

# Media Guide



## Virginia General Assembly

REVISED February 2022

Produced by:

Senate of Virginia  
and the House of Delegates

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## **PRESS PASSES**

Press passes are provided to journalists whose primary responsibility is coverage of Virginia state government and the Virginia General Assembly. Applicants must be full-time, paid correspondents employed by a news organization that is: (a) a general circulation newspaper that has been published for at least 52 weeks consecutively, (b) a public or commercial radio or television station with regularly scheduled news programming, or (c) a news organization whose principle business is the daily dissemination of original news of interest to a broad segment of the public, and which has broadcast or published (online or in print) continuously for 52 weeks. The news organization must (i) work independently of any government, industry, or institution and (ii) not engage, directly or indirectly, in any lobbying, political activity, or other activity intended to influence elections or any matter before the General Assembly or before any independent agency, or any department or other instrumentality of the Executive Branch.

A press pass, which allows access to the Pocahontas Building and Capitol, is available from the House of Delegates Support Services by completing an application, presenting valid identification issued by your organization, and providing a photograph (headshot) for the badge. Please contact Jay Braxton at (804) 698-1552 or e-mail [jbraxton@house.virginia.gov](mailto:jbraxton@house.virginia.gov) for more information or to schedule an appointment. It may take up to a week for your application to be approved and for your badge to be issued. Press passes for specific events are valid for that event only and general passes are good for one year from the issue date. "Day passes" are available to journalists who are not regularly assigned to cover the Virginia General Assembly. Reporters requesting a "day pass" must meet the same criteria as defined in the first paragraph of this section.

## **PRESS ROOMS**

House and Senate feeds are available in the Capitol extension and Pocahontas Building ground floor press rooms.

Anyone wishing to occupy press space in either the Capitol or Pocahontas Building must contact the Virginia Capitol Correspondents Association at [officers@vapress.org](mailto:officers@vapress.org).

## **DRESS CODE**

All reporters and camera operators are required to dress appropriately (business attire) when working in either chamber. Specifically, a blazer, collared shirt, and tie are required for all men for access to the House and Senate Chamber Floors.

Denim of any kind is not appropriate attire.

Those who are not appropriately attired will not be allowed in the Chamber; however, they may be seated in the Gallery if there is space available.

## SENATE CHAMBER COVERAGE

Press access to the floor of the Senate is a privilege. Limited seating is provided for reporters and photographers on the floor in the front of the Chamber. Seating is on a first come, “first-seated” basis. These seats are reserved for working representatives of independent news organizations.

Reporters may sit at the chairs on either side of the “well.” If seating is not available, reporters may go to the Gallery press area.

Additional press seating is provided on both sides of the Gallery. Do not place anything on the Gallery railing.

Bloggers are invited to sit in the Gallery.

The use of cellular telephones and audible electronic devices is prohibited in the Senate Chamber.

The Sergeant-at-Arms may limit news media access to the floor and Gallery due to crowded conditions.

Interviews are not allowed in the Chamber:

- during daily session
- fifteen minutes prior to the scheduled start of the daily session
- five minutes after the adjournment of session
- while the Senate is at ease or in recess

**DO NOT DISTURB THE DECORUM OF THE CHAMBER.**

## **SENATE CHAMBER COVERAGE (cont.)**

Each media outlet will designate no more than two (2) reporters to be eligible for Senate Floor access for the entirety of session. Substitutions of the designee(s) will only be permitted (a) in the event a designee is absent from work or assigned to a story outside of Capitol Square and (b) provided that notice of the substitution is given to the Sergeant-at-Arms 30 minutes prior to the beginning of that day's session.

Media desks in the Senate Chamber shall not be used as office space after session. Media should complete their work and exit Chambers within 20 minutes of adjournment.

Power cords are not allowed.

Do not disturb the members at their seats.

Do not block the view of the members, Lt. Governor, or staff.

The interior aisles are strictly off-limits except to General Assembly members and staff during the daily session.

Reporters do not walk in the "well" to get from one side to the other. Walk around the perimeter of the Chamber to get to and from the designated press areas.

