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## VHHA in Action

Each day, VHHA actively works on behalf of its members, their employees, and Virginians to advance the interests of Virginia's hospitals and health care systems. In the past week, these are some developments of interest to Virginia hospitals and health systems:

### **Virginia Continues its Streak as a Top State for Hospital Patient Safety in National Ranking**

- Virginia hospitals have once again earned national accolades for excellence in patient safety and care in the form of recent news that the Commonwealth is [ranked second overall among states](#) in the Fall 2025 Leapfrog Group Hospital Safety Grade rankings. Hospitals in Virginia have consistently been top performers in the bi-annual rankings of acute care hospitals. For the Fall

2025 period, 53.5 percent of Virginia hospitals evaluated by the Leapfrog Group received an “A” grade. Virginia previously ranked [fifth overall in the Spring 2025 rankings](#) and second in the [Fall 2024](#), [Spring 2024](#), [Fall 2023](#), [Fall 2022](#), and the [Spring 2022](#) periods. The Commonwealth was [first overall in the Fall 2021 rankings](#), fourth in Spring 2021, sixth in Fall 2020, third in Fall 2019, second in Spring 2019, third in Fall 2018, and fifth in Spring 2018. Hospitals from **Bon Secours**, **Carilion Clinic**, **Centra**, **HCA Virginia**, **Inova**, **Lifepoint Health**, **Riverside**, **Sentara Health**, **UVA Health**, **Valley Health**, and **VCU Health** are among those receiving “A” grades. Read more [here](#).

### **VHHA Hosts In-Person Meeting of Payor Advisory Committee**

- This week, VHHA held an in-person meeting of the **Payor Advisory Committee**. The Committee is a forum for hospital payor relations and revenue cycle leaders to discuss priority issues and ongoing payor-related challenges. Contact **Craig Connors** at [cconnors@vhha.com](mailto:cconnors@vhha.com) to inquire about the committee.

### **VHHA Encourages Hospital Staff to Consider Applying for Sorensen Political Leaders Program**

- As part of its partnership with the **Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership** at the **University of Virginia**, VHHA encourages hospital staff and leaders to apply for the 2026 Political Leaders Program. Applications are being accepted until Dec. 5 under an [extended deadline](#). The 2026 cohort program will run from March-December. Visit this [link](#) for more information and to access the program application. In 2020, VHHA [entered into a partnership with Sorensen](#) to support its programming and help identify health professionals who are strong candidates for the Political Leaders Program. The program draws applicants from across the state and focuses on Virginia politics and governing, policy issues and solutions, regional needs, ethical servant leadership, and efforts to unite the Commonwealth. This program is primarily focused on individuals who are 10-plus years removed from college. Prospective program applicants from VHHA member hospitals or health systems are encouraged to contact VHHA President and CEO **Sean T. Connaughton** at [sconnaughton@vhha.com](mailto:sconnaughton@vhha.com) to discuss this opportunity and the ways in which VHHA can support applicants.

### **VHHA in the News**

- VHHA actively engages with the news media to share public messaging and coordinate member media appearances to showcase the important work done by Virginia hospitals. That is reflected in recent coverage including [multiple articles](#) in [Chief Healthcare Executive](#), and [WHRO](#).

## **News Updates**

### **Congress, White House Reach Deal to End Five-Week Federal Government Shutdown**

Members of **Congress** and **U.S. President Donald J. Trump** this week reached agreement on a deal to end the federal government shutdown that began Oct. 1 and has endured more than five weeks. The logjam on the longest federal government shutdown in history was broken when eight members of the Senate Democratic Caucus agreed to vote with Republicans in the **U.S. Senate** on a plan to restore government funding for a range of programs including federal food aid for needy families and provide backpay for furloughed federal workers. The short-term funding deal to re-open the government, which

also attracted support from the GOP majority in the **U.S. House of Representatives** and the **White House**, runs through Jan. 30, 2026. It does not unwind Medicaid policy and funding changes in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Health care funding and policy, including a debate over extending expiring enhanced premium tax credits to help individuals purchase ACA marketplace insurance plans, were a sticking point in the talks over ending the shutdown and funding the government. As part of the compromise to end the shutdown, Democrats received a commitment from Senate GOP leadership for a future vote on health care legislation. **U.S. Senator Tim Kaine** (D) of Virginia was among the group of eight senators who joined with Republicans to advance legislation to end the shutdown.

