



# Staff Senate: State Government Relations Update

Lauren Posey

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# Agenda

- Office of State Government Relations Overview
- Issue Advisors
- Snap shot: a year in SGR
- 2025 General Assembly Session
- 2025 Legislation
- Commonwealth Budget
  - GMU Budget Priorities
  - 2025 Budget Update
  - Biennium Budget Update
- Dates to Watch
- Q&A

# Office of State Government Relations

- SGR represents the university administration's positions in Richmond and across the Commonwealth
- Advocates for investment in the university, to the general assembly and executive branch
- Communicates information to university leadership and the university community on significant state and legislative matters
- Assists legislators in working in partnership with the university on important issues impacting the Commonwealth, including tracking and developing legislation
- SGR is part of the Office of Government and Community Relations, led by Paul Liberty as Vice President, overseeing State, Federal and Community Relations for the university.

Lauren Posey  
Director



Tyler Javonillo  
Assistant Director



# Issue Advisors

- What is an Issue Advisor?
  - Experts with valuable insight into issues across the university
  - Offer expertise on issues being considered by legislature
  - Provide anecdotes, perspectives, and key details that help shape our advocacy
  - SGR works to ensure Mason's policy priorities are front-and-center in Richmond
    - We benefit from your network
    - information from your counterparts at other institutions can be very helpful in our advocacy and coordination
    - Our job is to know the state policy landscape, your expertise helps us inform elected officials, staffers, and stakeholders across the Commonwealth

# Snap Shot: A year in SGR

- **May-** Budget signed by Governor Youngkin
- **June-** General Assembly's Federal Workforce Commissions, Money Committees, SCHEV visits GMU, 6YP prep, develop budget agenda
- **July-** 6YP prep, meet with R & D candidates for Governor, Lt. Gov. & A.G.
- **August-** 6 Year Plan Presentation in Richmond, legislative meetings
- **September-** Legislative meetings, GMU's budget submissions & caboose budget discussion with Administration
- **October-** SCHEV budget recommendations, JLARC presentations, JCOTS legislative agenda development
- **November-** Legislative meetings, Elections, House and Senate Money Committee Retreats
- **December-** Governor's final budget proposal, identify budget patrons, finalize budget asks
- *January 2026-* Inauguration of new Governor, start of General Assembly Session
- *February-* Session, GMU reception, Mason Lobbies
- *March-* Session, budget season
- **April-** Reconvene session

## Throughout the Year in Richmond:

- JLARC
- SCHEV
- Council of Presidents
- JCOTS
- ACUP
- Committee Meetings: ex. Finance and Appropriations, Athletics Commission, Federal Workforce Impacts



# 2025 General Assembly Session

- President Washington Briefs NOVA Caucus
- Alumni & Legislative Reception
- Virtual Mason Lobbies





# 2025 General Assembly Session

- SBDC Breakfast Reception
- President Washington's Legislative Visits
- Legislators at A10 Men's Basketball Championship



# 2025 General Assembly Session

- The 2025 General Assembly session began on Jan. 8 and concluded on Feb. 22, “short session” = 45 days in odd years, 60 days in even years
- The General Assembly considered over 2,200 bills
  - More than 100 with potential impacts to the university.
- 924 bills were sent to the Governor for consideration.
  - 727 Signed
  - 197 Vetoed





# 2025 Legislation

- Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP)
- Athletics/Student Fees
- Campus Safety/Free Speech
- Disability Access
- Hunger-Free Campus
- University Procurement
- Animal Testing Research Reporting

# Commonwealth Budget: GMU Priorities

- Increase operations funding, including dedicated funding for VMSDEP
- Increase to facilities maintenance funding
- Planning authorization for ISEB
- Increase tick borne illness research funding
- Dedicated investment for Small Business Development Centers
- Authorization for State Climate Office
- Employee raises/bonus

# Commonwealth Budget: GMU 2025 Update

- Budget currently on the Governor's desk:
  - \$11M in new funding for affordability maintenance, operations, and Small Business Development Center support
  - Nearly \$2M in new financial aid
  - ~~Over \$28M in one-time maintenance reserve funds~~
  - \$140M in funding to offset VMSDEP waivers (split between IHE's across FY25 and FY26)
  - 1.5% employee bonuses, 3% salary increases



# Biennium Budget Update

- Total \$22.5M in new operating funds (\$11.5M ongoing) for FY25
- \$3.3M in financial aid (ongoing), plus additional \$2M one time in FY25
- VMSDEP: \$75M in FY25, \$65M in FY26 (ongoing), GMU expects roughly 12% from total funding, based on number of student waivers
- 3% salary increases in each year of the biennium
- Pre-planning funding for Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering Building (Fairfax campus) in FY24
- \$9M in maintenance funding (ongoing), \$8M one time funding for critical projects in FY25.

# Dates to Watch

- June 17: Primary Elections
- July 1: Effective date of 2025 enacted legislation
- November 4: Election Day
  - Governor
  - Lt. Governor
  - Attorney General
  - All 100 members of the Virginia House of Delegates
- December 17: Governor's introduced budget
- January 14, 2026: General Assembly begins session
- January 17, 2026: Governor sworn into office

# Q&A

- What are the university's current state legislative priorities? How are those priorities determined?
  - GMU budget priorities are derived from 6YP (strategic plan & capital plan) and identified by the President and senior leadership.
- How do you engage with state legislators and policymakers on behalf of the university?
  - Throughout the year we attend committees, counsel meetings, commissions and other events with legislators, we travel across the commonwealth to meet legislators in their district, usually with the President, to help us learn more about their priorities and to share GMU's impact to their constituents. We host events in Richmond and on our campuses to engage local electeds with the university.
- What does a successful year look like for you?
  - Money for GMU! Operations, capital investment, financial aid direct to students, state salary increases, you name it! Ensuring legislation that is harmful to the university and our community is an example of defensive advocacy, key role for Issue Advisors.
- How does your job shift (if at all) when the General Assembly is not in session?
  - Outside of session my time is more flexible, I can come to campus, schedule meetings etc., more engaged with university. More time to dig into issues and help connect electeds to our campuses.
- Let's talk budget – can you give us an overview of the state budget process and how you and other university representatives are involved?
  - See slide 5!
- Do you work with other universities in the Commonwealth to advocate for things that would benefit all of higher education, or is it more of an us-against-them mentality and each university is trying to get its own funding?
  - At certain times of the year, I work more closely with other university colleagues than my own! We meet every day during session to share information, strategize and pair off to conduct meetings with legislators. Throughout the year, we usually once a week. We do get very competitive when it comes to the budget, our friends become our frenemies really quickly, but that's all part of the job.
- What were some highlights from the most recent Legislative session?
  - President Washington's presentation to the NOVA delegation- members who thought they knew what GMU was up to, were thrilled to hear all that was happening on campus.
  - HB2427- GMU Alum Del. Michael Webert's athletics Mental Health First Aid training bill passing with bipartisan support- every school stood in support of the effort.
- What upcoming legislation should we be aware of that could affect the university or our students?
  - HB1805- IEP guidance & reporting
  - SB1016 Hunger-Free Campus and SB1018 SNAP benefits
  - SB1257-RA Naloxone Training
- How can staff help communicate the university's impact to lawmakers?
  - Stay in touch with SGR Office, share info, help us highlight the return on investment- what funding does at GMU- impact to students, research, community building etc.



# Questions?



Lauren Posey  
Director  
State Government Relations  
lposey@gmu.edu  
804-786-2217



Tyler Javonillo  
Assistant Director  
State Government Relations  
tjavonil@gmu.edu  
804-786-2216