



January 10, 2024

2024 Virginia General Assembly Convenes

The 2024 session of the Virginia General Assembly opens today for a 60-day session. Due to redistricting, approximately 40 percent of delegates and senators will be taking office for the first time, and population shifts have taken seats away from rural Virginia to population centers along I-95 and Hampton Roads. Democrats will have at least a one-seat majority in both branches. Perhaps most notable for our association is that today marks the first time in 54 years that a petroleum marketer does not hold a seat in the General Assembly. This loss of institutional knowledge will be a significant hurdle to overcome, but we will once again be counting on the support of the membership to engage your legislators and make them aware of those issues that specifically impact our businesses.

Jobbers Are Refiners Issue

It appears that instead of defining jobber/distributors as refiners, members of the Prince William based MOVE chamber have shifted their strategy to a bill that would mandate independent appraisals for dealer marketing locations. This gambit has raised numerous questions relative to conflicts with existing contracts and federal law. A house bill on the issue ([House 392](#)) was filed yesterday by new Loudoun Delegate Reason which can be viewed [here](#). We anticipate that last year's sponsor Senator Jeremy McPike will be filing companion legislation in the coming days. Your input on how this initiative will impact your business is vital.

Skill Games

We are part of a major effort to regulate, tax, and turn back on the skill games by July 1. There is no way to predict how this will turn out as out-of-state historical horse racing casinos and stand-alone casinos want to eliminate what they see as competition. Some legislators favor local referendums to authorize restoration of skill games. As is the case with most issues, the outcome of this will be largely dependent on those who favor restoration to participate in the process.

Electrification

The election results mean that any effort to eliminate the California car mandate that 100% of new vehicles be electric by 2035 is dead on arrival. We have already seen a bill that will allow public utilities to use ratepayer funds to convert oil and propane consumers to heat pumps. Another study has been filed that could lead to the abolition of the Dillon Rule, which prohibits local governments from enacting ordinances in conflict with state law. There will likely be bills to allow the General Assembly to legislate the building code taking away the collaborative stakeholder process that we have been a part of for many years.

Tobacco Issues

It is likely that the public health groups will be back with a bill to require licensure and registration fees for every venue selling tobacco products. There will also likely be legislation to prohibit the sale of tobacco or nicotine products within a quarter mile of a school.

Fuels Taxes

Enactment of the sweeping tax changes in 2020 make it unlikely major legislation will be considered this year, but we must remain constantly vigilant and on watch for any bills impacting this section of the code to assure that hard fought victories of the past are not overturned.

Right to Work

There will be efforts to repeal Virginia's longstanding law prohibiting forced unionization, but even if successful, such a bill would likely not be approved by Governor Glenn Youngkin.

Minimum Wage and Parental Leave

Both of these issues will be up again this year and it remains to be seen if either sees any action as a part of a two-year budget plan.