

In last week's Norment News, I profiled some of the legislation that I have put forth this session. In such an economically volatile time my legislation will focus on encouraging fiscally responsible, realistic, common sense solutions that will start moving Virginia forward. We need to continue to reform the way that we govern, and start putting the people of Virginia above politics. Yesterday, Senator Walter Stosch spoke on behalf of Senate Republicans concerning three key principles that we believe must guide the budget process:

- First, it is essential that we use realistic revenue estimates. Our local governments and agencies who depend on General Assembly funding need to be able to build budgets based on realistic funding. We must ensure that our revenue estimates are as accurate as possible so these agencies can develop realistic budgets.
- Next, we should employ "contingency spending" based on actual revenues as they are received. As the Governor has said, "Let the data do the talking." But, we need to wait to ensure that the revenues are truly there before spending more than we actually have to spend.
- Third, we must use funds for short-term, one-time expenditures or those which have a realistic chance of stimulating the state's economy. These revenues should not be used to prop up ongoing expenses which will hurt us in future years when the federal economic stimulus funds end and we are left without adequate money to continue these programs."

There is no doubt that in anticipation of crossover, committee meetings and floor sessions will extend for long hours; and we will soon see a huge influx of legislation on the Senate floor. This week will be of significance as all revenue matters will be brought to the floor. These include the contentious cigarette tax which was recently defeated and other revenue generating matters that will precede the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees proposed budgets on Sunday, February 8.

Below are a few issues that I considered this week and may be of interest or concern to you:

Health Care:

This week Senate Republicans unanimously opposed bills (SB 843, SB 885) that would significantly raise health insurance costs. Virginians are already struggling to afford adequate health care and both bills would further hinder hard working families from obtaining much needed affordable health insurance. SB 843 would increase the existing cap on medical malpractice cases by \$750,000 immediately and mandate an increase in the cap every year in the future. This action would increase costs for doctors be passed directly to the consumer through higher prices and force much needed medical practitioners and specialists out of the profession, especially in rural areas. SB 885 would permit drug-related personal injury lawsuits to be filed within two

years after a person "discovers" an injury. This bill would increase litigation, cause the price of prescriptions to rise, and hinder the ability of people who need and deserve affordable prescriptions from receiving them.

Virginia's Right to Work Laws:

For the last three years, Virginia has been named the "Best State for Business," citing the Commonwealth's outstanding regulatory environment, low unemployment rate, prime location for new businesses, low tort atmosphere, and low tax burden. An important proposed amendment to add Virginia's coveted right-to-work law to the state Constitution was unfortunately defeated by a straight party-line vote in committee. I co-sponsored this amendment because I believe that our Right to Work laws have been under threat and this legislation was needed to continue Virginia's legacy of attracting businesses to the state. It is essential in these economically unstable times that, Virginia continues to attract new businesses and jobs with its business friendly status.

Looking Ahead:

I have continued to meet with constituents on subjects of importance including: public school teachers, Bay Aging representatives, William and Mary students and the Virginia Farm Bureau. We have celebrated Arts Advocacy Day, Pharmacy Day and Small Business Day. Meeting with each and every person allows me to gain insight into the issues of importance to the people of the Third Senatorial District.

In my further attempts to better represent the Third District, I am seeking your opinion on how you believe the General Assembly should deal with the budget shortfall and other critical issues such as those listed above. Please visit my new website at www.senatornorment.com and follow the link for my legislative survey in order that I can know how to best serve you in the upcoming weeks. I will be updating the website on a regular basis to include YouTube videos, press releases and important legislation. Please follow the link to my YouTube site where you can view a number of speeches that I have made regarding legislation. Please be patient as we continue to update the site.

If you find yourself in Richmond during session, please feel free to stop by my office and visit. My staff and I are always open to your comments, so please do not hesitate to contact us. In Richmond, I can be reached at 804-698-7503 or via e-mail at district03@sov.state.va.us. Thank you for your continued support and please let me know how I may be of service to you. With kindest regards, I remain

Very truly yours,

Thomas K. Norment, Jr.