https://richmond.com/opinion/column/article_47130ad4-6455-481b-9047-a57ca281f3a6.html

TOP STORY | SPOTLIGHT

ECONOMIC INSTABILITY

Commentary: Federal spending, job cuts are already hurting Fairfax. Virginia is next

BY JEFFREY MCKAY
Aug 26, 2025



At Capital One in McLean on Feb. 24, Gov. Glenn Youngkin offers a helping hand to displaced federal workers while standing behind President Donald Trump's effort to eliminate their jobs. He was joined by, from left, Secretary of Health and Human Resources Janet Kelly, Secretary of Commerce and Trade Caren Merrick and Secretary of Labor Bryan Slater.
MICHAEL MARTZ, TIMES-DISPATCH

BY JEFFREY MCKAY

Virginia's recent drop from **CNBC's top business ranking** isn't just symbolic. It's a warning. More than 21,700 Fairfax County residents **are out of work**, a 35% increase in just one year, driven almost entirely by cuts to the federal workforce. These aren't abstract numbers. They reflect the growing impact of the Trump administration's reckless dismantling of federal agencies and the ripple effect on the private sector. As the state with the second-highest number of federal workers, Virginia is especially vulnerable.

Instead of offering meaningful solutions — or even basic empathy — Gov. Glenn Youngkin's administration has deflected responsibility or has celebrated the cuts as “necessary.” Despite the lack of a statewide plan or a governor who is fighting this statewide hit, our local economy continues to show strength.

People are also reading...

1. **Kaleb Allshouse bought 7-OH in a Henrico smoke shop. He died in the parking lot.**
2. **Six Flags to sell vacant land around Kings Dominion**
3. **Pop art: Alicia Keys and Swizz Beatz personal art collection headed to the VMFA**
4. **Cleo E. Powell elected chief justice of Virginia Supreme Court**



Jeffrey McKay

Will Schermerhorn

Here’s the good news: Between fiscal years 2022 and 2024, the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority helped us create or retain 28,000 jobs — 90% without state assistance. The Virginia Economic Development Partnership supported just 2,500 jobs here of 36,000 statewide during that same period.

Fairfax County contributes **more than $167 billion annually** to Virginia’s economy, more than a quarter of the state’s total GDP. Our economy is diverse, anchored by global companies like Amazon Web Services, Google, Northrop Grumman and Hilton. But Fortune 500 giants aren’t our only growth drivers. The majority of county businesses are small, employing fewer than 50 people. That mix of global scale and local entrepreneurship is a key reason we’ve remained strong amid federal job losses.

Fairfax County is one of only 50 nationwide with a Triple-A bond rating — a distinction we’ve held for more than 50 consecutive years. That record of financial strength, combined with our economic diversity, has resulted in national recognition as a leader in innovation, opportunity and quality of life.

Here’s the bad news: More than 11,000 federal civilian jobs have already been eliminated in Virginia this year, according to the University of Virginia’s **Weldon Cooper Center**, with another 10,500 at risk. These cuts are hitting critical agencies, including the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Treasury and Commerce, and have **triggered layoffs at major private contractors** like Booz Allen Hamilton, MITRE Corp. and Leidos.

Meanwhile, the number of open jobs in Northern Virginia has dropped sharply — from more than 90,000 in January to just over 48,000 today — underscoring a deepening slowdown and rising uncertainty across the region. This steep decline speaks to the scale of disruption. Employers are pulling back, and the **latest jobs report** confirms those trends.

When someone loses a federal job, it's not only a personal crisis. It affects small businesses, schools and essential local programs. When a longtime Department of Veterans Affairs employee is laid off, it's not just her job that disappears — it's a delay in care for veterans, a missed rent check, and one less customer at a neighborhood store.

I've called on the governor to use the close relationship with President Donald Trump that he proudly touts to stand up for Virginia's economy. Fairfax County has raised the alarm for months, and the governor's response has been to defend the Trump administration's actions.

In my nearly two decades as an elected official, governors of both parties have always put Virginians first — not Washington politics. Instead, we're told that the private sector can somehow absorb these losses. That's not only unrealistic but dismissive of the many public servants with specialized skills and deep institutional knowledge whose lives have been upended. Brushing them aside insults not just their work, but the families and communities who depend on them.

Virginia needs solutions. That means a comprehensive economic plan: funding retraining programs, expanding unemployment insurance, providing direct assistance to workers, expanding into new technologies, creating even stronger partnerships with universities, and more.

But Virginia should also absolutely be playing defense. I urge the governor to work with the attorney general and join other states in legal action to stop politically motivated attacks on the federal workforce. Virginians deserve leaders who respond in a crisis, not retreat.

The prosperity of Fairfax County has been built over decades of bipartisan leadership, and the current federal actions threaten the economic stability of the entire commonwealth.

Fairfax County will continue to lead through these challenges. But we can't do it alone. Virginia needs leaders who put families first and take urgent action to protect our economic foundation. The Trump administration's reckless federal workforce cuts are devastating Virginia. Refusing to respond only deepens the crisis. The time to act is now.

From the Archives: Barges and Richmond Steel

1 of 11