
Virginia 
Association for Parks

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To all VAFP members:

Well. It's over--at least until April 4 when we'll see the next chapter unfold on the transportation issue. Here's a quick recap regarding VAFP's results for the State Park System.

As you know, Governor Kaine included no funds in his proposed budget to increase the Park System's operating budget. VAFP was successful in getting matching amendments introduced in the House and Senate for \$3.9 million and 38 positions. VAFP also succeeded in getting a "full amount needed" amendment introduced in the House for \$11 million and 127 positions.

The General Assembly ultimately approved an increase of \$1 million and 10 positions for State Park System operations. This is nowhere near what is needed, but it's certainly better than nothing.

Governor Kaine did include in his proposed budget \$15 million for State Park System capital outlays. The General Assembly reduced this amount to \$6 million, specifying that \$5 million is to be used for building cabins and campgrounds and \$1 million is to be used for initial development of High Bridge State Park.

This year VAFP expanded advocacy efforts beyond the budget and sponsored four legislative bills designed to provide State Park Law Enforcement Officers with protections already presently afforded to other Virginia law enforcement officers.

Senator Creigh Deeds graciously consented to be our Patron on all four bills. Three of the four bills were passed by both the House and Senate. Those bills were:

SB 894 - Provides for the Attorney General to represent Conservation Officers in civil actions and for special counsel to be appointed to represent Conservation Officers on criminal charges arising from performance of official duties.

SB 896 - Adds Conservation Officers to the list of those officers covered by the Law Enforcement Procedural Guarantee Act.

SB 897 - Adds Conservation Officers to those public safety employees who are entitled to the presumption that certain infectious diseases are occupational diseases compensable under the Workers Compensation Act.

The fourth bill, SB 895, would have included Conservation Officers in the Virginia Law Enforcement Officer Retirement System (VaLORS). This bill died in Committee on a vote of 7 "no", 5 "yes", 1 "abstain", and 2 members absent. We learned a lot from this legislative effort, and, if you do the math, you'll see why we're encouraged to try again next year.

Many thanks to each of you who helped achieve these results by communicating with key legislators during the Assembly session. Your contacts truly made a difference...

...Johnny