

**Department of Planning and Budget
2026 General Assembly Session
State Fiscal Impact Statement**

PUBLISHED: 1/26/2026 12:55 PM

ORIGINAL

Bill Number: SB475 **Patron:** Marsden
Bill Title: Court Date Reminder Program established.

Bill Summary: Establishes a Court Date Reminder Program, to be developed or procured by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, for the purpose of reminding criminal defendants to appear at each of their scheduled court appearances and to provide any related information. The bill directs the Program to send a text message notification to any defendant with a criminal case or traffic infraction in general district court or circuit court, allows a defendant to opt out of participating in the Program, and allows the Program administrator or his designee to use other communication methods to contact a defendant when such defendant is unable to receive text messages, including telephone, email, or other internet-based technology.

Budget Amendment Necessary: Yes

Items Impacted: 31

Explanation: See fiscal analysis

Fiscal Summary: The Office of the Executive Secretary (OES) of the Supreme Court of Virginia currently offers the Court Alert Subscription System (CASS), which is an opt-in service that allows users to be notified of upcoming hearings regarding subscribed-to cases. The structure of CASS can be enhanced to accommodate the provisions of this legislation, though the necessary updates will be extensive across multiple systems that are maintained by OES. The estimated cost for modifying the electronic systems to implement these requirements is \$4,266,483.

Additionally, the information that is to be included within the notifications according to the provisions of this bill is much more extensive than what is currently being transmitted, and it will be sent to more phone numbers than the current opt-in system. The estimated annual cost of sending more SMS notifications with more comprehensive information for hearings is \$350,000. The estimated annual cost for sending SMS notifications for payment due alerts, issuance of a writ of habeas corpus, and driver's license suspensions is \$150,000.

This bill also calls for a program administrator who will be tasked with contacting defendants who are not able to be reached via SMS message sent to a cell phone number. It is estimated that five additional employees would be necessary to fulfill the function of reaching out to such defendants. The average annual cost for a deputy clerk is \$81,205, including salary and benefits, and thus the expected ongoing cost to contact defendants who can't be reached via SMS messages is \$406,025.

General Fund Expenditure Impact:

Department of Planning and Budget
2026 General Assembly Session
State Fiscal Impact Statement

<u>Agency</u>	<u>FY2026</u>	<u>FY2027</u>	<u>FY2028</u>	<u>FY2029</u>	<u>FY2030</u>	<u>FY2031</u>
Supreme Court		\$4,266,483	\$906,025	\$906,025	\$906,025	\$906,025
TOTAL		\$4,266,483	\$906,025	\$906,025	\$906,025	\$906,025

Position Impact:

<u>Agency</u>	<u>FY2026</u>	<u>FY2027</u>	<u>FY2028</u>	<u>FY2029</u>	<u>FY2030</u>	<u>FY2031</u>
Supreme Court		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
TOTAL		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Fiscal Analysis:

This bill establishes the Court Date Reminder Program, which would require the Office of the Executive Secretary (OES) of the Supreme Court of Virginia to develop a system that reminds criminal defendants to appear in court by sending a text message to any defendant, as well as the parent of a juvenile defendant, who has a criminal case or traffic infraction in general district court or circuit court. The message would be required to be sent one week prior to the scheduled court appearance and again the day before the scheduled appearance. The notification is required to include the time and location of the hearing in addition to court closures affecting the appearance, information on opting out of future notifications, contact information for the court, consequences of failing to appear, and how to resolve the matter online. Defendants who fail to appear at a scheduled court appearance or fail to pay a ticket by the required payment date will receive a notification within two days regarding the consequences of failing to appear. In situations where the telephone number received from the defendant is not able to receive text messages, the program administrator or his designee may use other communication methods to contact such defendant by telephone, email, or other internet-based technology.

The Office of the Executive Secretary (OES) of the Supreme Court of Virginia currently offers the Court Alert Subscription System (CASS), which is an opt-in service that allows users to be notified of upcoming hearings regarding subscribed-to cases. The structure of CASS can be enhanced to accommodate the provisions of this legislation, though the necessary updates will be extensive across multiple systems that are maintained by OES. The systems will need to, among other things, include fields allowing for the input of multiple cell phone numbers (for parents of juveniles), establish a closure notice system, send notifications based on payment information, assess and send dispositional information for default judgments, and provide the ramifications of the default judgments. The estimated cost for modifying the electronic systems to implement these requirements is \$4,266,483.

Additionally, the information that is to be included within the notifications is much more extensive than what is currently being transmitted, and it will be sent to more phone numbers than the current opt-in system. The estimated annual cost of sending more SMS notifications with more comprehensive information for hearings

Department of Planning and Budget
2026 General Assembly Session
State Fiscal Impact Statement

is \$350,000. The estimated annual cost for sending SMS notifications for payment due alerts, issuance of a writ of garnishment, and driver's license suspensions is \$150,000.

This bill also calls for a program administrator who will be tasked with contacting defendants who are not able to be reached via SMS message sent to a cell phone number. It is estimated that five additional employees would be necessary to fulfill the function of reaching out to such defendants. The average annual cost for a deputy clerk is \$81,205, including salary and benefits, and thus the expected ongoing cost to contact defendants who can't be reached via SMS messages is \$406,025.

Other: Identical bills are SB442 and HB885.