

# SENATE OF VIRGINIA



**R. CREIGH DEEDS**  
11TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT  
ALL OF ALBEMARLE, AMHERST, AND  
NELSON COUNTIES;  
ALL OF THE CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE;  
AND PART OF LOUISA COUNTY  
POST OFFICE BOX 5462  
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22905-5462

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:  
COMMERCE AND LABOR, CHAIR  
COURTS OF JUSTICE  
FINANCE AND APPROPRIATIONS  
PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS  
RULES

August 1, 2025

## *VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL MESSAGE*

Ms. Rachel W. Sheridan, Rector  
Office of the Board of Visitors  
Northwest Wing, The Rotunda, PO Box 400222  
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4222

Ms. Porter N. Wilkinson, Vice Rector  
Office of the Board of Visitors  
Northwest Wing, The Rotunda, PO Box 400222  
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4222

Dear Ms. Sheridan and Ms. Wilkinson,

The General Assembly has a constitutional and statutory interest in the governance and operations of public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, including the University of Virginia. Recent events surrounding the forced resignation of President James E. Ryan raise urgent concerns about transparency, shared governance, and whether the University's governing board has operated within the bounds of its legal and ethical responsibilities.

To fulfill the General Assembly's responsibility to conduct oversight, I respectfully request written responses to the following questions. These questions are designed to clarify the sequence of events that led to President Ryan's resignation, the role played by members of the Board of Visitors, and the nature of communications between the Board, the Governor's Office, and the U.S. Department of Justice.

### **March 7th BOV Resolution on DEI**

1. Did either of you receive a draft of the March 7, 2025, Board of Visitors resolution on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) from Governor Youngkin's office or anyone acting on his behalf? If so, on what date and through what means? Please provide a copy of

the resolution as transmitted to you from Governor Youngkin's office or anyone acting on his behalf.

2. Did one or both of you negotiate with the Governor or his staff regarding the content of that resolution prior to its adoption by the Board of Visitors (BOV)? Did other members of the BOV participate in those negotiations? If so, who?
3. The March 7 BOV resolution specified a 30-day deadline for a report from President Jim Ryan. Did President Ryan submit that report to the BOV on April 7? If so, what did the BOV do with that report?

### **Outside Counsel**

4. When were Farnaz Thompson and Jack White of McGuire Woods first retained in connection with the DOJ investigation? Was their client the Board of Visitors, the Office of the President, or someone else? Please provide a written copy of all engagement letters with McGuire Woods signed between March 1, 2025, and July 30, 2025.
5. What other attorneys did you, the Board of Visitors, and/or the University hire as outside counsel in connection with the DOJ investigation? For each attorney retained, please state whether their client was the Board of Visitors, the Office of the President, or someone else. Please provide a written copy of all such engagement letters signed between March 1, 2025 and July 30, 2025.
6. At any time did one or both of you communicate — either in person, electronically, or telephonically — with any other individual about President Jim Ryan's potential resignation? If so, provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
7. At any time did one or both of you suggest — either in person, electronically, or telephonically — to President Jim Ryan that he should speak with a specific attorney (other than those from McGuire Woods) about the DOJ negotiations? If so, which attorney did you recommend, and how did you describe their role to President Ryan? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
8. At any time did one or both of you communicate — either in person, electronically, or telephonically — to the Board of Visitors as a whole that you had retained an attorney other than those from McGuire Woods in connection with the DOJ negotiations? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
9. At any time did one or both of you witness a member of outside counsel communicate to President Ryan that the Department of Justice would close its investigation into UVA if President Ryan resigned? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
10. At any time did one or both of you witness a member of outside counsel communicate to President Ryan that the Department of Justice needed his resignation by 5pm on a certain date or else UVA's federal funding would be in jeopardy? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.



## **General Communication with State and Federal Officials**

11. At any time did one or both of you communicate — either in person, electronically, or telephonically — with officials or other staff from the U.S. Department of Justice about the possibility of asking or convincing President Jim Ryan to resign? If so, provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
12. At any time did one or both of you communicate — either in person, electronically, or telephonically — with Governor Youngkin or his staff about the possibility of asking or convincing President Jim Ryan to resign? If so, provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
13. At any time did one or both of you communicate — either in person, electronically, or telephonically — with Attorney General Jason Miyares or his staff about the possibility of asking or convincing President Jim Ryan to resign? If so, provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
14. At any time did Governor Youngkin or anyone acting on his behalf request, suggest, demand, or imply to you that President Ryan should resign as part of a resolution to the DOJ investigation? If so, provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
15. At any time did Attorney General Miyares or anyone acting on his behalf request, suggest, demand, or imply to you that President Ryan should resign as part of a resolution to the DOJ investigation? If so, provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
16. At any time did one or both of you say, suggest, or imply to President Ryan that his resignation would resolve the DOJ investigation? If so, provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.

## **June 3rd Meeting with the Department of Justice**

17. Did one or both of you meet with officials from the Department of Justice on June 3, 2025? If so, who requested this meeting, who was the meeting request sent to, who was present at the meeting, and who else on the Board of Visitors was notified the meeting would be taking place?
18. Did a Department of Justice official request, suggest, demand, or imply to you that President Ryan should resign as part of a resolution to the DOJ investigation? If so, what was promised or implied in return? Did you ask for anything in writing from the DOJ? If not, why?
19. What did you communicate to President Jim Ryan about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 3rd meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
20. What did you communicate to Rector Robert Hardie about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 3rd meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
21. What did you communicate to Vice Rector Carlos Brown about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 3rd meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.



