

# Prospective Senate Pages: Overview and Considerations

The following information addresses the most commonly asked questions by prospective applicants and their families regarding the Senate Page Program. You are strongly encouraged to thoroughly consider this information before starting an application.

The Virginia General Assembly is a bicameral legislature. The House Page Program, administered by the House Clerk's Office, is a separate program that requires completion of a different application. In addition, the selection process, program components and protocols for the House Page Program differ from the Senate.

## Prior to Starting the Senate Page Application

### **Consider the time of year in which your term of service would occur as a Senate Page.**

By order of the Constitution of Virginia, the legislature convenes on the second Wednesday in January each year for 46 calendar days in odd-numbered years (seven total weeks) and 60 calendar days in even-numbered years (nine total weeks). **Service as a Senate Page is a session-long commitment!**

### **Understand the responsibility you would take on in the role of a Senate Page.**

Each Senate Page will be tasked with various job assignments such as staffing committee meetings (in a backup clerk capacity), answering telephone calls, providing basic concierge services and speaking to the public or visiting delegations about their experience and role in the legislative process.

**It is important to recognize that any day in the legislature is constantly changing, regardless of a set schedule.** A typical day-in-the-life of a Senate Page will resemble the following:

#### **Sunday**

- 4:00 p.m.: The designated hotel opens for Senate Page arrival
- 9:30 p.m.: Deadline to report to the designated hotel for the week
- 10:30 p.m.: Curfew/lights out

#### **Monday - Thursday**

- 6:30 a.m.: Wake up/breakfast/report to work
- 8:15 a.m.: Roll call and morning class
- 8:30 a.m.: Teams report to work areas (*note: teams rotate team assignments each week, and most assignments are delegated on a weekly basis. Therefore, a Senate Page who receives a "fixed" work assignment at the start of the week will likely have the same assignment for five consecutive days to instill consistency, responsibility and a better understanding of how that task supports the overall legislative operation*).

Depending on the team to which a Senate Page is assigned, a day may include the following: pulling or filing bill copies, answering telephones, assisting visitors with directions on Capitol Square, working a Senate floor session, visiting a historical site, attending a program class or engaging with a guest speaker on a designated topic of interest. All Senate Pages are afforded an opportunity to work in committee meetings, too.

5:00 p.m.: Three team system ends/dismissal  
5:15 p.m.: Dinner  
7:00 p.m.: Mandatory study hall  
9:00 p.m.: Social time begins/pack for the weekend trip home on Thursday night  
10:30 p.m.: Social time ends/curfew/lights out

### **Friday**

6:30 a.m.: Wake up/breakfast/report to work  
8:15 a.m.: Roll call and morning class  
8:30 a.m.: Teams report to work areas (*note: teams rotate work areas each week*)  
Noon: Dismiss for the weekend/return home

Senate Pages work 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday - Thursday and 8:30 a.m. - Noon on Friday. Senate Pages are expected to work the entire session.

**Discuss the expectations as a family to ensure the optimal experience. This is a big commitment.**

Each Senate Page is held to a **strict code of professional conduct at all times**, and details will be covered during orientation and training. Applicants who receive admission to the program will be issued a handbook, employment forms and other important information. Those who do not follow the program handbook shall be subject to suspension or dismissal. Upon suspension or dismissal from the program, their school will be notified.

The code of conduct shall include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Adhering to uniform guidelines.
- Adhering to business casual guidelines outside of work hours.
- Exhibiting professional behavior both inside and outside of the workplace.
- Following instructions and respecting staff authority.

In the course of discussing this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, you should consider the following:

- **Cell phones:** must be turned in during work hours and at the beginning of study hall (to be returned the following morning).

- **Other electronic devices:** Senate Pages are allowed to have one other electronic device. Use of any personal electronic device, including a cell phone, is a privilege that can be suspended.
  
- **Dress code**
  - **Young ladies (workday):** white blouses or turtlenecks, gray slacks, and coordinating socks with comfortable black shoes.
  - **Young men (workday):** white shirts, gray slacks, and ties that coordinate with gray and navy. Socks must coordinate with comfortable black shoes.
  - **Both (outside of work hours):** Business casual, although jeans are allowed.
  
