Commonwealth of Virginia AI Strategy

Executive Order 30 Task Force Report

Governor Glenn Youngkin

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Letter from the Director of the Office of Regulatory Management

Almost two years ago, Governor Youngkin was at the forefront of state governors in launching a comprehensive initiative for promoting responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI). His vision has proven prophetic. Since then, the use of AI in both government and the private sector has exploded. It has opened extraordinary opportunities even as it has created risks, including the very real challenges it poses in the realm of child safety.

A major component of the Governor's AI strategy was launching a Task Force to help inform the Commonwealth's work. Launched in 2024, that Task Force included some of the most prominent individuals working in the AI space. It also included experts from the fields most likely to be affected by AI, including education, law enforcement, and workforce development. It held multiple meetings over the course of 2024 and 2025 and grappled with all the key issues associated with the rapid rise of AI.

At the conclusion of its work, the Task Force has prepared a comprehensive Statement that summarizes its findings and recommendations. This Statement recognizes the extraordinary work that Virginia has already accomplished in the AI space. Virginia K-12 schools and higher education institutions lead the nation in providing students with age-appropriate training on AI. Virginia has partnered with Google to provide upskilling for individuals in the workforce. And Virginia launched an innovative agentic-AI-driven pilot program to help streamline regulatory burdens.

The Task Force Statement also offers concrete recommendations for ensuring that Virginia maintains its lead in the AI space. It identifies strategies to ensure that both students and current members of the workforce possess the skillsets necessary to compete in a workplace in which AI is ubiquitous. It offers recommendations on optimizing power usage and development to ensure that rapidly expanding energy demands can be met. It counsels against stifling AI development by imposing onerous regulatory restrictions while acknowledging the need to protect against misuses, especially those that threaten child safety. And it urges state agencies to utilize AI to enhance efficiency and accomplish more with existing resources.

I want to commend the AI Task Force for its extraordinary work. It is my hope that this work will set a precedent for ongoing collaboration between state government and private sector experts. And I want to thank Governor Youngkin for his vision in convening the Task Force and entrusting it with this important mission. It has been a great privilege to work with this extraordinarily talented and professional group of people, and I am excited to see this Statement serve as the blueprint for Virginia's continued success in the AI space in years to come.

Sincerely,

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Director of the Office of Regulatory Management

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Executive Order 30 Task Force Report

Governor Youngkin's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Task Force represents a wide and bipartisan range of perspectives and professional backgrounds. Each member has extensive experience working in a sector that has already been or is poised to be profoundly affected by the growth of AI. And each shares Governor Youngkin's vision for positioning the Commonwealth of Virginia to lead the nation in exploiting the full range of opportunities this exciting new technology makes available while maintaining appropriate guardrails.

Virginia is poised to be the leading state to take advantage of the economic opportunities generated by responsible growth and the use of AI technologies. Throughout the Task Force's work, members discussed strategies to ensure that Virginia builds on its existing strengths and continues to compete for these new opportunities. Already, Virginia has the largest concentration of data centers in the world, sponsors cutting-edge AI research in its world-renowned universities, and continues to attract tech talent across a wide range of industries. The Commonwealth also serves as home to some of our nation's most critical defense and intelligence agencies, including the headquarters of the Department of War, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Reconnaissance Office, and the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, just to name a few, as well as a growing technology startup and investment ecosystem that includes some of the most innovative companies in the nation working on dual-use technologies for government and industry customers.

Those who have a strong academic foundation combined with analytical and application skills will be able to use AI to promote efficiency; those who lack that foundation are destined to be locked out of future opportunities. Virginia K-12 schools have recently implemented computer science *Standards of Learning*, which address AI applications that are fast becoming the model nationwide. Higher education institutions have likewise integrated AI into degree programs and work-based learning opportunities to ensure all graduates in the Commonwealth are prepared for a career in this quickly changing world.

