



Division of Capitol Police News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Richmond authorities prep for large Friday rally

RICHMOND -- Authorities are asking those who work, live or conduct business in downtown Richmond to show extra patience Friday as a planned large rally descends on Brown's Island and the Virginia Capitol.

Virginia Capitol Police and the Richmond Police Department said the event, one of more than 2,000 planned nationwide to rally against school gun violence, is likely to have a significant impact on traffic along several downtown streets and in the immediate area of Capitol Square from mid-morning into late afternoon. Organizers of the Richmond event have said they are expecting a crowd of about 10,000 participants from across Virginia, and possibly more.

The Richmond event, part of the National School Walkout, focuses on high schools and coincides with the anniversary of the April 20, 1999 shooting deaths of 12 students and one teacher at Columbine High School in Colorado.

"The local organizers have been excellent about not only meeting with us, but about doing all they can to work with us to help facilitate a smooth rally," said Col. Anthony S. Pike, chief of the Virginia Capitol Police. "Along with the Richmond Police Department and our other partners, we are committed to providing a safe environment for these folks to express their freedom of speech."

Rally organizers said the plan is for many of the high school students attending the event to use Brown's Island as the staging area. Organizers are also expecting about 1,000 Virginia Commonwealth University students to walk from the Monroe Park academic campus to Brown's Island to join the event.

Speeches, voter registration and other activities are planned at Brown's Island from noon until 1 p.m., when the rally participants are to move on foot to the Capitol. Richmond police plan to escort the rally participants north on Seventh Street to Grace Street, where they will walk eastbound into Capitol Square.

The main rally is to begin at 2 p.m. on the Capitol's South Portico and last 45-60 minutes, according to organizers.

"The Richmond Police Department and the Virginia Capitol Police have a great deal of experience dealing with large crowds," said Richmond Police Chief Alfred Durham. "While the large number of participants at this rally will cause some disruption to traffic downtown, we are encouraged the event will remain peaceful throughout."

For those not going to Brown's Island and joining in the walk to the Capitol, police plan to use Ninth Street, along the western perimeter of Capitol Square between Bank Street and Grace Street, as a drop-off and pick-up zone. Parking will not be allowed on Ninth Street, but drivers will be allowed to pull over and drop off rally participants before the event and pull over and pick them up afterward.

Those who are coming from out of town or are unfamiliar with parking in the city can learn more about the city's meters, garages and lots by visiting <http://www.richmondgov.com/Parking/>

Capitol Police will be providing live updates throughout the day via their Twitter feed, @VaCapitolPolice.

"We realize that having such a large crowd at the Capitol on a weekday is a bit unusual," said Pike, whose agency is celebrating its 400th anniversary, "but we are appealing to everyone to please be even more patient and vigilant than usual Friday. It's paramount that we provide a safe environment for our young people."

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