

Wednesday night's State of the Commonwealth address was filled mostly with accolades and expressions of thanks. Very little policy was discussed. Accolades included our reputation as a very well run state. We are proud of these recognitions and they are many. We have led and kept our economy stronger than most states throughout the years with sound fiscal policy. Presently, the jobless rate and inflation outpacing income are the greater problems. Accordingly, we need to focus on that which creates jobs and leaves money in taxpayers' pockets for paying the household bills.

One of the outgoing governor's more notable remarks was, "The largest obstacle to solving our transportation needs is a philosophy, espoused by some, that it is always wrong to raise taxes or fees." So, the philosophy that, 'it is better to raise taxes than moderate spending' is not the larger problem? Now the greater obstacle is revealed. It is found in the mistaken belief that whatever we need can be found in your pocket.

In this session alone we have to resolve a budget discrepancy that has us spending \$4 billion more than we should expect to bring in. We will not be raising taxes to close that gap, so get ready for spending reductions. We have to get the budget to position on structural soundness which cannot be done without making the tough choices.

I anticipate, however that the Democrat controlled Senate Finance Committee will oppose efforts to right size our states budget to establish a more stable structural balance. The Senate has historically always followed the Finance Committee's lead. It is most likely to prefer the tax and fee increases included in the departing governor's budget.

Fortunately, our incoming Governor, Bob McDonnell, the House majority and the Senate minority will resist such efforts and insist on sound though painful reductions in spending. We are going to be focusing on job creation and reducing government's size, it's spending and intrusion into your lives. Businesses must be able to be profitable for employment and income to increase. Accordingly, taxes and regulatory intrusion have to be abated.

I have been increasingly concerned about the integrity of our electoral system. Our election laws leave opportunities for voter fraud that must be closed off. I think all would agree that we want voter will properly reflected in the electoral process. All eligible voters should be encouraged to vote once and in the proper precinct, district, locality and state. But, opportunity for people to vote as others and in multiple precincts must be removed. True identification requirements must be enforced along with other protections. Accordingly, in this session, I have about twenty amendments I am offering to our election law. We have to assure the process' integrity to have confidence in those elected to represent us.

I am honored to be serving on the Inaugural Committee and having worked on Governor-elect, Bob McDonnell's transition efforts in Health and Human Services. He will be sworn in Saturday, marking the beginning of his term of office. One of the first united efforts you will see from his administration has already been announced. Governor McDonnell, LG Bill Bolling, AG Ken Cuccinelli, the House Majority along with a minority in the Senate fully intends to protect Virginia citizens from any federal requirement to purchase health insurance as a condition of citizenship and residency.

Additional early focuses will include, job creation, government right sizing and expansion of educational choice and opportunity.

Thank you for the privilege of serving. I look forward to hearing from you and communicating with you in the weeks ahead.

Steve Martin