Virginia has also wisely avoided saddling the AI industry with regulatory burdens that would stifle its growth while using AI to help identify opportunities to further streamline and modernize regulations. At the same time, Virginia recognizes that targeted interventions may be necessary in areas in which existing law does not provide sufficient protection. Executive Order 30 adopts appropriate guardrails to protect against misuse of state-owned data and other possible abuses, and it ensures that a human being reviews any AI outputs and makes the final decision. Virginia also recognizes that children may be at particular risk when it comes to new technologies and is actively exploring ways to ensure

that children are not placed at risk and receive proper education on the promises and dangers of AI technology.

Virginia's AI Policy Standards must emphasize safe, responsible, and ethical use of AI across state government and public services, including education. The standards should promote AI-enabled learning while enforcing strong privacy protections, clear human oversight, and robust safeguards to protect minors. Agencies must implement transparent standards for the development, deployment, and ongoing monitoring of AI tools. Improvements in efficiency and innovation must not compromise student privacy or child safety. The framework should harness AI's benefits for society and students, while applying guardrails that mitigate risks to children.

For Virginia to continue winning in the AI space, it must build on these strengths. It must:

- Continue preparing its K-12 and higher education students with the skills required to compete in a workplace and society in which AI will be ubiquitous.

- Promote business investments to create opportunities for current members of the workforce to upskill throughout their working lives, providing ready access to the training and credentialing resources that will be necessary as the nature of employment constantly evolves.

- Plan for the effects that AI will have on the power grid, including both allowing for more efficient use of existing energy sources and increasing energy demand as AI use becomes ever more widespread.

- Continue to create an ecosystem in which both large and small businesses can thrive, which includes both creating a robust economic development framework (focusing especially on cutting-edge technologies, including those in the national security domain) and avoiding unnecessary legal or regulatory burdens that will disadvantage start-up firms and slow economic growth.

- Ensure that state government agencies use AI responsibly and utilize its potential to enhance government efficiency and to drive economic growth across the Commonwealth.

Though Virginia enjoys numerous built-in advantages that could attract and retain technology companies and talent, it must double down on these advantages and accelerate its efforts if it is to maintain and build on this enviable position. In this spirit, the Task Force offers a series of recommendations that will help ensure that Virginia—and our nation—continues to win the race for AI dominance.

Education

In January 2024, Governor Glenn Youngkin issued Executive Order 30, which directed the development of the nation-leading *Guidelines for AI Integration Throughout Education* ("the Guidelines"). These guidelines, as Task Force Member John Bailey described in congressional testimony, set standards "for responsibly integrating AI in education, focusing on ethical use, data privacy, and workforce readiness." Through the release of the Guidelines, the Commonwealth became one of the first states in the country to develop a strategic plan for the educational use of AI from K-12 to postsecondary education.

Building on that foundation, the Commonwealth has continued to promote thoughtful exploration of new AI tools, expand professional development, and educate students and teachers in best practices in the classroom and prepare them for the workforce of the future. Artificial intelligence is poised to revolutionize education in Virginia by transforming how students learn, how teachers teach, and how schools operate. The Task Force firmly believes that AI is not a threat to education, but an opportunity to be leveraged in the Commonwealth. AI fosters student creativity by enabling learners to design, build, and express ideas through generative tools and personalized exploration. Students across the Commonwealth are already using AI to simulate speakers in world language classes and receive real-time feedback on writing and design projects. These tools empower students to become creators of knowledge, not just consumers.

AI also allows for the creation of individualized lesson plans that adapt content and pacing to meet each student's unique needs and learning style. Teachers are leveraging AI to generate differentiated activities on demand, curate reading passages for English learners, and provide one-on-one tutoring experiences through intelligent agents—all aligned to Virginia's *Standards of Learning*. Additionally, AI greatly expands teachers' ability to accomplish more in less time by automating administrative tasks, generating instructional materials, and providing real-time insights—freeing up time for deeper student engagement.

At the same time, students must continue to develop reasoning skills and other core competencies and must not over-rely on AI in a way that diminishes these critical abilities. AI also can increase students' exposure to the risks that have arisen in the online space, including harmful materials and online predators. It is therefore incumbent on educational institutions to ensure that any classroom AI involves a balanced approach, drawing on AI's strengths while also recognizing its limitations and risks.

