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FOOD PANTRIES

DEMAND SURGES AS DONATIONS FALL



ALLYSE PULLIAM, TIMES-DISPATCH

Jeron DuHart-Rodriguez and Chris Gohrband fill bags with food for Ginter Park United Methodist Church's food pantry on Wednesday. Feed More has seen a 20.6% increase in demand for food assistance in central Virginia this year, even as donations have fallen by 1.6 million pounds.

Nearly half of state households don't have enough to eat

MEREDITH LINDEMOM
Richmond Times-Dispatch

“Rent is up, gas is up. All of these things are creating a vice on the people who have the least,” said Stephen Gura, a volunteer at Ginter Park United Methodist Church’s food pantry. “And as a result, they’re relying more and more, and more, on food pantries.”

Across the Richmond region, food pantries are struggling to keep up with growing demand as families grapple with rising living costs and cuts to federal food assistance.

Feed More has seen a 20.6% increase in demand for food assistance in central Virginia this year, even as donations have fallen by 1.6 million pounds. At St. Thomas Episcopal Church, weekly USDA food deliveries have dropped from 8,000 pounds to 2,500 pounds, forcing the pantry to spend more on groceries and recruit additional volunteers.

WATCH: Stephen Gura talks about the rising demand for food at food pantries. Point your cellphone camera at the QR code and click the link.

NEWSVU

The local strain reflects a much broader problem. A new state-wide study called the Virginia Hunger Study found that 42% of Virginia households experienced food insecurity at some point between May 2025 and May 2026, including 51% of households with children.

Only 27% of food insecure households in Virginia are enrolled in SNAP

The Virginia Hunger Study was released as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

participation has declined by more than 130,000 people in Virginia since the enactment of H.R. 1 (the “One Big Beautiful Bill”) in July 2025.

The legislation is a broad federal budget reconciliation package that spans taxation, energy, agriculture and major safety-net program reforms. On Oct. 1, 2026, the percentage of SNAP benefits that states must cover increased to 75% from the previous 50% split with the federal government, which now covers 25%.

However, the Virginia Hunger Study also showed that only 27% of food-insecure households in Virginia are enrolled in SNAP.

Formerly known as food stamps, SNAP is the largest federal anti-hunger program in the United States, administered by the Food and Nutrition Service under the USDA.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Stores setting a price just for you?

Virginia lawmaker calls for ban against practice

DAVE RESS
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Companies shouldn’t be able to customize higher prices for you based on your personal data, says state Sen. Russet Perry, D-Loudoun.

She’s introduced legislation to ban such surveillance pricing.

More and more companies set customized prices for consumers using data such as information about what people have bought, how they browse when thinking about buying something, where they shop and what kind of device they use when shopping.

It means customers can be charged more simply because a company’s algorithm predicts they can afford it or won’t shop around, Perry said.

“Our private habits and personal information should not be used against us,” Perry said.

“If you and your neighbor are standing 5 feet apart, buying the exact same thing from the exact same store, you should pay the exact same price. A company shouldn’t charge you more because it decided you can afford to pay more,” she said.

Perry’s bill says businesses can still use a history of what customers have purchased in the past when deciding whether to offer a discount.



Perry

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ONLINE: Read state Sen. Russet Perry’s bill by aiming your cellphone camera at the QR code and tapping the link.

NEWSVU

OAK HILL

Next state park gets a boost of \$1.5M

Va. working to clear final hurdles for Monroe estate

MICHAEL MARTZ
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Virginia will have an additional \$1.5 million in federal grants in hand as it works to clear the final hurdles to make President James Monroe’s estate in Loudoun County a new state park.

The National Park Service this week awarded two grants to the state to restore the 1823 manor house and other outbuildings on Oak Hill Farm, a scenic 1,200-acre property along Route 15 south of Leesburg. One \$750,000 grant was tied to the 250th anniversary of the nation’s birth and the other to a Save America’s Treasures fund to help restore the manor house where Monroe lived when he wrote the Monroe Doctrine to assert the new country’s role in the Western Hemisphere.

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FEDERAL SCHOLARSHIP TAX CREDIT

State’s status in new program ‘in question’

Governor: School choice decision could be rescinded

ANNA BRYSON
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Virginia was the first state in the nation to opt into the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit, the first national school

choice scholarship program, but there’s a chance Virginia will rescind its decision to participate.

Former Gov. Glenn Youngkin opted into the program early this year before he left office, but Virginia still needs to complete the full legal process to join.

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MIKE KROPP, TIMES-DISPATCH

Gov. Abigail Spanberger is seen in Williamsburg on Wednesday. “We’re continuing to evaluate the program and where Virginia is and what our options are moving forward,” Spanberger said Friday in Henrico.

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School program uses drones to deter, distract threats. **PAGE A6**

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