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GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NO MORE WAITING



ALLYSE PULLIAM, TIMES-DISPATCH

Virginia Del. Luke Torian, D-Prince William, points at a fellow delegate on the House floor during a special legislative session at the state Capitol on April 23.

Virginia House pushes new budget compromise with governor's support

MICHAEL MARTZ AND DAVE RESS
Richmond Times-Dispatch

After three months of deadlock, the House Appropriations Committee isn't waiting on the state Senate any longer for a budget deal to keep the Virginia government running on July 1.

The committee unveiled its own version of a budget agreement on Friday morning, using \$1.5 billion in additional revenues that Gov. Abigail Spanberger expects the state to collect in this fiscal year and the two-year budget cycle that begins on June 30. Also, the new House proposal includes 3% raises each year for teachers and state employees.

The House proposal, posted on the committee website at 10 a.m., would fund most of the priorities shared by the House and Senate budgets adopted in late February, but would not repeal the state sales and use tax exemption on data center equipment that the Senate has insisted upon. The House and the governor have warned that repealing the exemption entirely

would threaten Virginia's business reputation and undermine its economy at a precarious time.

The House proposes creating a commission to examine all direct and indirect costs caused by data centers and to report the findings by Nov. 1 for the General Assembly to consider when it convenes in January.

"The package includes explicit direction for the establishment of a Commission to thoroughly evaluate the direct and indirect costs and benefits of the data center industry, with a report and recommendations for legislative bill and budgetary changes to address financial, energy, and air/water/noise impacts in time for consideration by the 2027 General Assembly," it reads.

It won an enthusiastic endorsement from Spanberger.

"This budget was built in close coordination with my administration, and I am proud to support this budget for a couple reasons," Spanberger said in a statement.

"The proposal is specific, it is substantive, it is balanced, it is purposeful, and

that's reflected certainly in the funding priorities that exist within this budget, and it makes investments in public schools and infrastructure, affordable housing, our economy across Virginia," she added.

Lucas responds

Senate Finance Chair Louise Lucas, D-Portsmouth, pushed back with a statement on Friday that called the House proposal "an unprecedented step."

"I am disappointed that the House conferees did not continue conversations with the Senate conferees," Lucas said.

The entire 11-member conference committee hasn't met since March 6, but the chair has been sparring with House Appropriations Chairman Luke Torian, D-Prince William, and Spanberger in private meetings as they have searched for a compromise.

Lucas faulted the House and the governor for calling for another study of data

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LAW ENFORCEMENT

'Alarming, to say the least'

Morale on decline within Albemarle Police Department, survey shows

HAWES SPENCER
The Daily Progress

The Albemarle County Police Department has recently touted falling violent crime, expanded wellness programs and the successful completion of a long-delayed accreditation effort. But an internal survey obtained through a public records request paints a less optimistic picture of how some officers view their department.

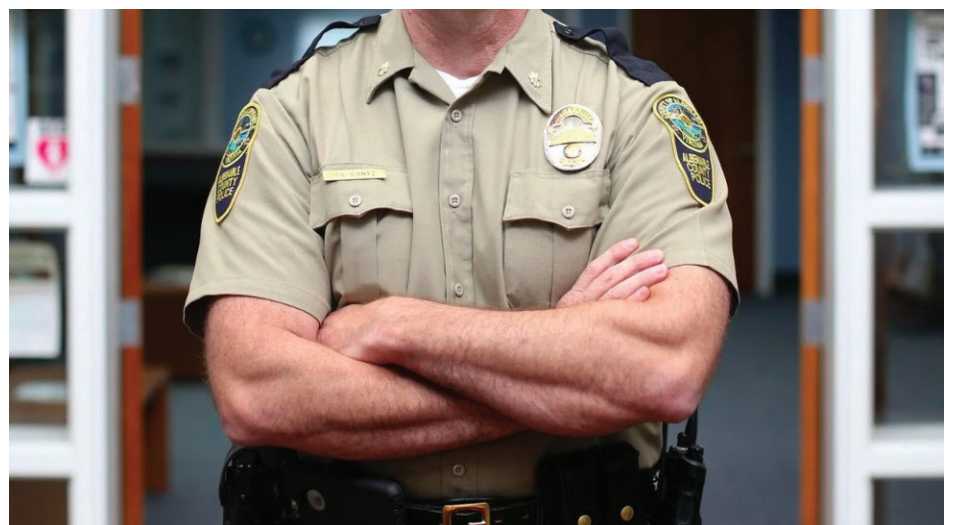
The 2025 countywide employee engagement survey found double-digit declines

across roughly two dozen workplace measures within the department, including teamwork, inclusion, psychological safety, communication and confidence in leadership.

"It's alarming, to say the least, that the comments and the negativity coming out of it is certainly something you don't want to see at any agency," said Rich Goszka, executive director of the Virginia division of the Southern States Police Benevolent Association, which obtained the survey results through a Freedom of Information Act request.

The survey was conducted roughly a year ago as part of a biannual effort involving

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ANDREW SHURTLEFF, THE DAILY PROGRESS

An Albemarle County police officer stands, armed cross, in the station, Thursday, April 14, 2022.