



Commonwealth of Virginia

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RICHMOND

July 30, 2026

The Honorable Abigail Spanberger
Governor of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, Third Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Spanberger:

We write to urge you to call the General Assembly into a special session to address the deeply alarming findings contained in the recently released Department of Environmental Quality's Groundwater Supply East of Interstate 95 Report required by the 2024 Senate Joint Resolution No. 25.

The report, the most comprehensive study ever conducted of our coastal aquifer, makes clear that Virginia's groundwater is under serious and immediate strain. There is virtually no capacity in the Coastal Plain aquifer system to support major new withdrawals; in fact, not one of nine large withdrawals DEQ simulated could lawfully be permitted. Water levels in the Potomac aquifer are entering a renewed decline, the land is sinking, saltwater intrusion is a growing threat, and the Commonwealth's regulatory framework has significant weaknesses.

The warning signs are not limited to one region. In this year's budget, the General Assembly funded a study of groundwater in western Loudoun and northern Fauquier, where supplies already show clear signs of strain. The Potomac River, the main source of drinking water for more than two million Virginians, was named the country's most endangered river, and the Rappahannock River now ranks among the nation's most endangered as well.

Whether Virginians draw water from a private well or through a public water system, families across the Commonwealth depend on clean, reliable drinking water. Article XI, Section 1 of the Constitution of Virginia declares it the Commonwealth's policy to protect its waters from pollution, impairment, or destruction for the benefit and general welfare of the people.

The risks detailed in this report are too dire to ask Virginians to wait another year, and the timing of the report's release makes immediate action necessary.

Senate Joint Resolution 25 required the Department of Environmental Quality to submit its findings by the first day of the 2026 General Assembly session on January 14, 2026. Instead, legislators did not receive it until the third week of July, months after the legislative session adjourned and the new biennial budget took effect. Had the General Assembly reviewed these findings when the law required, it is safe to say the outcome of several legislative and budget decisions would have been different.

The report provides specific recommendations for both the legislative and executive branches that should be thoughtfully considered during a special session: strengthening DEQ's authority over groundwater withdrawal permits, requiring greater consideration of alternative water sources, improving monitoring and enforcement, and tying local development planning to groundwater availability.

We understand the call for a special session may already be under consideration within your Administration; if so, we welcome it and stand ready to assist. Protecting the water our citizens drink and ensuring the clean water our agriculture industries depend upon is not a partisan cause.

Our Commonwealth now has incredibly clear evidence of a serious threat to one of its most essential resources. We respectfully ask that you call the General Assembly into special session so we can respond with the urgency these findings demand.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Richard H. Stuart".

Richard H. Stuart
Member, Senate of Virginia
Twenty-Fifth District

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Russet W. Perry".

Russet W. Perry
Member, Senate of Virginia
Thirty-First District