

## **Committee on General Laws**

### **Modern Jurisdiction**

Considers matters concerning alcoholic beverage sales and licensure requirements; emblems of the Commonwealth; cemeteries; conflicts of interest, except those concerning members of the judiciary or the legal profession; consumer affairs; fire protection; Freedom of Information Act; Public-Private Partnership Act; housing, to include the Landlord-Tenant Act, Condo Association Act, and Property Owners Associations; inter- or intra-government relations, including inter- and intra- state compacts and agreements; libraries; gambling, to include lotteries, casino and pari-mutuel wagering; professions and occupations, except the health and legal professions; organization of state governmental bodies (agencies, boards, departments, etc); veterans' affairs; and matters not specifically referable to other committees.

### **Origin and History**

The modern General Laws Committee was first established in December 1901, but its origins date back centuries earlier.

The first traces of a committee system in England date to the reign of Edward I (1272-1307) when committees were formed to consider petitions from the lands of the realm. Arguably, the first true standing committee of Parliament was established during Queen Elizabeth's third Parliament, which on April 7, 1571, formed a standing committee to consider "grievances and petitions." By the early 17th century, it was commonplace to find committees of Parliament for receiving grievances from the different counties, which were then framed into the form of a petition. Once adopted by the lower house, the official grievances were sent to the Lords for concurrence, and in their final form were presented as a petition to the king by the houses jointly. One such committee, during the Parliament of 1610, consisted of the king's Privy Council, the first knight of every shire, all the lawyers of the house, the first burgess of every borough and Sir Edwin Sandys, who was also one of the founders of the Virginia Company of London.

When the Burgess convened the first Assembly on Jamestown Island in 1619 they divided themselves into two committees – one to examine proposals for new laws, and one to propose necessary amendments to existing laws.

While the first recorded reference to a committee for propositions and grievances comes from a clerk's petition in 1677 given the Burgesses's desire for an efficient process for transacting legislative business it should not be surprising that a committee for dealing with grievances was among the earliest developed by the General Assembly. Although refined over time the general procedure called for colonists to go before a magistrate asking the legislature to remedy some evil by law or through a proposed change in existing legislation. Once certified at the local level, the grievance would then be brought to the legislature and referred to the Committee on Propositions and Grievances which would review the petition and, if necessary, make recommendation to the House of Burgesses. From at least 1677 through 1900, the Committee on Propositions and Grievances served Virginians as a means of addressing the complaints of the average citizens on an endless variety of problems.

Historically, the Committee on Propositions and Grievances was one of the most powerful and sought after committees. Past chairmen include Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Nelson, Jr., and Benjamin Harrison to name but a few.

By the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the House of Delegates had developed an elaborate committee system featuring 22 standing committees with specific subject-matter jurisdictions, and in December of 1901, the oldest standing committee of the House was renamed the Committee on General Laws.

**Past Chairs of General Laws:**

1901 - 1905	George Y. Hunley (Mathews/Middlesex)
1906 - 1913	Edwin P. Cox (Richmond City)
1914 - 1915	N..E. Spessard (Alleghany/Craig)
1916 - 1927	Robert O. Norris Jr (Lancaster/Richmond County)
1928 - 1931	James P. Jones (Richmond City)
1932 - 1933	Hugh Reid (Arlington)
1934 - 1935	Daniel Coleman (Norfolk)
1936 - 1937	Edward L. Oast (Norfolk County)
1938 - 1939	Henry M. Bandy (Wise)
1940 - 1943	S.M. Chitwood (Bedford/Franklin/Floyd)
1944 - 1947	Ceylon G. Quesenbery (Augusta/Staunton)
1948 - 1959	John B. Boatwright (Appomattox/Buckingham)
1960 - 1970	Arthur H. Richardson (Petersburg/Dinwiddie)
1971	Lucas D. Phillips (Loudoun/Prince William)
1972 - 1973	Walther B. Fidler (King George/Essex/Westmoreland/Northumberland/Richmond County/Lancaster)
1974 - 1981	Thomas W. Moss Jr (Norfolk)
1982 - 1997	Alan A. Diamonstein (Newport News)
1998 - 1999	Alan A. Diamonstein (Newport News) S. Vance Wilkins (Amherst)
2000 - 2001	Alan A. Diamonstein (Newport News) John S. Reid (Henrico)
2002 - 2007	John S. Reid (Henrico)
2008 – 2010	Terrie L. Suit (Virginia Beach)
2011 – 2013	S. Chris Jones (Suffolk)
2014 – 2017	C. Todd Gilbert (Woodstock)
2018 – Present	Christopher K. Peace (Hanover)

