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Delegate Landes' Legislative Newsletter

**By: Delegate R. Steven Landes
Week of February 6, 2012**

Introduction

Crossover has finally come and passed. Crossover is the day that the House of Delegates must complete its work on the nearly 1,300 House Bills introduced this session. On Wednesday, the House began to consider all bills that have passed the State Senate.

A great deal has been accomplished in the five weeks since the start of Session, with over 400 bills, covering a wide range of issues, having passed the House. Over one-third of the bills the House has passed relate to my core focus of the session - helping businesses create jobs, expanding education opportunities, keeping our communities safe, and making our government more efficient and effective. These areas of focus will also be addressed in the budget, which is scheduled to be voted on by the House of Delegates in the coming week.

Tebow Bill Passes House

On the floor this week, the House passed House Bill 947, which paves the way for homeschooled children to participate on high school athletics teams. The bill, nicknamed the "Tebow Bill", requires the Virginia High School League, the organization that governs high school athletics in Virginia, to allow home school students to try out for public schools teams. Currently, twenty-two states allow for homeschooled children to participate on high school athletics teams, including Florida where Tim Tebow was allowed to play on his high school football team.

House Republicans Unveil 2012 Public Safety Agenda

This week, some of my Republican colleagues held a press conference to highlight a number of public safety initiatives to keep families safe from habitual drug traffickers, individuals who prey on children, drunk drivers, gang members, and those who commit domestic violence.

Del. Rob Bell (R-Albemarle) discussed two of his bills, House Bill 968, which will increase penalties for habitual drug traffickers, keeping our kids away from drugs and drug-related violence, and House Bill 973, which would impose a mandatory life sentence for raping a child under the age of 12. In the last two years, 228 children under the age of 12 have been victims of these horrific crimes, and only 10 of these cases resulted in a life sentence, with a median sentence of 13 years. I voted in support of both of these bills.

Del. Dave Albo (R-Fairfax) has put forward two bills, House Bill 49 and House Bill 50, which respectively increase the jail time for DUI-maiming and DUI-manslaughter. I voted in support of House Bill 49 and House Bill 50 was incorporated into House Bill 962.

Del. Ben Cline (R-Rockbridge) introduced two bills to address strangulation and gang recruitment. House Bill 752 raises the penalty of assault and battery via strangulation in an attempt to curb the elevation of domestic violence.

Protecting our families and keeping our streets safe is one of the most important responsibilities of the government. I, along with my Republican colleagues, are 100% committed to doing everything we can when it comes to protecting children and keeping families safe from the dangers of this world.

Making Virginia the Most Veteran Friendly State

This week, the House passed a handful of bills aimed at accomplishing Governor McDonnell's goal of making Virginia the most veteran and military friendly state in the Nation. On Monday, the House passed House Bill 719, a bill that allows for a veteran with a permanently disabled service-connected disability to purchase a lifetime hunting, fishing, or combined hunting and fishing license at a discounted rate. The House also passed House Bill 384 which would give hiring preference for state jobs to members of the Virginia National Guard. This bill builds from last year's successful efforts to give hiring preference for state jobs to veterans. I voted in support of both of these bills.

Update on My Legislation

House Bill 777 establishes the Joint Subcommittee to Evaluate Tax Preferences. The Joint Subcommittee is charged with overseeing the evaluation of Virginia's tax preferences. The joint subcommittee would consist of 14 legislative members: two members of the House Committee on Appropriations; six members of the House Committee on Finance; and six members of the Senate Committee on Finance. Members of the joint subcommittee will be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates and the Senate Committee on Rules, respectively, upon the recommendation of the House and Senate Committee chairmen. The bill passed the House 98-0 and has been referred to the Senate Committee on Rules.

House Joint Resolution 108 directs the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the cost efficiency of the Commonwealth's institutions of higher education and to identify opportunities to reduce the cost of public higher education in Virginia. This is a two-year study ending in November 2014. The bill passed the House 95-2 and has been referred to the Senate Committee on Rules.

Visitors

This week additional visitors came to our doors. Groups representing the Family Foundation and the Family Foundation Pastors' Day came by. Representatives from the Shenandoah Brewery and MillerCoors, as well as Merck came down to discuss legislation of interest to them. Greg Campbell, Executive Director of the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport, came by representing the Virginia Airport Operators Council.

Melanie Button brought down a group of constituents to discuss concerns related to grandparent issues. The Rockingham and Augusta County 4-H groups were led in by Faye Giles. Gayl Brunk brought down a number of representatives of the Valley Associates for Independent Living (VAIL).

I was honored that Rev. Randy Cosner, of Briery Branch Church of the Brethren in Dayton, was selected to offer a prayer before the House of Delegates on February 7th. Pastor Cosner, his wife, and I had a chance to visit beforehand.

Another round of students from Blue Ridge Community College came down, as well as students from Eastern Mennonite University and the Virginia 21 organization. Nancy Blitz-Ruff, RN, came in to discuss the issue of a shortage of perioperative nurses at the University of Virginia. Dr. Pam Moran, Superintendent of Albemarle County Schools, came in to discuss public education concerns.

Lee Hartman of the Bluestone Vineyard in Bridgewater stopped in as well as Jon Hannah of State Farm Insurance. It was a busy, busy week!

Contact Me

As always, my legislative aide, Judy Wyatt, and I are here to serve you. We want to hear what you think about the legislation pending before the House, or if there's anything we can do to help you in dealing with a state government agency. Please use the contact information listed below to reach us in the Richmond Office by phone, fax, or email. My office can be reached by phone at **804.698.1025** or by email at **steve@stevelandes.com**. Our Richmond Fax number is **804.698.6725**. Our Richmond Address is Post Office Box 406, Richmond, Virginia 23218. Please visit my website at **www.stevelandes.com** for my newest press releases and newsletters. Also, be sure to "like" my Facebook Fan Page at **https://www.facebook.com/SteveLandesVA**.

If you are in Richmond, be sure to stop on by and visit! I am located in Room 515 of the General Assembly Building, located on the corner of 9th and Broad Streets.

Thank you again for allowing me to serve as your Delegate.

Sincerely,



Steve Landes

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