

Hello Friends,

With Governor McDonnell's theme of "Commonwealth of Opportunity," our top priority this session will be jobs and strengthening Virginia's economic position. This week I joined with Governor Bob McDonnell and the other Republican and Democrat Chief Patrons of his legislative package for a press conference. We are going to get some great things done on this front in the coming weeks.

Last year I sent a letter to DC in support of the pending application for drilling over fifty miles off shore. If Virginia's application is approved first (it is the only one pending) we will be well positioned to become the energy capital of the east coast. This is important both for economic and energy resource reasons. In addition, I have been and will continue to support efforts to get another nuclear power facility built and increase the use of clean burning coal found here in Virginia.

Governor McDonnell promised to veto any tax increases and I have already had and taken opportunities to vote "NO" to fee increases intended to replace previously proposed tax increases.

We have been rolling in this office with great legislative successes on your behalf. My Senate Bill 311, which is to protect Virginians from any federal mandate to purchase health insurance, is scheduled for final passage from the Senate Floor this coming Monday afternoon. If federal mandates are passed they would assert federal preemption resulting in a need for our Attorney General to defend our law in US Courts. We will see how that works out but thankfully we have a Lt. Governor who can break a tie if needed, a Governor to sign it and an Attorney General to defend it.

This morning my Senate Bill 59, requiring screening for and testing of probable drug users among our adult TANF recipients (welfare) was reported/passed from committee. It was sent to Finance Committee, creating another hurdle. The bill provides an opportunity for those testing positive to receive treatment offered through VIEW (the states' welfare to work program). If they choose not to do so they lose the benefit attributable to that adult. We provide these taxpayer funds to those in need in an effort to meet the need of some of our most vulnerable children. If it is being misspent in a manner that is harming those children further, we need to know and put a stop to it. I will continue to work towards this end.

At the Governors request I have introduced a bill to double the tax credit (from 15% to 30%) for the purchase of Long Term Care Insurance. For all concerned and the Commonwealth's budget we need to encourage the purchase of these plans.

Much of my legislative package this session relates to the integrity of the electoral process, making sure those who are eligible and want to vote are allowed to have their vote counted while also eliminating opportunities for fraud. I have had some great success that cannot be expanded on today but I look forward to reporting on it to you next week.

I have received hundreds of visitors in my office this week, done several radio interviews and two TV shows along with a tale-town hall meeting with 17,000 constituents so far this session. I look forward to hearing from you and receiving your input. If there are matters of importance to you, let me know. I want to make sure I consider them. Starting on Monday, Martin Luther King Day, there have been large crowds of visitors to the Capitol.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve you and I urge you to contact my office with your comments or concerns. We can be reached at district11@senate.virginia.gov or call 804-698-7511.

Steve Martin