

WTOP NEWS

Virginia gas tax hike deal reached as state lawmakers come down to the wire

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A driver fills her tank at a gas station in Richmond, Virginia, Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2007. (AP Photo/Steve Helber)

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Virginia lawmakers are set to approve a 10 cent gas tax increase over the next two years and transportation funding changes that would restore Northern Virginia money cut a few years ago as part of a Metro funding deal.

The agreement among Virginia House and Senate negotiators comes amid a rush of action in the final days of the legislative session.

According to preliminary information provided to WTOP, the deal would include 5 cent gas tax increases this year and next year, then the gas tax would be tied to inflation.

The 10 cent increase splits the difference between a Senate proposal to raise the gas tax 8 cents over the next two years and the House plan to raise the gas tax 12 cents over the next three years that tracked the originally introduced bill.

The additional regional gas tax already in place in Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads and along Interstate 81 for local projects would also be expanded to other parts of the state, including the Fredericksburg area.

A separate bill regarding Northern Virginia transportation funding that was shifted to Metro in 2018 proposes raising certain real estate transfer and hotel taxes in Northern Virginia to make up the difference in revenue.

House Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn called it “a huge win” for Northern Virginia.

Gov. Ralph Northam supports the general principles of the plan, and the administration has been involved in negotiations on the bill. Northam’s proposal also includes bond authorizations for I-81 corridor improvements and major rail upgrades along I-95.

The conference agreement, which Northam could still offer tweaks to in coming weeks ahead of April’s reconvened session, would keep annual car inspections but reduce some fees for vehicle registrations.

Final technical language was still being developed early Thursday afternoon.

Top lawmakers were still working late Thursday night to finalize a budget deal, as they aim to meet a Saturday deadline to adjourn the annual session without waiving rules about how long lawmakers have to review the agreement before a vote.

The House and Senate used a procedural move to go into recess overnight rather than adjourning for the day so that they could finish processing bills Friday morning without missing a deadline.

The chambers will adjourn Thursday’s session sometime Friday and then convene to only consider conference reports working out differences between the two chambers.

Agreements on other bills, such as the details of marijuana decriminalization and a minimum wage hike, can be reached any time between now and Saturday afternoon or evening.

Article continued, see here for more:

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