## **SENATE CHAMBER COVERAGE (cont.)**

Beyond exchanging a brief personal greeting,

(a) The media may NOT interview or enter into conversations with any member or staff of the Senate on the Floor (other than the Sergeant-at-Arms) 15 minutes before session and 5 minutes after session or during any recess or period “at ease.” This protocol will be strictly adhered to. You may ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to have a Senator step outside of the Chamber to chat with you at any time. Conversations must be out of the Chamber.

(b) Members of the media may not request assistance from the senate desk staff during session. Roll call votes will be delivered to the press by pages. Press shall refrain from approaching desk staff 30 minutes before and 15 minutes after session to allow staff time for session preparation and wrap-up.

Do not use lights, flashes, or tripods on the floor of the Chamber.

During the session, photographs and video may be shot from the area to the right or left of the “well,” but only from a kneeling position.

Still photographers may transfer from one side of the “well” to the other while in a crouching position.



## **SENATE CHAMBER COVERAGE (cont.)**

Photographers may also shoot from the area designated for press.

During the Morning Hour only, photographers may shoot from the corner of the Chamber to the Page bench beside the podium.

Do not block the Pages' access to the Senators.

When using hand-held television cameras, use extreme caution not to block the view of members, the Lt. Governor, and staff.

Primary television camera coverage of the debate should be from the Gallery or the press room feeds.

All television cameras in the Gallery must be secured on tripods.

The Senate has contracted with WCVE Public Broadcasting to provide television coverage of the floor sessions. Limited audio and video drops are available in the Capitol and Pocahontas Building press rooms.

See Addendum for Senate Chamber Diagram, page 16. If you have any questions, please see the Sergeant-at-Arms or call the Clerk of the Senate at 804-698-7400.

## **SENATE CHAMBER COVERAGE (cont.)**

The Clerk of the Senate shall be the arbiter if these protocols are violated. If these protocols are violated then the following rules will be in effect:

A. Violation #1: the representative of the media will be politely advised of the violation and the consequences of a second violation.

B. Violation #2: the representative of the media will not be allowed on the floor for one week; and advised of the consequences of a third violation.

C. Violation #3: the representative of the media will not be allowed on the floor or in the reserved gallery for the remainder of session; and if that happens during the last week of session, the privileges will be suspended until crossover of the following session, or the completion of an intervening special session, following the reconvened veto session, whichever comes first.

D. Because this is a privilege being extended to the media there will be no appeal process created.

## **HOUSE CHAMBER COVERAGE**

Limited seating is provided for reporters and photographers on the floor of the Chamber. There are a total of ten (10) press seats provided in the rear of the Chamber. These seats are reserved for working representatives of independent news organizations.

If available, additional press seating may be provided in the Gallery. Please do not place any items on the Gallery rail. The daily floor session may be viewed in the Capitol and Pocahontas Building Press Rooms, House Room 3 (Capitol), Senate Room 3 (Capitol), and online at the Virginia Assembly's website ([viriniageneralassembly.gov](http://viriniageneralassembly.gov)).

Bloggers are invited to sit in the Gallery.

The use of cellular telephones and audible electronic devices is prohibited in the House Chamber.

The Sergeant-at-Arms and Doorkeepers may limit news media access to the floor and Gallery due to crowded conditions.

**DO NOT DISTURB THE DECORUM OF THE CHAMBER.**

The interior aisles are strictly off-limits, except to lawmakers and staff during the daily session. Press may only interview a Delegate in the designated press seating area (see area 5 of the House Chamber diagram).

Do not disturb members at their seats.

Floor privileges are not allowed while the House is at ease.

Do not block the view of the members, Clerk's staff, or Pages, or block their access to walkways throughout the Chamber.

## **HOUSE CHAMBER COVERAGE (cont.)**

Do not use lights, flashes, or tripods. (Tripods are allowed in designated areas of the Gallery--please see the Gallery Doorkeeper for locations.)

During the session, photographs may be taken on the Chamber floor in the “well” area. Photographers and cameramen are asked to kneel in the “well” area.

Do not walk in the “well” to get from one side of the Chamber to the other. Walk around the perimeter of the Chamber to get to and from the tables. Do not stop or talk to Delegates as you go from one side of the Chamber to the other.

Primary television camera coverage of the floor debate should be from the Gallery.