Every example of AI being used to enhance learning practices follows the Guidelines' suggestions to provide oversight, maintain proper use, and ensure integrity. As a further safeguard, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV), and other key stakeholders will continue to collaborate to protect data and develop micro-credentials that validate competence in this emerging technology, further preparing Virginia for the future.

What We Have Accomplished

Over the course of Governor Youngkin's administration, Virginia has moved from conceptualizing the academic applications of AI to putting them to work. Our divisions have central support, educators are receiving training, and local policies are being developed with state guidance. Higher education institutions are also leveraging AI on campuses across the state to aid in classroom and work-based learning.

- **K-12 Initiatives**
    - **Generative AI Year of Learning**
      The Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS), in partnership with VDOE and Advanced Learning Partnerships (ALP), supported 75 Virginia school systems in developing comprehensive support for Generative AI integration. This program included four in-person training sessions for each regional group and features an accompanying website designed to facilitate ongoing resource-sharing and collaboration among educators.
    - **Instructional Technology Resource Teachers (ITRTs)**
      VDOE is providing instruction resources to divisions to facilitate the training of additional ITRTs. Serving as co-educators of students, coaches for teachers, resources for leaders, and community advocates, ITRTs empower all learners to develop the skills and mindset needed to succeed in an increasingly digital society through supporting lesson planning and promoting informed access to AI tools.
    - **Developed Resources on Responsible AI Uses**
      VDOE has issued model policies covering acceptable use, data privacy, and internet safety. It has also created instructional resources and leadership programs in partnership with community colleges.

- **Lab Schools**
  The Commonwealth's 15 College Partnership Lab Schools are designed to bring innovation directly into K–12 education by leveraging the expertise and resources of higher education institutions. Schools like the Academy of Technology and Innovation; Shenandoah Valley Data Science, Computing, and Applications Lab School; ACCESS Academy; and SmithTECH are playing a pivotal role in strengthening Virginia's AI talent pipeline.

- **Higher Education Efforts**

  - **AI in Education Summit at George Mason University (GMU)**
    SCHEV supported a summit at GMU on developing a path forward for the future of artificial intelligence in education across K-12, junior colleges, community colleges, and 4-year institutions.

  - **Development of Reference Guide on Integrating AI into Virginia Education**
    The AI in Education Summit culminated in SCHEV's release of a reference guide, authored by Dr. Amarda Shehu and Dr. Padhu Seshaiyer of George Mason University, with considerations for an institution's approach to integrating Artificial Intelligence.

  - **AI Implementation**
    A range of current efforts to integrate AI into instruction are pervasive across Virginia's public and private institutions of higher education, including simulations of highly technical training, work-based learning opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, and the development of AI fluency in the curriculum. For example, Hampton University now has a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science with Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning degree program, with most departments systematically infusing the use of AI into their teaching pedagogy and curricula across the campus. Another example is the UVA School of Nursing's use of generative AI to create customized clinical simulations and scenario-based learning that mirror real clinical unpredictability.

Moving Forward

Moving forward, Virginia must ensure that AI serves as a tool to enhance teaching, personalize learning, and prepare students for the workforce while safeguarding against its risks. To fully realize the benefits of artificial intelligence and ensure Virginia's students are prepared for the changes AI will bring, the Commonwealth must ensure that every student has strong academic knowledge in core subjects such as reading and math, as well as robust analytic and communication skills. AI is a powerful tool, but it is rendered meaningless to the students without the knowledge and skills to use it appropriately and to understand the risks of misuse. Therefore, AI's role in the future of Virginia's Education system must be centered on goals such as:

- **Committing to Rigorous Academic Standards and Accountability**
  Virginia should continue to raise expectations for student learning by promoting high academic standards and accountability for results. Reinforcing the virtues of high expectations throughout education will equip students with the skills to use AI, not be displaced by it. This will ensure that students will develop critical reasoning skills and not come to over-rely on AI.