### **CMS Announces New Voluntary Drug Payment Model for State Medicaid Agencies, Pharmaceuticals**

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** (CMS) recently announced a new GENERating cost Reductions fOr U.S. (GENEROUS) Medicaid Model pilot program to enable state Medicaid programs to purchase drugs included in the pilot at prices aligned with those paid in select other countries, allowing Americans to benefit from fairer, more competitive pricing. CMS has released a [request for applications](#) (RFA) for drug manufacturers interested in participating in the GENEROUS Model. The agency will also seek letters of intent from state Medicaid agencies interested in participating. States that express interest will later have the opportunity to formally apply and potentially opt in to the terms and prices CMS negotiates with participating drug manufacturers whose applications are accepted. The voluntary model will launch in January 2026 and run for five years. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

### **CDC Data: 2025 Confirmed Measles Cases Exceed 1,700 Across the Nation**

According to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC), [1,723 confirmed measles cases](#) have been reported in the U.S. in 2025, with the majority of those in 43 jurisdictions: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York City, New York state, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. There have been 45 outbreaks reported in 2025 and 87 percent of confirmed cases (1,503 of 1,723) are outbreak-associated. For comparison, 16 outbreaks were reported during 2024 and 69 percent of cases (198 of 285) were outbreak-associated. The **Center for Outbreak Response Innovation** at **John Hopkins University** [indicates](#) the current measles case count is the highest U.S. number since 1992. View a North American data dashboard on 2025 measles cases [here](#). Measles is a highly contagious illness that can spread by airborne means. Its symptoms usually appear in two stages: first, an infected person may develop a fever of greater than 101 degrees and experience a runny nose, watery red eyes, and a cough from 7-14 days after being exposed; second is the appearance of a skin rash that can start 3-5 days after symptoms begin. People with measles are contagious from four days before the rash appears through four days after the rash appears. There have been four [confirmed measles cases](#) in Virginia this year.

### **ACA Marketplace Health Plan Enrollment Period for 2026 Coverage Open to the Public**

The [open enrollment period](#) for people to purchase 2026 health coverage plans on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) health insurance marketplace is open until Jan. 15, 2026. In 2025, nearly 389,000 Virginians enrolled in coverage through [Virginia's Insurance Marketplace](#). What is different about this cycle is that the enrollment period is two weeks shorter than last year and fewer people may have access to financial support that helps subsidize the cost of purchasing coverage. For the past several years, enhanced

premium tax credits (EPTC) approved by Congress have helped qualified individuals purchase coverage on the marketplace. Those EPTCs are set to expire at the end of this year if Congress doesn't extend them. Anticipating EPTC expiration, health insurance companies that offer marketplace plans have proposed rate increases for plan year 2026 in Virginia and beyond. In August, the **Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC)** [announced](#) that many health insurers offering individual and small group coverage marketplace plans have requested rate increases, with many proposing average increases of 20 percent or more. It has been projected that as many as one-fourth of the Virginians who now have marketplace plans could lose coverage if the enhanced premium tax credits expire. Nationally, an [analysis](#) by Peterson-KFF showed that "across 312 insurers participating in the ACA Marketplaces from the 50 states and the District of Columbia" there is "a median proposed premium increase of 18 percent." The study indicates that is a sharp increase from last year and "the largest rate change insurers have requested since 2018." The SCC also noted that insurers requested an average 11.2 percent rate increase for small group rates in 2026.