All television cameras in the Gallery must be secured on tripods.

Audio “mult” boxes are located in the Gallery.

Hand-held television cameras are allowed in the “well” on the Chamber floor, but do not block the view of members and staff.

The House has contracted with WCVE Public Broadcasting to provide television coverage of the floor sessions. Limited audio and video drops are available in the Capitol and Pocahontas Building press rooms.

See Addendum for House Chamber Diagram, page 17.

If you have any questions, please see the Sergeant-at-Arms or call the House Clerk’s Office at 804-698-1619.

## **JOINT SESSION COVERAGE**

Joint Session coverage for the Governor's State of the Commonwealth Address is the one exception to normal media guidelines. Traditionally, a limited number of newspaper, television crews, and photographers have been allowed to cover the Joint Session from the rear of the House Chamber under the following conditions:

Television cameras are restricted to a designated area.

Photographs may be taken from the press seating area. Photographers may only set up tripods in the designated area. (Please note that a pool photographer is often used due to space limitations.) Television crews must keep cameras on tripods during the Joint Session. (A pool live feed camera is often used due to space limitations.)

The limited floor tripod space is allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. It is requested that equipment be in place at least 45 minutes prior to the start of the Joint Session.

Do not conduct interviews in the Chamber until the Joint Assembly has adjourned.

Interviews are not allowed in the hallway outside of the Chamber while the Governor, the Senate, and guests are exiting the House Chamber.

The Governor's press office will advise the press corps of an interview location for the question and answer session with the Governor.

Please note, after the Governor's address concludes, the Governor and his party will exit the Chamber. The Joint Session will then adjourn and the Senate will exit the Chamber. The House remains in session for a brief time and then adjourns for the day.

## **SENATE AND HOUSE HALLWAY INTERVIEWS**

On the second floor of the Capitol:

Due to traffic congestion, interviews are not permitted outside the Senate and House Chambers during the daily sessions.

Provided no tours are being conducted, interviews are permitted in the Rotunda and the hallway outside the Old Senate Chamber and the Jefferson Room.

Television interviews should be conducted with the cameras and lights facing away from the entrance of the chambers.

Interviews are permitted on the first floor of the Capitol, provided they do not obstruct the normal flow of traffic in the hallways.

## **INTERIM CHAMBER ACCESS**

During the Interim, press personnel desiring to film or take still photos of the Senate Chamber or the House of Delegates Chamber must request access from the respective Clerks' Offices.

## **PAGE INTERVIEWS**

Interviews of Pages must be arranged in advance of the interview by contacting the Senate or House Clerks' Offices.

## SENATE AND HOUSE COMMITTEE ROOM COVERAGE

Due to space constraints, only accredited photographers (television/video and/or still) may set up in designated areas and only if the committee room is open. Live-feed and archived video of Senate and House Committees is available online. Senate committee rooms are opened 30 minutes prior to a meeting.

Do not conduct interviews with members in the committee rooms during meetings.

Do not block the aisles or block a member's view of the podium.

Audio "mult" boxes are located in: Senate Rooms 1, 2, 3, (Capitol), Senate Room A (Pocahontas Building), Committee Room B (Pocahontas Building), and House Rooms 1, 2, 3, (Capitol) and House Committee Room (House Room C, Pocahontas Building).

The Senate Briefing Room is located W539, Fifth Floor West (Pocahontas Building).

The House Briefing Room is the primary venue for press conferences for the House (Ground Floor, Pocahontas Building).

Photographers (or their equipment) may not block the access of the legislative staff to members or the members' view of the Senator who has the floor.

