House Rules Studies Subcommittee will consider: HB19, HB33, HB357, HB368, HB1363.

We encourage you to SUPPORT HB19, HB33, HB357, HB368

We encourage you to OPPOSE HB1363

[HB 19 \(Ware\) Studying Menhaden Ecology, Fishery Impacts, & Economic Importance](#)

This legislation would:

direct the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) to conduct a three-year study of the ecology, fishery impacts, and economic importance of the Atlantic menhaden population in Virginia's waters.

Reasons to **SUPPORT HB19**

- Menhaden are a critical species to provide nourishment for other fish targeted by commercial and recreational fishing industries.
- The General Assembly passed SB1388 during the 2023 legislative session, which developed plans for studying menhaden in Virginia's waters. HB19 would direct VIMS to follow through on conducting the study

[HB 33 \(Clark\) Public drinking water; Commissioner of Health's work group to study occurrence of microplastics.](#)

This legislation would:

Direct the Commissioner of Health to convene a work group to study the occurrence of microplastics in the Commonwealth's public drinking water.

Reasons to **SUPPORT HB33**

- As plastic breaks down over thousands of years, it does not go away but rather becomes microplastics—small plastic particles less than five millimeters in size.
- Microplastics are being found in our blood, lungs. Humans consume about a credit card worth of plastic every week, but information about the plastic's source and health impacts are limited.

If you have any questions about our position, please contact Michael Town, Executive Director of Virginia LCV, at mtown@valcv.org, or Chris Leyen, Policy Director, at cleyen@valcv.org, or 925-354-1433 (mobile).

- One goal of the Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan (VMDRP) is increasing the understanding and prevention of microplastic and microfibers as marine debris. The VMDRP is supported by the VA Coastal Zone Management Program (CZM is embedded within DEQ).

[HB 357 \(Simonds\) Tidal and nontidal wetlands; DEQ to establish work group to develop strategies to protect, report.](#)

This legislation would:

Establish a work group to evaluate existing approaches to wetland conservation strategies, identify wetlands adaptation areas where tidal wetlands can persist in the landscape, and explore climate’s impact on wetlands’ health and survival.

Reasons to **SUPPORT HB357**

- Wetlands are among the most productive, diverse, and important ecosystems in Virginia. Both tidal and nontidal wetlands improve water quality, reduce storm damage and flooding, control erosion, provide vital wildlife habitat, and help fight climate change.
- Virginia has already half the wetlands that existed in the 1780s due to development. According to a 2021 report by Climate Central, sea level rise threatens to cause Virginia to lose 42% of existing tidal wetlands by 2100.
- To meet Virginia’s Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Watershed Implementation Plan goals, the Commonwealth must restore more than 3,500 acres of tidal and nontidal wetlands but Virginia currently lacks a comprehensive strategy to protect tidal and nontidal wetlands from impacts due to human activities and climate change.

[HB 368 \(McClure\) Uniform Statewide Building Code; Board of HCD to convene advisory group to evaluate, report](#)

This legislation would:

Convene a stakeholder advisory group to recommend revisions to the Uniform Statewide Building Code regarding allowing multifamily buildings up to 6 stories to be served by a single staircase.

Reasons to **SUPPORT HB368:**

- Changing current regulations to allow single-stair buildings will empower construction of family size apartments and condos more easily and more affordably.
- Virginia code currently limits the construction of single staircase residential buildings to just three stories—despite many highly-desired and attractive communities in Richmond, Alexandria, and other historic cities being characterized by single staircase housing which was legal to build in the past.
- Single stair construction is used in NYC, Seattle, and across Europe for buildings with a single staircase up to six stories in height. Modern fire safety measures such as fire resistant building materials, sprinkler systems, and secondary fire escapes mitigate fire risk.

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[HB 1363 \(O’Quinn\) Critical infrastructure sectors; Director of Dept. of Energy to convene a work group to evaluate.](#)

This legislation would:

Establish a working group designed to declare the transition away from fossil fuels a threat to national security—in order to prevent the electrification of homes and buildings.

Reasons to **OPPOSE HB 1363:**

- This 2024 legislation is the “study version” of failed attempts in 2022 and 2023 to ban localities from electrifying new building construction—using the same broad language aimed at preventing any local action that “limits, prohibits or has the effect of prohibiting” natural gas service.
- The parameters of the study imply that Virginia’s clean energy transition threatens jobs, revenue, and our national security.
 - This study seeks only to measure access to “fuels” methane (natural gas), or propane. It fails to consider whether banks, schools, state and local buildings, transit or telecommunications providers can use non-gas sources to meet their future energy needs.
- Prohibiting building electrification can leave high-density zones vulnerable to gas leaks, result in worsened indoor air quality, and prevent localities from meeting local emissions reductions targets.

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