- **Increasing Baseline AI Literacy for Students and Educators**
  Build flexible, developmentally appropriate learning pathways by launching teacher and student-facing micro-courses, scenario-based professional learning modules, and role-specific training courses. Among other things, this should include cultivating the ability to recognize false information produced by generative AI.

- **Encouraging Local Ownership of Policies**
  VDOE encourages local school divisions to develop their own policies concerning artificial intelligence, supported by shared examples and guidance from the state, especially on internet safety and acceptable use.

- **Spotlighting Successful AI Use Cases**
  K-12 and higher education stakeholders should continue fostering a collaborative community that includes business leaders, educators, governing members, leaders, and families. This community should share successful stories of AI implementation in learning environments to motivate the adoption of best practices.

- **Increasing Community Engagement**
  The Commonwealth is exploring ways to include families and communities in transparent, ongoing dialogue about the role of AI in schools. Blue Ridge PBS is supporting this effort by creating resources that help families navigate and better understand AI in education.

- **Building a Robust Talent Pipeline**
  VDOE and SCHEV are coordinating with institutions to align dual-enrollment, community college certificates, and four-year programs to AI-enabled fields to ensure K-12 education pathways more seamlessly integrate with the Commonwealth's higher educational institutions.

Workforce Development

AI is revolutionizing the workforce, presenting both challenges and opportunities. The primary challenge is that Virginia's workforce — both those currently employed and those seeking new or next careers — will need to continually upskill to ensure they continue to provide value beyond routine functions that can be automated.

AI also offers numerous opportunities in the workforce space, including: (a) expanding access to ongoing professional education; (b) assisting humans in matching workers with jobs and screening large applicant pools; and (c) supporting the growth of the "gig economy."

To address these challenges and take advantage of new opportunities, Virginia Works has partnered with Google, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), and Virginia universities to provide an upskilling portal on the "Virginia Has Jobs" website, which includes the free Google AI Essentials and Prompting Essentials certifications. The Commonwealth's new AI learning and career development landing page, hosted on the Virginia Has Jobs website and designed by Virginia Works, is a one-stop hub designed to help working-age Virginians understand, explore, and prepare for the growing role of artificial intelligence across a wide range of jobs and skills. The platform supports both job seekers and current workers, from those just beginning to explore AI and how it can be used in their work to those pursuing AI-centric or tech-forward career pivots. The site features curated no-cost and low-cost learning opportunities, including beginner-friendly courses on AI fundamentals and practical workplace applications of artificial intelligence. It also highlights trusted industry credentials, Virginia-based training providers, and pathways to careers where AI skills are increasingly valuable.

Going forward, Virginia Works' strategy is to build the nation's Top State for Talent. The plan incorporates four "moonshot" goals, with one specifically focused on AI and emerging technology: building a future-ready Virginia workforce. By 2030, the Task Force envisions that Virginia will have the most AI-ready and digital and human-skills proficient workforce in the country, with every working-age Virginian receiving at least foundational upskilling.

Specific components of this goal include:

1. Launching and communicating low-barrier-to-entry upskilling opportunities on AI and digital literacy.

2. Collaborating with employers to develop programs tailored for employee upskilling.

3. Integrating AI literacy into K-12 education to prepare future generations from an early age, as outlined above.

The metrics and outcomes that will be used to measure this goal include:

1. The number of workforce development programs that have integrated AI/Digital Upskilling into content.

2. The number of individuals receiving digital literacy training through Virginia's American Job Centers.

3. The number of employers partnered with state agencies on digital skills curriculum development.

4. The number of employers receiving incentives for investing in employee upskilling, and the total monetary value of any such incentives.

5. The number of K-12 schools/districts that integrate AI literacy into the curriculum.

Energy Infrastructure

At present, there are many unknowns regarding the interrelationship between expanded AI use and energy supply. While AI will provide insights for building and maintaining a power grid that optimizes the use of existing energy sources and allows new sources to be deployed strategically, heightened demand for computational resources will lead to increased energy demand. The precise dimensions of these trends remain to be seen, but the use of AI is driving capital investment in both power generation and transmission infrastructure in the short-term. If current consumption trends continue, it will significantly increase demands on the regional power-grid.