22. What did you communicate to other individual BOV members about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 3rd meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
23. During the Board of Visitors meeting held June 4-6, 2025, what did you communicate to the Board as a whole about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 3rd meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.

#### **June 24th Call with the Department of Justice**

24. Did one or both of you have a call/meeting with officials from the Department of Justice on June 24, 2025? If so, who requested this call/meeting, who was the call/meeting request sent to, who was present at the call/meeting, and who else on the Board of Visitors was notified the call/meeting would be taking place?
25. Did a Department of Justice official request, suggest, demand, or imply to you that President Ryan should resign as part of a resolution to the DOJ investigation? If so, what was promised or implied in return? Did you ask for anything in writing from the DOJ? If not, why?
26. What did you communicate to President Jim Ryan about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 24th call/meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
27. What did you communicate to Rector Robert Hardie about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 24th call/meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
28. What did you communicate to Vice Rector Carlos Brown about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 24th call/meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
29. What did you communicate to any other individual BOV members about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 24th meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
30. What did you communicate to the Board as a whole about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 24th call/meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.

#### **June 26th Call with the Department of Justice**

31. Did one or both of you have a call/meeting with officials from the Department of Justice on June 26, 2025? If so, who requested this call/meeting, who was the call/meeting request sent to, who was present at the call/meeting, and who else on the Board of Visitors was notified the call/meeting would be taking place?
32. Did a Department of Justice official request, suggest, demand, or imply to you that President Ryan should resign as part of a resolution to the DOJ investigation? If so, what was promised or implied in return? Did you ask for anything in writing from the DOJ? If not, why?

33. What did you communicate to President Jim Ryan about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 26th call/meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
34. What did you communicate to Rector Robert Hardie about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 26th call/meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
35. What did you communicate to Vice Rector Carlos Brown about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 26th call/meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
36. What did you communicate to any other individual BOV members about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 26th meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.
37. What did you communicate to the Board as a whole about what officials from the Department of Justice had communicated to you during the June 26th call/meeting? Provide the dates, means, parties, purpose, and content of all such communications.

### **Governance, Transparency, and Integrity**

38. On April 29, 2025, the Board passed a resolution in open session stating that UVA had made progress on implementing the directives in the March 7th BOV resolution. As Chair and Co-Chair of the BOV's Audit and Compliance Committee at the time, explain why no mention is made in the meeting minutes about the fact the DOJ had issued seven formal letters in the interim, including one referencing threats of lost federal funding.
39. At the July 11, 2025, Faculty Senate meeting, Ms. Sheridan denied being the BOV member involved in DOJ negotiations. Ms. Sheridan, how do you reconcile this statement with multiple reports indicating you met with DOJ officials on June 3rd, June 24th, and 26th?
40. Were any emails, text messages, or memoranda exchanged between either of you and federal or state officials relating to President Ryan's employment status? If so, please provide them.
41. Are you aware of who leaked information to the New York Times about President Ryan's resignation? If so, what do you know and how did you come to know this information?
42. Why did the BOV fail to respond to **any** of the DOJ letters? On the BOV, whose decision was it to hold off on sending materials to the DOJ?
43. The Faculty Senate and the General Faculty Council both passed no confidence resolutions against the Board of Visitors and urged the BOV to include them in developing a process for the search for the University's 10th president. Despite this, the BOV announced on July 25, 2025, that it had convened a search committee and was launching the presidential search, without their input. What is your understanding of the importance of shared governance in a university? What is your understanding of the significance of having lost the confidence of the people who educate students in that university?
44. Similarly, members of the General Assembly urged the BOV to hold off on launching the search given grave concerns about the conduct of the BOV. Despite this, the BOV



announced on July 25, 2025, that it had convened a search committee and was launching the presidential search, without their input. What is your understanding of the statutory relationship between Boards of Visitors and the General Assembly?

45. In a July 14th NYTimes article, the DOJ's Harmeet Dhillon "denied that her division had pressured the university to remove its president. 'I unequivocally deny that I or my colleagues made some sort of quid pro quo or demanded that Jim Ryan resign.'" Was Harmeet Dhillon telling the truth?
46. Is there any demand the Department of Justice could make that the Board of Visitors would reject? Provide a list of at least ten examples of lines the Board of Visitors would refuse to cross in negotiating the terms of a resolution agreement with the Department of Justice.

The people of Virginia deserve to know whether political interference, external pressure, and/or secret deliberations played a role in the resignation of the University's President. The University of Virginia belongs to the Commonwealth, and its leadership must be accountable to the public it serves.

Pursuant to § 23.1-1301(A) of the Code of Virginia, which provides that "boards of visitors of public institutions of higher education shall at all times be under the control of the General Assembly," the General Assembly has clear authority to conduct oversight of the actions and decisions of the University of Virginia Board of Visitors. Accordingly, please produce all relevant documents and communications responsive to the questions listed above and send to me at [senatordeeds@senate.virginia.gov](mailto:senatordeeds@senate.virginia.gov) no later than August 15, 2025. I reserve the right to ask follow-up questions should the need arise.

Sincerely,



R. Creigh Deeds

cc: The Honorable L. Louise Lucas  
President pro tempore, Senate of Virginia  
Chair, Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations

The Honorable Don Scott  
The Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates

The Honorable Scott A. Surovell  
Majority Leader, Senate of Virginia

The Honorable Ghazala Hashmi  
Chair, Senate Committee on Education & Health

Susan G. Harris  
Secretary to the Board of Visitors