

FACT SHEET

The Senate and House of Delegates Page and Messenger Programs

Questions and Answers

1. What is the General Assembly Page and Messenger Program?

Student pages and messengers are appointed to assist members of the General Assembly and their staffs in the daily duties required for the operations of the Senate and the House of Delegates during the General Assembly session. These duties include, but are not limited to: collating bills; distributing legislation and legislative documents; assisting committee clerks; preparing calendar books; and performing general office errands. Pages and messengers are expected to work the entire session. The session usually lasts for 60 days in even numbered years and 45 days in odd numbered years. For this year, the session is from January 6 to March 9, 2002. Hours of work are from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. There is no weekend work unless the House or the Senate is in session.

2. What are the qualifications and requirements for being selected as a page or messenger?

Pages or messengers for the Senate must be between the ages of 13 and 15 years at the time of appointment. Pages for the House of Delegates must be between the ages of 13 and 14 years. Applicants should have an "A" or "B" average in school at the time of appointment. The applicant must obtain permission from the school principal prior to being appointed. Pages and messengers are appointed for one session and are not eligible for reappointment.

3. Does being a page or messenger to the General Assembly require a student to miss school?

Yes. Students who are appointed as pages or messengers to the General Assembly are expected to work for eight hours each day and will be out of school the entire time the legislature is in session. Each student page or messenger is responsible for making arrangements with his or her school administrators and teachers to maintain schoolwork, including any tutoring that may be necessary. Students also must make arrangements with their teachers regarding any

tests or exams that they may miss during their experience as a page or messenger.

4. Will the student page or messenger have any time to study or make up schoolwork?

For all pages and messengers who will require local housing, the House and Senate Clerks' Offices will make arrangements at a nearby hotel and provide a couple to chaperon them. All pages and messengers residing at the hotel will be required to attend a two-hour study hall every Monday through Thursday evening.

Certified teachers will supervise the study hall and assist individual students as needed, but they will not provide classroom instruction. House tutors do not proctor examinations but Senate tutors do. Home teachers are encouraged to work with the students to help them keep up with assignments.

5. Will students who participate in the Page or Messenger Programs be dropped from the roll and withdrawn from the school they attend?

No student would be withdrawn from the school as long as the activity is approved by the local school board. The Board of Education on October 19, 2000, amended Virginia's Pupil Accounting Regulations to give local school boards greater authority for determining circumstances under which attendance or absence of students should be counted. Board regulations allow a student to be counted as present if he or she is in attendance for activities and events approved by the school board (8 VAC 20-110-40; 8 VAC 20-110-50). A student may be counted present if participating as a page or messenger in the Virginia General Assembly, as long as the local school board approves it.

6. What can a student gain from participating in the Page and Messenger Program?

The Senate and House page programs are an educational opportunity for young people. Not only do they have the experience of learning the legislative process first-hand, they meet and talk with legislators, the Lieutenant Governor, and Governor. The Senate Page/Messenger Programs offer tours of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, Supreme Court of Virginia, and several museums in the

immediate area. Senate pages and messengers may even have the opportunity to select a bill, track it, and discuss the pros and cons of the issues in a brief paper. These activities are in addition to their regular work duties. In addition to the educational opportunities, pages and messengers receive a salary of \$130 per week.

7. How is an application to become a page or messenger made available?

Students interested in page or messenger appointments should complete the appropriate application form available from the offices of the Clerk of the Senate, P. O. Box 396, Richmond, Virginia 23218 or the Speaker of the House of Delegates, P. O. Box 406, Richmond, Virginia 23218.