In that light, it is critical for state government to support research and development of emerging technologies that could use AI to improve efficiencies at power generation and transmission facilities. State leaders must identify opportunities to maintain power system resource adequacy in a developing AI landscape through both existing and innovative technologies. The Task Force recommends that the Commonwealth pursue the following initiatives to ensure that the energy supply is sufficient to allow Virginia to maintain and build on its lead in the AI arena:

1. Expanding partnerships with energy providers. Data center operators are already working directly with utilities to seek innovative ways to finance and locate new generation. State agencies should ensure effective management of large load onboarding and capacity expansion at the utility and regional transmission operator (RTO) level.

2. Locating data centers close to energy sources and transmission capacity. This could include behind-the-meter and/or co-located facilities that would directly serve data centers and reduce grid stress. The Commonwealth must prioritize net-new generation capacity to ensure citizens do not face increased costs of electricity. State agencies should prepare and promote sites with existing infrastructure or access to utilities with more available capacity. At present, there are several suitable sites in South and Southwest Virginia.

3. Using AI to build a “smarter” grid. While AI requires energy to operate, it is also a valuable tool that can be employed to identify efficiencies in the development, deployment, and use of energy resources.

4. Empowering the State Corporation Commission (SCC) and collaborating with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and, crucially, localities to streamline and prioritize new generation and transmission project approvals. The state government must ensure that the regulatory regime these agencies oversee is not imposing unreasonable burdens while ensuring health and safety. Additionally, state agencies should fast-track grid-enhancing technologies, such as upgrading existing lines with higher-capacity advanced conductors.

Designing a Legal Framework That Promotes Economic Growth

An oft-overlooked aspect of fostering technological growth is ensuring a supportive legal environment that drives economic expansion. Businesses benefit from a pro-growth legal and economic environment and from opportunities provided by government incentives and contracts. In addition, ensuring that the Commonwealth is focused on economic growth and limiting overregulation, while also ensuring that it provides incentives to align private industry's goals with the Commonwealth's desire for trusted, safe, and secure AI capabilities, as well as a fair business climate, will provide the type of certainty that businesses crave.

The reality is that in a rapidly evolving industry like AI (as well as other high-tech industries), overregulation could easily kill off promising innovation in its infancy. One needs only look at Europe and other jurisdictions that seek to regulate early and often to see what happens to innovation and investment rates.

This is not to say that protections are not necessary to ensure that AI technology is not misused, especially when it comes to ensuring child safety. Indeed, Executive Order 30 emphasized the need for guardrails to ensure that new technology does not undermine important health and safety objectives. To the extent that there are gaps in existing legal protections, targeted regulatory changes may be appropriate to promote public welfare.

The Commonwealth should move aggressively to attract and build more start-ups and small businesses, and the venture capital investment that drives them, particularly in the national security domain, where Virginia is already a leader. The growth of these start-ups and small businesses, however, can be stifled by an overly complex or burdensome regulatory climate. Indeed, regulatory hurdles that may be a nuisance for large firms can act as a near-complete barrier to entry for small firms, crushing innovation and driving out market competition.

Virginia has wisely avoided the "regulate first, ask questions later" approach that has characterized the government's approach to AI technology in several jurisdictions, including the European Union. As Virginia considers whether and how to regulate in the AI space, it should bear the following principles in mind:

1. The core governing principle regarding AI and other emerging technologies in the Commonwealth ought to be energizing, accelerating, and expanding the innovation happening in Virginia, not constraining it with added regulations and restrictions.

2. There are significant reasons already present in the marketplace today—for both investors and innovators alike—to prioritize the trust, safety, and security capabilities of AI systems, including the desire of such market players to expand and retain market traction, which is enhanced by such capabilities. To achieve the goals desired by the citizens of the Commonwealth, incentives may be needed to accelerate and prioritize these efforts.

