



Rivanna Ridge Professional Building
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As the Executive Director of the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA), I would like to take this opportunity to address some important aspects of our organization, its nature, and the services we offer. Our commitment is to serve and support school boards across Virginia, and it is essential to clarify our role and operations.

The Nature of Membership in VSBA

Membership in the VSBA is entirely optional. We are a membership association created in 1906 specifically to serve school boards in Virginia. It's important to emphasize that our membership is comprised of school boards as entire entities, not individual board members. This collective approach ensures that all members benefit from VSBA resources and support.

Control Over Local School Board Policies

A common question we receive is if VSBA controls the policies of local school divisions. The answer is no. VSBA does not have authority over local school board policies. The services we offer, such as policy development and support, are optional add-ons for our members. Not all VSBA members subscribe to these policy services. Our sample policies are designed to comply with state and federal laws, giving local boards the flexibility to customize them according to their specific needs. Our role is to provide guidance and support, not to create or enforce policies. If a school board subscribes to VSBA Policy Services, they are sent sample policies based on compliance to the law. It is up to the individual school boards to review the sample policies and update them to best fit the needs of their school division.

Primary Offerings and Services

VSBA offers a wide range of services to support local school boards. These include:

- **Networking Opportunities:** Connecting school boards across the state for collaboration and shared learning.
- **Professional Development:** Offering sessions to enhance the skills and knowledge of school board members.
- **Policy Services:** Providing law-compliant sample policy development services and support
- **Legal Services:** Offering legal guidance and support.
- **BoardDocs:** Streamlining board document management.
- **Governance Training:** Helping school boards operate more effectively.
- **Superintendent Searches:** Assisting in the recruitment of top educational leaders.

Legislative Positions and Lobbying

There is a narrative across the state that VSBA is a “lobbying organization”. Yes, VSBA does provide legislative advocacy services, however lobbying is one small component of the many services that VSBA provides for our members. The VSBA legislative positions – which are used to lobby at the state level – are shaped entirely by the members of the association, not the staff. Legislative Position Proposals are submitted by member boards and reviewed by a committee with representatives from all nine VSBA regions. This committee presents the positions to the Delegate



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Assembly in November, where a delegate from each member board votes on them. The resulting handbook guides our legislative staff in their lobbying efforts at the General Assembly. These positions are reviewed and updated annually to reflect current priorities.

VSBA's guiding principle when lobbying at the Virginia General Assembly and with Executive Branch Boards and Commissions is local control. VSBA routinely opposes legislation from both sides of the aisle that seeks to mandate one size fits all solutions as we believe what works well for one school division may not work well for another. VSBA believes local school board members are best equipped to make decisions for their school divisions and will continue to oppose measures from the general assembly that interfere with the principle of local control.

Equal Representation for All Divisions

All school divisions receive the same level of service and access to VSBA services, regardless of their size. Each school division is granted one vote at all meetings of the Association, including the VSBA Delegate Assembly. It is important to note that 70% of our member divisions have fewer than 6,000 students, emphasizing our commitment to equitable representation. We have heard comments that VSBA does not support or represent rural school divisions. At the current time, 60% of the VSBA Board of Directors are members of rural school boards.

Monitoring and Enforcement of Compliance

VSBA does not monitor regulatory compliance for school boards or enforce rules and regulations. Our focus is on providing valuable services, networking opportunities, and professional development to our member boards. We operate as a nonpartisan association, committed to maintaining the autonomy of local school divisions. Our stance has remained consistent throughout our 116-year history, emphasizing issues over political affiliations.

Board Development Training and Conference Attendance

Both our board development training sessions and conference attendance are optional. While training sessions require full attendance by school board members and the superintendent when booked, there is no obligation for boards to schedule these sessions. Similarly, participation in our meetings, conferences, or webinars is not mandatory but offered as a benefit to our members should they choose to use them.

We hope this information clarifies the nature of our association, our role, and the benefits we offer to our members. VSBA has remained committed to and will continue carrying out the will of the majority of our school boards without regard for false narratives driven by political preferences and ideology. Thank you for your continued dedication to the educational success of Virginia's students.

Gina G. Patterson
Executive Director
Virginia School Boards Association