

During the General Assembly session, the Commission on Local Government (CLG) analyzes legislation with a potential fiscal impact on localities using a network of local government volunteers. Statements on these bills are generated to advise legislators of the potential impacts of their decisions. In 2015, several improvements to the fiscal impact statement process were implemented. First, a web portal was created to allow an easier exchange of data between local governments and CLG staff, using a small allocation from the General Assembly. Next, legislation went into effect that would increase the volume of bills that could be reviewed for local impact. Finally, volunteers were organized into subject areas to decrease the workload on local volunteers but increase the level of expertise of local analysis.

The 2014 General Assembly allocated one-time funds to the Commission on Local Government to build a Web portal that would assist in collecting fiscal impact data. The portal was built by the Department of Housing and Community Development's IT staff and allows for localities to provide analysis on legislation directly to CLG staff so they can easily compile the data, make edits, and submit fiscal impact statements to the legislature. Upon receiving input from local governments, a fiscal impact statement could be generated in minutes, whereas before it could take CLG staff hours to prepare the analysis for legislators. During the 2015 session, this new tool proved to be a valuable enhancement to this crucial process for local governments.

The General Assembly also amended §30-19.03 of the *Code of Virginia* with the intent of more bills being referred to the CLG for local analysis. Two agencies that already review legislation for fiscal impacts to the state, the Department of Planning and Budget and the Department of Taxation, were authorized to begin referring bills to the CLG for analysis. During the 2015 General Assembly session, CLG staff submitted 19 fiscal impact statements on legislation, 11 more than the previous year. Of these 19 bills, one was passed without amendments, four were passed with amendments and 14 were defeated.

Local volunteers were also organized into four subject areas for the 2015 session: finance, education and human services, local government and general laws. Local volunteers were only referred bills for analysis for those within their subject areas, which reduced the workload on the volunteer localities. While this reduced the volume of total responses, CLG staff noted an increase in the quality of responses.

Within their subject areas, some of the volunteer local governments should be recognized for their significant contributions to the local fiscal impact process during the 2015 Session. Those jurisdictions are:

Counties

Henrico
Henry
Rappahannock
Richmond
Rockingham
Spotsylvania

Cities

Chesapeake
Danville
Falls Church
Lexington
Lynchburg
Roanoke
Winchester

Towns

Front Royal