3. Existing laws already protect against most societal concerns that might potentially be associated with AI use. Civil rights laws, privacy laws, consumer protection laws, intellectual property laws, prohibitions against defamation, child protection laws, libel laws, and various other preexisting statutes and regulations at the federal, state, and local levels provide remedies for most misuses of AI technology. Prior to passing any new law or creating new regulations, legislators and regulators should ask what gap, if any, exists in the current legal framework. Any new legal regime or regulation should be narrowly designed to fill that gap and take significant care to avoid negative impacts on innovation and economic growth in the Commonwealth. At the same time, regulators should be mindful of the fact that children may be at particular risk from misuse of AI and should ensure that proper protections exist.

4. There are also many approaches to addressing most potential risks associated with AI that do not involve government intervention. For example, private standard-setting and credentialing bodies serve the valuable role of establishing voluntary rules that companies choose to comply with to signal to consumers that they offer trustworthy, high-quality products. These regimes can be leveraged and adopted by the Commonwealth for those companies that wish to serve as state contractors. Similarly, universities and other research institutions can study the possible pitfalls of frontier technologies and issue reports outlining risk-mitigation strategies, including the use of market-based incentives as a primary approach. Legislators and government agencies should consider regulatory intervention only when non-regulatory approaches are demonstrably insufficient.

5. Effective regulation should empower citizens and businesses to make good decisions rather than limiting their options. One of the most effective regulatory approaches involves information disclosure. For example, citizens should be made aware of whether and how AI was used in reaching a decision that affects them. This allows businesses and individuals to factor any limitations involved in AI decision-making into how they use the information produced and decide which functions are and are not appropriate for assigning to AI.

6. Almost all the attention surrounding AI regulatory topics to date has focused on whether and how to regulate AI. But AI itself can shape regulation. It can help businesses and citizens process dense regulatory text more quickly and effectively, and it can help the government rationalize and streamline existing regulations. Virginia has already streamlined 35% of regulatory requirements and saved Virginia citizens over $1.4B per year, but there is still work to be done. As directed by Executive Order 51, Virginia agencies should continue using AI to periodically and consistently review existing regulations and guidance documents and determine how they should be streamlined to drive economic growth. Agencies should also use AI tools to explore different regulatory options, assess the costs and benefits of different regulatory approaches, and write regulations and guidance documents in the clearest, least burdensome way that both protects our citizens and creates more economic opportunities.

AI Use in State Government

Under Executive Order 30, the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) has developed an internal policy that, among other things, implements a centralized system for registering, analyzing, and approving new AI uses. In addition, the existing cyber-security policies and procedures are aligned with protections necessary to ensure the integrity and responsible use of AI in state government. This allows the Commonwealth to ensure data security and privacy, protect against possible misuses (including those involving bias), and combat the siloing inherent in an agency-by-agency approach to deploying new technology.

The Commonwealth has taken a flexible approach to address special situations such as the use of AI for research or teaching purposes within Virginia's higher educational institutions. For example, universities researching AI need the latitude to freely operate. Students and teachers who are increasingly using AI in the classroom need to balance use of technology with creative expression and original work.

VITA has strongly encouraged the exploration of AI through training, industry demonstrations, proofs of concept, and pilot applications. To date, over 120 use cases of artificial intelligence are being studied or applied throughout the Commonwealth for capabilities such as machine learning-enabled translation, cybersecurity, business process optimization, and enterprise search. Commonwealth websites are using AI to automatically translate websites for non-English speaking citizens, and many agencies are using AI to accelerate transaction processing for permits and claims. The Commonwealth also issued model guidelines for law enforcement in Virginia, drawing from pre-existing applications and pilots at the local and state level to explore use cases and guardrails. In each of these initiatives, the Commonwealth has emphasized that a human being must be responsible for any decision that is made. AI can supplement human capabilities in many important respects and is an extraordinarily powerful tool for compiling and processing information, but a human must carefully review any outputs and decide how they should be used.

Moving forward, the Commonwealth needs to continue leaning into the use of AI while updating the internal approval framework to ensure that state agencies are making optimal use of AI. As more use cases of AI are approved, enterprise patterns will emerge that will allow the Commonwealth to leverage pre-existing AI tools and technologies more quickly and efficiently.