### Past Chairs of Propositions and Grievances:

1680 - 1681	Isaac Allerton (Westmoreland)
1682 - 1683	Charles Scarborough (Accomac)
1684 - 1687	Thomas Ballard (James City County)
1688 - 1690	Thomas Milner (Nansemond)
1691 - 1692	Christopher Robinson (Middlesex)
1692	Charles Scarborough (Accomac)
1693	Samuel Swann (Surry)
1693	Wm Fitzhugh (Stafford)
1695 - 1696	Robert Carter (Lancaster)
1696 - 1697	Isaac Allerton (Westmoreland)
1698 - 1699	Phillip Ludwell (James City County)
1700 - 1703	William Leigh (King and Queen)
1704 - 1705	William Randolph (Henrico)
1705 - 1706	Peter Beverley (Gloucester)
1710	William Randolph (Henrico)
1711 - 1714	John Holloway (King and Queen)
1715 - 1716	John Clayton (James City County)
1718 - 1719	Gawin Corbin (Middlesex)
1720 - 1722	John Clayton (James City County)
1723 - 1725	Daniel McCarty (Westmoreland)
1726	William Randolph (Henrico)
1727 - 1731	Henry Harrison (Surry)
1732 - 1735	John Clayton (Williamsburg)
1736 - 1737	John Robinson (King & Queen)
1738 - 1743	Henry Fitzhugh (Stafford)
1744	Benjamin Harrison (Charles City)
1745 - 1761	Charles Carter (King George)
1762 - 1765	Peyton Randolph (Williamsburg)
1766 - 1774	Richard Bland (Prince George)
1775	Thomas Jefferson (Albemarle)
1776 - 1777	Benjamin Harrison (Charles City)
1778	Thomas Jefferson (Albemarle)

1778	Thomas Nelson Jr (York)
1779	Thomas Jefferson (Albemarle)
1779	Thomas Nelson Jr (York)
1780	Richard Henry Lee (Westmoreland)
1781	John Page (Gloucester)
1782	Charles Carter (Stafford)
1783	Patrick Henry (Henry)
1783	Charles Carter (Stafford)
1784	Henry Tazewell (Williamsburg)
1785	Carter Henry Harrison (Cumberland)
1786 - 1787	Geo. Nicholas (Albemarle)
1788	Wm Cabell (Amherst)
1789	Edmund Randolph (Henrico)
1790 - 1791	Henry Lee (Westmoreland)
1792	Francis Corbin (Middlesex)
1793 - 1798	Miles King (Elizabeth City)
1798 - 1799	John Taylor (Caroline)
1799 - 1800	Wm B. Giles (Amelia)
1800 - 1801	John Page (Gloucester)
1801 - 1802	Samuel Shield (York)
1802 - 1803	Geo. Booker (Elizabeth City)
1803 - 1807	Edmund Harrison (Amelia)
1807 - 1808	Peter Johnston (Prince Edward)
1808 - 1809	Daniel Sheffey (Wythe)
1809 - 1811	Wm Madison (Madison)
1811 - 1815	Wm Noland (Loudoun)
1815 - 1817	Jerman Baker (Cumberland)
1817 - 1819	Robert Mallory (Orange)
1819 - 1821	Geo Wm Crump (Cumberland)
1821 - 1825	John Bowyer (Rockbridge)
1825 - 1827	Horatio Gates Winston (Louisa)
1827 - 1830	Ambrose P. Hill (Culpeper)
1830 - 1831	Richard Eppes (Sussex)
1831 - 1833	Wm McMahon (Rockingham)
1833 - 1834	Thomas J. Stuart (Augusta)

1834 - 1835	Charles Yancey (Buckingham)
1835 - 1838	Ambrose P. Hill (Culpeper)
1839	William Seymour (Hardy)
1839 - 1841	Arthur Smith (Isle of Wight)
1841 - 1842	John J. Jackson (Wood)
1842 - 1844	Robert A. Banks (Madison)
1844 - 1845	John J. Jackson (Wood/Ritchie)
1845 - 1847	Robert A. Banks (Madison)
1847 - 1848	James Lanier (Pittsylvania)
1848 - 1853	Alexander Jones (Chesterfield)
1853 - 1854	Wright Gatewood (Shenandoah)
1855 - 1858	John H. Lee (Greene/Orange)
1859 - 1861	B.H. Magruder (Albemarle)
1861 - 1863	Samuel McCamant (Grayson)
1863 - 1865	B.H. Magruder (Albemarle)
1864 - 1865 @ ALEXANDRIA	Andrew L. Hill
1865 - 1868	M. Garnett (Essex/Middlesex)
1869 - 1871	B.L. Woodson (Alleghany/Craig)
1871 - 1873	Samuel Watts (Portsmouth)
1874 - 1875	Henry E. Blair (Roanoke)
1875 - 1877	James H. Dooley (Richmond City)
1878 - 1879	E.C. Robinson (Norfolk City)
1879 - 1880	Thomas H. Cross (Nanesmond)
1881 - 1882	William J. Dickenson (Russell)
1883 - 1887	Richard H. Cardwell (Hanover)
1887 - 1888	J.H.H. Figgatt (Botetourt)
1889 - 1890	Henry Delaware Flood (Appomattox)
1891 - 1892	Phillip W. Magruder (Shenandoah)
1893 - 1894	John E. Mason (Stafford/King George)
1895 - 1896	J. Alston Cabell (Richmond City)
1897 - 1900	R.S. Parks (Page/Rappahannock)