VIRGINIA CONFERENCE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

September 15, 2025

VA-AAUP Endorses Spanberger, Hashmi, and Jones in Virginia's 2025 statewide elections

FAIRFAX, Virginia – The Executive Committee of the Virginia Conference of the American Association of University Professors (VA-AAUP) has unanimously voted to endorse the candidacies of Abigail Spanberger for Governor, Ghazala Hashmi for Lieutenant Governor, and Jay Jones for Attorney General in this year's November election.

This is an extraordinary moment in our organization's history. The Virginia Conference has always been and still remains nonpartisan. Our mission is to defend and extend the principles of academic freedom and shared governance in Virginia's colleges and universities, both public and private, and our members work tirelessly in their classrooms, conference rooms, labs, and studios to ensure that our institutions serve our students, our communities, and the common good. We have always left the ferment of electoral politics to others.

We can no longer do so. The concentrated attacks on the independence and integrity of higher education in the Commonwealth and nationally have forced us to act. The experience of the past year has taught us that protecting our students and our mission requires friends and allies–indeed, it requires a whole community of citizens who believe in the value of higher education and the crucial role universities and colleges play in nurturing a healthy democracy.

This community must include our state and federal representatives. Our students cannot thrive when their colleges and universities are under a relentless ideological assault from state and federal authorities. To protect our students, we must have leaders in Richmond who, regardless of their partisan affiliations, believe in and are ready to defend the core values of the AAUP: institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and the shared governance of our universities and colleges. We have found three such leaders in Abigail Spanberger, Ghazala Hashmi, and Jay Jones.

As Abigail Spanberger has said on the campaign stump, academic freedom is on the ballot this year. Virginia institutions, both public and private, have been targeted this year for politically motivated investigations by the federal departments of Justice and Education and by the Virginia Attorney General. Students' First Amendment rights to protest have been threatened based on the viewpoints expressed. Programs that support the bedrock values of diversity, equity, and inclusion have been misrepresented and then shut down due either to administrations' fears of federal budget cuts or boards' political alignment with those attacking higher education. The balance in the relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government regarding board of visitor appointments is being tilted by the current governor against board independence in favor of political control. The U.S. Department of Justice has even launched a civil rights investigation over a faculty senate's resolution defending its university president!

Abigail Spanberger's Strengthening Virginia Schools Plan vows to protect Virginia's institutions from political influence by reforming the appointment process for board of visitor members, including the strengthening of the role of Virginia Commission on Higher Education Board Appointments in identifying "serious individuals whose responsibility and allegiance is to addressing the needs of the institutions they serve."

Ghazala Hashmi was a professor and administrator during her career at the University of Richmond and Reynolds Community College. As chair of the Virginia Senate's Health and Education Committee, she has been a tireless advocate for faculty rights and student access to higher education, turning away proposed legislation designed to chill academic freedom to teach and learn. She was the 2025 recipient of the Conference's Colonel Michael S. Harris (Ph.D.) Award for exemplary service in support of higher education.

As Attorney General, Jay Jones will strongly support defending academic freedom and a strong higher education system. He will use the office's power to appoint university counsel that best work in the interest of each college or university, rather than serving political favors or vendettas. As Attorney General, he will "make sure Virginia fights back when Washington overreaches." He will defend Virginians' rights and livelihoods, no matter who is in the White House.

The Virginia Conference of the AAUP calls on our members and all who care about the health and well-being of Virginia's universities and colleges to support these three remarkable leaders in November's statewide elections. The independence and integrity of higher education in the Commonwealth is on the ballot, and a better future for our students, institutions, and communities is within our grasp.

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