**SENATE COMMITTEE AND  
CONFERENCE ROOMS**

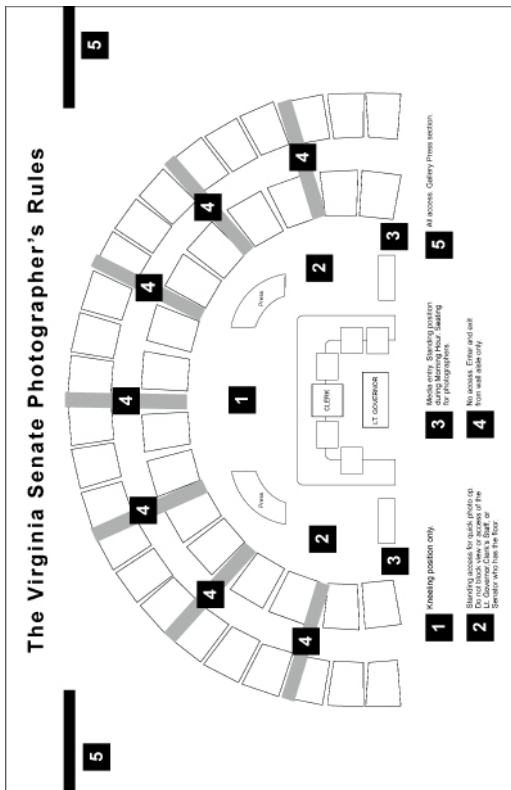
ROOM	LOCATION
Senate Room A	First Floor, Pocahontas Building
Committee Room B (Shared Committee Room)	First Floor, Pocahontas Building
Senate Room 1	First Floor, West Wing, Capitol
Senate Room 2	First Floor, North Hall, Capitol
Senate Room 3	Extension Capitol
Senate Subcommittee Rooms (Pocahontas Building)	E 500-1 E 500-2 E 500-3 Sixth Floor, Senate Leadership
Senate Briefing Room	W539 Fifth Floor, Pocahontas Building



**HOUSE COMMITTEE AND  
CONFERENCE ROOMS**

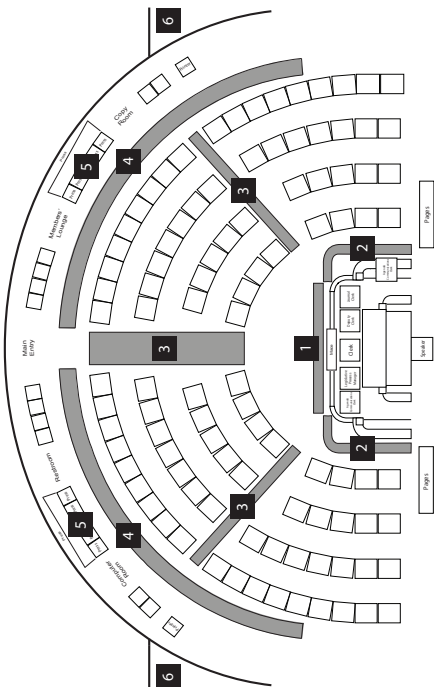
ROOM	LOCATION
House Committee Room (House Room C)	First Floor, Pocahontas Building
Shared Committee Room (Committee Room B)	First Floor, Pocahontas Building
House Subcommittee Rooms (Pocahontas Building)	200-A 200-B 300-A 300-B 400-A 400-B 400-C Sixth Floor, Speaker's Conference Room
House Room 1	First Floor, East Wing, Capitol
House Room 2	First Floor, North Hall, Capitol
House Room 3	Extension Capitol
House Briefing Room	Ground Floor, Pocahontas Building

## SENATE CHAMBER DIAGRAM



# HOUSE CHAMBER DIAGRAM

## The Virginia House of Delegates Photographers' Rules



- 1** Kneeling positions only.
- 2** Standing access. Do not block view between Speaker, Clerk's staff and speaking Member. Move as directed by staff.
- 3** No Access. Enter and exit from wall aisle only.
- 4** Limited access. Quick still only photo ops.
- 5** All access. Press bench.
- 6** All access. Gallery Press area.

## INFORMATION CENTERS AND SERVICES

Bills, Daily Calendars, Committee Dockets, Votes, Cumulative Index, Bill Status and other information can be found at: <http://lis.virginia.gov>

Information Desk                      Ground Floor, Pocahontas  
(804) 6998-1470  
Staffed during session only

Senate Information                      First Floor, Capitol  
Room W147  
(804) 698-7410  
(888) 892-6948  
[information@senate.virginia.gov](mailto:information@senate.virginia.gov)

House Information and                      First Floor, Capitol  
Communications Services                      Room S131  
(804) 698-1500  
[HICS@house.virginia.gov](mailto:HICS@house.virginia.gov)