

## Saturday Morning Coffee with Your Delegate



**Have an issue on your mind?** Join David at **Main Street Bagel** (10268 Main Street) for Saturday morning coffee from **9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.** This is a time when residents can stop by without an appointment to ask a question, discuss an issue, or to just find out what is going on in the General Assembly.

**Dates include:**

**September 13th ■ October 11th ■ November 8th**



## Summer Homework

While the General Assembly is only in Session for a few months out of the year, the Speaker of the House and the Governor appoint members to various commissions and study committees to work on issues during the interim. That is, even members of the General Assembly get assigned summer homework.

I am pleased to have been appointed to three studies/commissions. These include the Governor's **Commission on Climate Change**, a **Special Subcommittee to Study ABC Issues**, and the **Joint Commission on Health Care**. If you are interested in any of these topics, please let me know so that I can keep you involved.

## Keep in Touch!



Knowledge is power! Stay up-to-date on what is happening in Richmond by signing up for my Focus on

Fairfax electronic newsletter. Updates are sent weekly during Session (January and February) and monthly during the rest of the year.

Visit [www.davidbulova.com](http://www.davidbulova.com) for more information or to sign up.

# 2008 Report from Richmond



## Delegate David Bulova

*Proudly Representing Virginia's 37th District*

Dear 37th District Resident,

I am pleased to provide you with my 2008 "Report from Richmond" -- a summary of some of the new laws passed this year that will affect you and our community.



This year, in addition to grappling with the tight budget, the General Assembly tackled a number of pressing issues. In some areas we were successful, such as reforming our mental health system and better protecting consumers from identity theft. In other areas, there remains much to be done. This is particularly true when it comes to transportation. As a commuter and a parent, I know that our quality of life and our economy depend on addressing this critical issue.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you want to discuss an issue or have an idea for how to make our Commonwealth an even better place to live, work, and raise a family.

It is an honor to serve as your voice in Richmond.

## Contact Information

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## How Did My Delegate Vote?

**My voting record is how I am accountable to you.** To check how I voted on a specific issue, visit <http://leg1.state.va.us>.

**More than 3,000 bills were introduced during the 2008 Session of the General Assembly.** The following are just a few of the new laws and initiatives that will have an impact on our daily lives.

**Supporting Our Veterans** (Budget). The General Assembly significantly increased funding for the "Wounded Warrior" program. The program was created to ensure that veterans receive timely treatment and support for combat-related mental stress and traumatic brain injury. Visit [www.dvs.virginia.gov/woundedwarrior](http://www.dvs.virginia.gov/woundedwarrior) for more information.

**Credit Freeze** (HB1311). As more commercial and financial data is transmitted and stored digitally, consumers have become vulnerable to identity theft and fraud. Any consumer in Virginia may now freeze access to their credit report and prohibit a consumer reporting agency from releasing the report without the consumer's express authorization.

**Continued inside...**

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# Report from Richmond

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**Predatory Mortgage Lending** (HB408). Sadly, the increase in foreclosures also has resulted in an increase in those seeking to take advantage of the situation. Anyone participating in a so-called foreclosure rescue with the intent to defraud is now eligible for prosecution under the Consumer Protection Act. In addition, all lenders and brokers are now subject to a criminal background check.



**Making Day Care Safer** (HB3). In order to better protect children in day care, the Department of Social Services will establish and maintain a Screened Family Day Home Provider List. This web-based tool will provide additional information to families wishing to screen a family day care provider.

**Increased Penalties for Animal Fighting** (HB656). Engaging in any animal fighting is now punishable up to a year in jail and a \$2,500 fine. Using blades or razors to enhance an animal's fighting ability is now a Class 6 felony, which can result in up to five years imprisonment. All dog fighting remains a Class 6 felony.



**Prescription Medication Donation Program** (HB85). Virginia will establish a prescription drug donation program to accept unused prescriptions. The integrity of the drug must be assured. The prescriptions will then be re-dispensed at indigent medical clinics.

**Pay Day Lending Reform** (HB12). Pay day loans are short-term, high-interest loans that can trap an individual in a cycle of debt. To help prevent this, lenders now are prohibited from making a new loan to a borrower who already has an outstanding loan. In addition, a cooling off period is required if a borrower takes out more than five loans within 180 days.

**Sangria** (HB1075). Believe it or not, sangria sold at restaurants before July 1st was technically illegal under Virginia's ABC laws. But never fear, this new law has taken care of the problem.

**Social Security Numbers** (HB633). This law prohibits the dissemination of another person's social security number, regardless of whether it was obtained from a public or private record. The purpose is to prevent someone from maliciously distributing this information and placing the person at risk of identity theft.

