



CITY OF RICHMOND POET LAUREATE

2026 - 2028

READY TO APPLY OR NOMINATE? VISIT GO.RVA.GOV/POET-APPLY TO GET STARTED!

INFORMATION PACKET

“ We’re looking for somebody who does the art form well, who loves this city, and who helps it tell its stories and create paths to healing.

- MAYOR DANNY AVULA

”

Welcome to the City of Richmond’s Poet Laureate Program!

If you’re here, you’re considering applying for the 2026-2028 Poet Laureate position, or you know someone who might be a good fit.

Below, you’ll find all the resources you need to put together your application, as well as information about what to expect from the program. Please read through this document before nominating a candidate or applying. If you have questions, you can email the Office of Strategic Communications at askosc@rva.gov.

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The 2026-2028 Poet Laureate will be our City’s third. The first, Roscoe Burnems, was appointed in 2021, and Joanna Lee was appointed in 2024. Each Poet Laureate has their own unique viewpoint and approach, but they share a commitment to language and a belief that coming together around the arts makes our communities stronger.

This new Poet Laureate will step into a meaningful moment. In fall 2025, Mayor Danny Avula launched the **Mayoral Action Plan**, which includes among its key pillars the importance of telling our stories. The Third Poet Laureate will also serve during **VA250**, a yearlong initiative to highlight state and city history during 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Our ability to tell stories in a way that reflects where our communities have been and where they’re going is part of what makes Richmond Richmond. The next Poet Laureate will play a critical role in enriching, inspiring, and gathering our city.

Learn more about the program’s history and previous laureates at go.rva.gov/poet-laureate.

WHAT THE CITY OFFERS THE LAUREATE

In recognition of the Poet Laureate's work on behalf of the City of Richmond, the City will provide the following support **each year** of their tenure:

- \$5,000 stipend.
- \$2,000 in initial project development funds, to support the Laureate's proposed educational or cultural programming.
- Access to a weekly, City-sponsored workspace (determined in conversation with the Laureate's needs and schedule).
- Opportunities to share work through City-sponsored events and platforms, including but not limited to the annual State of the City, Days of Service, the monthly Hey, Richmond newsletter, and the City's social media accounts.
- Connections to City teams and projects in order to integrate poetry more fully into Richmond's operations and to advance the Laureate's intended programming.
- Support in applying for additional funding opportunities, like the **Academy of American Poets Laureate** fellowship, to enhance both programming and publishing opportunities.

WHAT THE NEXT POET LAUREATE WILL OFFER THE CITY

- Regular participation in City ceremonies, events, and programming.
- Willingness to engage with and foster Richmond's poetry communities and resources.
- Ability to create new work that supports the City's mission, vision, and values, along with the Mayor's Pillars.
- Dedication to a central project with support from City officials. The project should advance the Mayor's Pillars in a manner of the Laureate's choosing. Projects can take the full tenure or be annual.
- A vision for consistent City programming related to poetry.
- The Laureate should expect to spend between 5-10 hours a month on activities related to the program.

ELIGIBILITY

All applicants must be:

- 18 years or older.
- Currently living, working, and/or studying within the City of Richmond, with an established history of doing so.
- Someone with an established record of poetic achievement and fostering literary community.
- Available for a launch event on April 11, 2026, and some potential media the following week.
- Able to pass a background check in the event of programming connected to youth.
- Both applications and nominations are welcome. **All applications, whether nominated or self-submitted, are due by Monday, January 12, at 11:59 p.m.**

GUIDELINES FOR APPLYING

The application will ask applicants to describe their relationship to Richmond and their experiences fostering community through poetry. Applicants should also prepare the following materials (please see the application portal at go.rva.gov/poet-apply for more information.):

- Basic contact info and short answer responses.
- Resume or CV.
- Sample packet of 7-10 poems, including at least one recording of a performance and at least one written piece.
- A short project pitch, sharing your vision for serving a particular community demographic through poetry as the City's Laureate (500-1000 words).
- 2 community references (not to include direct family members).

GUIDELINES FOR NOMINATING

If you know a poet who should be considered for Richmond's next Poet Laureate, we want to hear from you! Please visit the application portal at go.rva.gov/poet-apply and click "I want to nominate someone." You'll be asked to share the poet's name, contact information, and a short description of why you think the poet is a good fit for the program.

Nominees will be contacted and asked to complete the full application. **Since the deadline is January 12 for all applicants, please complete your nominations early so the nominee has time to submit.**

CHOOSING A LAUREATE

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of City and community stakeholders, including representatives from City government, Richmond Public Library, Richmond Public Schools, institutions of higher education, community writing collectives, and local businesses. They will make final recommendations to Mayor Danny Avula. The finalist will be selected and notified by the Mayor's Office.

The panel will be looking for an applicant who demonstrates:

- Deep understanding of Richmond's opportunities and challenges.
- Poetic achievement that furthers artistic community.
- A commitment to service and relationship-building through poetry.
- Investment in a specific project that can be reasonably completed within the program's scope.

DATES AND DEADLINES

- **January 12, 2026:** Application window closes.
- **January - March, 2026:** Search panel reviews applications and makes recommendations to the Mayor's Office. Mayor Avula selects and notifies the finalist.
- **April 11, 2026:** The new Poet Laureate is introduced at the annual VisArts Poetry Fest.

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