### **Medicare Annual Enrollment Period Active Through Dec. 7**

The [Medicare open enrollment period](#) for 2026 recently began and continues through Dec. 7. During this period, eligible individuals can enroll or disenroll from Medicare Advantage plans, change drug plans, and more. Earlier this year, the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** [indicated](#) that it anticipates premium and drug plan cost stability for 2026 coverage. In 2025, [CMS data](#) shows that of the 69 million Americans enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B, about 51 percent were in Medicare Advantage plans. VHHA has additional information about Medicare on its website, including official government documentation, and educational resources on plan feature comparison charts, frequently asked questions, and more. Visit this [link](#) to learn more and access the available resources.

## **Events**

### **VHHA to Host Nov. 18 'Earn While You Learn' In-Person Workshop for Virginia Hospitals**

Hospitals seeking to fill allied health vacancies are encouraged to participate in an upcoming workshop whose programming is focused on supporting hospitals in meeting evolving workforce needs through the innovative "Earn While You Learn" model. During the workshop, representatives from the **UVA Health** "Earn While You Learn" team will deliver a presentation about their program designed to help fill a range of health care roles from entry-level support positions to advanced clinical pathways, including allied health positions. Workshop participants will learn how that model can be adapted and applied by other organizations in a tailored way to meet specific workforce needs. The in-person workshop is scheduled for Nov. 18 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at VHHA offices in Glen Allen, VA. Visit this [link](#) to register. Contact VHHA Director of Workforce Initiatives **Sharon Alexander** at [salexander@vhha.com](mailto:salexander@vhha.com) with any questions.

### **VAFCC to Host 2025 Annual Conference Nov. 16-18 in Roanoke**

The **Virginia Association of Free & Charitable Clinics (VAFCC)** is scheduled to host its 2025 Annual Conference from Nov. 16-18 in Roanoke, VA. The conference theme is "Sustaining Care in Turbulent Times: Bolstering the Healthcare Safety Net" and the event will focus on equipping free and charitable clinics with the tools, insights, and partners needed to build long-term financial and operational sustainability. That includes putting a spotlight on strategies and practices that fuel clinic

growth, empowering them to move beyond survival and toward long-term impact despite rising demand and limited resources. Learn more through this [link](#).

## Podcast

### VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features HCA Virginia Cardiothoracic Surgeon Leader, Combat Vet

This episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features **Dr. William Cooper**, a nationally recognized cardiothoracic surgeon, a decorated U.S. Army veteran, and a healthcare entrepreneur. He joins us for a conversation about his new role as Medical Director of Cardiovascular Surgery at **HCA Virginia's Reston Hospital Center**. Listen to the episode [here](#) and hear past episodes through this [link](#). Podcast episodes are also available through these podcast apps and networks: [Apple Podcast](#), [Amazon Music](#), [Spotify](#), [Pandora](#), [Stitcher](#), [TuneIn](#), [SoundCloud](#), [Blubrry](#), [iHeart Radio](#), [Deezer](#), [Podbay](#), [Pocket Casts](#), the [Virginia Audio Collective](#), and the [World Podcast Network](#). The podcast can also be heard on the radio airwaves – episodes air Sundays at 9 a.m. on 100.5 FM, 107.7 FM, 92.7 FM, and 820 AM across Central Virginia and 1650 AM in Hampton Roads. Send questions, comments, feedback, or guest suggestions to [pcfpodcast@vhha.com](mailto:pcfpodcast@vhha.com).



## Around the State



Anderson



Frese

**Monica Anderson, RT**, with **Chesapeake Regional Healthcare**, and **Ashley Frese, ANP**, with **Inova Fairfax Hospital**, have been named recipients of the "Virginians Speak Up for Safety Award" for the third quarter of 2025. Since 2017, the Speak Up Awards have been presented by the **VHHA Center for Healthcare Excellence** in recognition of individuals and teams within Virginia hospitals who speak up to prevent potential harm to

patients or other staff members. Anderson was recognized for actions taken in response to a situation involving stocking of resuscitation bags. Frese was recognized for actions taken in response to a situation involving neurological evaluations for patients at the end of life.