**Underage DUI** (HB719). Last year, fourteen teenagers died in alcohol-related crashes in Fairfax County. This bill establishes "zero tolerance" (defined as 0.02% BAC) for underage drinking and driving. An offense is now punishable by the forfeiture of the person's license for a period of one year and either a mandatory minimum fine of \$500 or 50 hours of community service.

**Absentee Voting** (HB1062). This bill adds pregnancy to the list of reasons a voter may give to be entitled to vote absentee.

**Solar Energy** (SB320). As energy costs soar, many people are turning to solar energy for home use. This bill states that a community association cannot prohibit an owner from installing solar panels -- unless it was expressly prohibited before this new law went into effect. The association may, however, establish reasonable restrictions on size and placement.



**No Bail for Illegal Immigrants** (HB440). This bill establishes the presumption that no bail is to be provided for illegal aliens charged with certain crimes.

**Employing Illegal Immigrants** (HB926). The Commonwealth may now terminate or revoke the authority of a business to operate in Virginia if the business entity is convicted of violating federal laws prohibiting the hiring or continued employment of illegal aliens.

**Common Interest Community Board** (HB516). In many parts of Northern Virginia, it is difficult to purchase a home that is not part of a community association. As a result, the General Assembly is working to provide better oversight of residential property management companies. The new board will develop a certification process for community association managers. In addition, HB516 includes enhanced insurance requirements to protect community associations from embezzlement and an alternative dispute resolution process so that property owners aren't forced to go to court as a first recourse during a dispute.



**Higher Education Bonds.** The General Assembly authorized \$1.4 billion in bonds for construction at Virginia's colleges, parks, and mental-health facilities. George Mason University will receive about \$110 million for improvements. Virginia voters will need to approve the bonds in the upcoming general election.

## 2008 Legislative Accomplishments

This year, I introduced 14 legislative initiatives -- ranging from an overhaul of the transportation maintenance funding formula (HB389) to a study on the impacts of pharmaceuticals and other chemicals found in our drinking water (HJ171). Below are highlights from my bills that have been signed by the Governor or were rolled into other successful legislation.

**Conserving Trees During Development.** A mature tree can provide up to 60 times the air quality benefits of a newly planted tree. This is particularly important for an area like Northern Virginia, which is designated as a non-attainment zone for air quality by the U.S. EPA. Thanks to a great team effort, we were able to pass HB1437, which provides local governments in Northern Virginia with new tools to preserve trees during development. Previously, localities could require tree replacement, but not the conservation of mature trees.

**Data Breach Notification.** Many of you will recall several incidents at the federal level where computers with sensitive personal information were lost or stolen. To my surprise, I discovered that if our state government lost your sensitive personal information, there was no requirement to notify you so that you could take steps to protect yourself. In response, I worked with the Virginia Secretary of Technology's office to introduce HB390. My bill was ultimately rolled into a larger bill (HB1469), which has been signed by the Governor. As a result, any time personal information is accessed by an unauthorized person, the keeper of the information, whether business or government, must notify the individual and the Office of the Attorney General that a breach has occurred.

**Improving Water Quality.** This year, I was pleased to carry three bills aimed at protecting and improving water quality in our local streams, the Potomac River, and the Chesapeake Bay. First, HB392 strengthens the penalties that urban local governments can impose on developers who violate water quality regulations. Second, HB360 authorizes the Governor and General Assembly to provide additional funding for urban and agricultural water pollution reduction activities (see above picture for the bill signing ceremony). Finally, HB1355 requires new or expanded wastewater treatment facilities to have sufficient capacity to accept waste from septic systems. The purpose of the bill is to reduce the likelihood that the waste will be dumped illegally.

**Streamlining State Government.** At the request of the Governor, I introduced HB388 to standardize the process for conveying utility easements on publicly-owned land. In addition to streamlining the process (a win-win situation for both the utility and the Commonwealth), the bill ensures that Virginians get reasonable compensation for the use of publicly-owned land.



## Spotlight on Mental Health Reform

In the wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy, the General Assembly passed comprehensive legislation designed to improve services for those with mental illness. Major changes include the following:

- **Involuntary commitment criteria.** Under the old criteria, an individual had to be an immediate danger to himself or another. Now, a person may be committed if it can be shown that the individual is likely to cause serious harm to himself or others, or may suffer serious harm due to his inability to provide for basic needs.
- **Parental involvement.** Parents will now be notified if their dependent child is receiving mental health treatment at a college or university. The law contains some exceptions.
- **Purchase of firearms.** The law has been clarified to ensure that persons ordered to involuntary treatment are prohibited from purchasing, possessing, or transporting a firearm.
- **Funding for treatment services.** The biennial budget includes \$41.6 million to improve access to emergency care and provide additional case managers for those with mental illness.

Additionally, bills were also passed that require colleges and universities to develop crisis management plans, create campus "threat assessment teams," and implement campus-wide emergency notification systems.