- **Pay and Per Diem:** Senate Pages are paid a weekly salary and receive a weekly per diem. Chapter 879 of the 2008 Acts of the General Assembly directs the Commonwealth of Virginia to disburse payroll and per diem checks through direct deposit to a checking or savings account. This is a mandatory requirement for all persons on state payrolls. For the most recent pay information, please contact our office.
  
- **Up-front costs:** Applicants who receive admission to the program will be required to submit an activity fee at orientation. In recent years, the fee has been \$50.00. They are also responsible for purchasing uniform attire and a binder for program materials.
  
- **Hotel residency:** Required for all program participants beginning each Sunday evening. The entire class will check out for the week on Friday mornings and return home that afternoon. The Senate Clerk's Office makes the reservations, roommate assignments, and provides a couple to chaperone. The cost of the hotel room is billed to the Senate Clerk's Office.
  
- **Illness:** The Senate Clerk's Office has an agreement with the Pediatrics Department of Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center to provide emergency medical service for Senate Pages. Parents are responsible for the cost of treatment and will be billed by VCU. Parents will be required to submit completed medical forms and insurance information to have on file during session.
  
- **Study Hall:** Senate Pages are required to attend a monitored study hall on Monday through Thursday nights from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Only the Clerk of the Senate can excuse a Page from study hall. There are no exceptions.
  
- **Transportation:** Arrangements to and from the Richmond are the responsibility of each family. Once the Senate and House class lists are finalized, a copy will be furnished to parents for the purposes of arranging carpools. Senate Pages are not allowed to ride in motor vehicles driven by anyone other than a member of his/her family, a Senator or Delegate, or a member of the Clerk's staff unless written authorization from a parent or guardian is on file in the Senate Clerk's Office.

## Before You Apply for the Senate Page Program

**Review each tip sheet and, if possible, speak to someone who served as a Senate Page.**

The Senate Clerk's Office does **not** afford an opportunity for prospective applicants to "shadow" a current Senate Page for the day. This material for prospective families and teachers will answer most of the commonly asked questions.

**Review the application instructions in a thorough manner. If you choose to proceed, make sure your application is truly complete before submitting.**

All components of the application must be completed by the applicant, with the assistance of parents/legal guardians, by the deadline stated within the application material.

**The number of applications will far exceed the number of available Senate Page positions.**

The Senate receives approximately 150-200 applications for 36 - 40 positions each year.

**Deadlines are firm.**

The application opens in August and closes in mid-October of each year.

Students who want to be considered for a Senate Page position and admission to the Senate Page Program **must** submit a complete application by the established deadline. *Applicants are encouraged to not wait until the last minute to apply.*

**Applicants are allowed to apply to the Senate Page Program and the House Page Programs.**

However, please remember the process and requirements are different.

Applicants are **not** allowed to serve in **both** programs concurrently or in subsequent years. For example, if an applicant serves as a Senate Page during a regular legislative session, they are not allowed to serve as a House Page in the subsequent regular legislative and vice versa.

**Carefully consider your current and future commitments that may occur during a legislative session. This is especially true if you are a member of a sports team, band, orchestra or other organized activity from which you cannot be excused during the legislative session.**

Senate Pages are prohibited from practicing for extracurricular activities that may include, but shall not be limited to, the following: the use of musical instruments, other band equipment, exercise equipment and/or facilities in any physical space (professional, hotel or otherwise) utilized by Senate Pages.

Arrangements need to be made with teachers/coaches for practice to occur outside of their time in Richmond. If you have a specific circumstance, please ask **before** applying!

# Understanding the Senate Page Selection Process

## **Senate Committee on Rules**

Pursuant to the Rules of the Senate adopted on January 13, 2016, the members of the Senate elect twenty Pages. In addition, six Senate Pages are appointed by the leadership of the Senate to serve during a legislative session. The Clerk of the Senate may appoint additional Senate Pages.

## **Timeline**

The review process for admission to the Senate Page Program typically takes one and a half months to complete. All applicants will be notified, typically by mid-December.

## **Orientation**

Those who receive admission to the program will attend a mandatory Orientation program with their parents. There are no exceptions. Orientation is typically a four-hour session.

**The manner in which applicants are selected to the House Page Program is very different.** If you have questions about becoming a House Page, please contact the House Clerk's Office by calling (804) 698-1500.

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## **For more information, please contact:**

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**Updated on 05/15/2022**