

Join David For Saturday Morning Coffee



Have an issue on your mind? Let me know! Join David at **Main Street Bagel** (10268 Main Street) for Saturday morning coffee from **9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.** Feel free to 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.

Upcoming dates for 2009 include:

September 12th ■ October 10th ■ November 14th

Summer Homework

Although the General Assembly only meets for a few months of the year, members are appointed to various commissions and study committees to work on issues during the summer and fall.



I am pleased that the Speaker of the House has appointed me to two standing commissions and one study committee. The commissions include the **State Water Commission** and the **Joint Commission on Health Care**. In addition, I

have been asked to serve on a special committee to study ways that **Virginia's public and private nonprofit colleges can better work together** to meet our Commonwealth's higher education needs.

Please let me know if you are interested in any of these topics so that I can keep you involved.

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 for more information or to sign up.

2009 Report from Richmond



Delegate David Bulova

Proudly Representing Virginia's 37th District

Dear 37th District Resident,

It is my pleasure to provide you with my 2009 "Report from Richmond" -- a summary of some of the new laws passed this year that will affect you and our community. In most cases, these laws take effect on July 1st.



Not surprisingly, the major issue faced by the General Assembly was balancing the budget in the face of the growing recession. I am proud of Virginia's fiscal conservatism, which placed us in a stronger position than most of our neighboring states. Ultimately, the General Assembly cut over \$2.8 billion from the budget.

In addition to balancing the budget, the General Assembly tackled a wide range of legislative issues. In some areas we were successful. On other issues, such as transportation, there remains much work to be done.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you want to discuss an issue or have an idea for how to make Virginia an even better place to live. It is an honor to represent you in Richmond.

Contact Information

Fairfax District Office
Office Hours: 10-4, M-F
Legislative Assistant:
Mr. Rama Van Pelt

9900 Main Street, Plaza 102
Fairfax, Virginia 22031
Phone: 703-310-6752
info@davidbulova.com

Mailing Address
P.O. Box 106
Fairfax Station, Virginia 22039

Web Site
www.davidbulova.com

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>.

David
BULOVA

P.O. Box 106
Fairfax Station, Virginia 22039

The following are just a few of the new laws and initiatives passed in 2009 that will affect our community.

Mortgage Lender and Broker Act (HB1776). This measure prohibits a mortgage broker from failing to use appropriate diligence in exercising the broker's duty to make reasonable efforts to secure a mortgage loan that is in the best interests of the applicant, considering the applicant's circumstances and loan characteristics.

Property Tax Exemption for Disabled Veterans (SJ275/HJ648). This proposed constitutional amendment would exempt from taxation the principal residence of a veteran, or widow or widower of a veteran, if the veteran has a 100% service-connected, permanent, and total disability.

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Report from Richmond

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The amendment must be passed again next year and then approved by voters in 2010 to become part of the constitution.



Unemployment Compensation for Military Spouses (SB1495).

This bill extends unemployment insurance benefits to individuals who leave a job to relocate with a military spouse due to a transfer. Under existing law, these men and women are ineligible for unemployment

compensation because the separation is considered voluntary. In reality, following a spouse is anything but voluntary and I am pleased that the bill passed.

Protecting Renters During Foreclosure (HB2129).

This bill requires a landlord to provide tenants with notification if the landlord knows that the property is going into default or foreclosure. This will ensure that the renter has some time to look for alternative housing.

Transparency for Property Owners' Associations (HB2305).

Current law allows a property management company to withhold information on the salaries of individual employees, which makes it very difficult for home owner association (HOA) boards to know how their money is being spent. This change requires all records, including the salaries of employees and payments to independent contractors, to be available to an HOA board.



Protection of Social Security Numbers (HB2427).

Public records often contain all the information needed for someone to steal your identity. This bill makes the first five digits of a SSN contained in public records confidential and exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

Protecting Consumers from Unfair Lending (HB1709).

Last year, the General Assembly passed several reforms to payday loans. In an end-run around that legislation, several payday loan stores started providing a new product under Virginia's Open-Ended Credit statute. To address this loophole, the General Assembly passed bipartisan legislation prohibiting any person licensed as a payday lender from extending unsecured credit under an open-end loan plan.

Texting While Driving (HB1876). Unfortunately, people simply aren't designed to drive and text message

at the same time. Effective July 1st, it will be illegal to operate a motor vehicle while sending or reading any text message on a handheld personal communications device. Exceptions are made for emergencies and when a vehicle is safely stopped.

Virginia Indoor Clean Air Act (HB1703). This year's big surprise was the Virginia Indoor Clean Air Act. The bill prohibits smoking in almost all indoor restaurants and bar and lounge areas. Exceptions are made for private clubs and where a restaurant is constructed in a manner so that smoking areas are structurally separated and vented from non-smoking areas. This bill, which has for years been defeated in subcommittee, passed the full House on a 60Y-37N vote. I voted for the bill.

Affordable Health Care Insurance for Small Business (SB1411).

As the cost of health insurance continues to escalate, many small businesses cannot afford to offer insurance to their employees. Under this new law, businesses with 50 or fewer employees can provide a basic health insurance plan that does not have to include all of the state-mandated benefits. At the suggestion of Governor Kaine, the General Assembly added amendments to require screenings for breast, colorectal, cervical, and prostate cancer.

Whistle Blower Protection (HB1799). This bill protects from retribution any state employee who provides testimony of wrong doing or abuse. It also establishes a reward fund for an action that results in a savings of at least \$10,000.

Child Protection Accountability (HB1904).

This bill establishes a process to make information available to the public on the response to reported cases of child abuse. The database will be presented in such a manner that no individual identifying information will be included.



Encouraging Bio-Fuels (HB2001). The downside of many existing bio-fuels is that they compete with food crop production. This legislation provides incentives to produce biofuels from promising non-food crops, such as switchgrass and algae.

Virginia Tax Amnesty Program (SB1120). This program will provide both a carrot and a stick for the payment of delinquent taxes. All penalties and 50% of the interest will be waived for those who pay their outstanding taxes. Those who have amnesty-eligible liabilities and do not participate will be assessed an additional penalty. The timing of the program will be determined by the Department of Taxation. This is Virginia's third amnesty program in 20 years and is estimated to generate \$41 million in net revenue.

Legislative Initiatives and Accomplishments

This year, I introduced bills ranging from eminent domain reform to providing for the families of our firefighters and local law enforcement officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the safety of our community. While not all of my initiatives succeeded, I am proud of these efforts and thankful for the many constituents who took the time to provide feedback and even testify in Richmond.

A full list of my bills can be found by searching under General Assembly Members at <http://leg1.state.va.us>. Below are a few of the highlights.

Saving Our Schools Money (HB2406). While Virginia is one of the best managed states in the nation, there is always room for improvement. HB2406 is an example of how we can save money by challenging the way we do business.

This bill eliminates the requirement that a school official must be physically present in the courtroom to certify records when they are requested in cases involving custody or termination of parental rights. The requirement is largely unnecessary and often results in an entire day of lost productivity for the employee. HB2406 allows schools to self-certify these records through the use of an affidavit. When implemented state-wide, this bill will ensure that our educators and administrators aren't spending thousands of hours needlessly in court rooms rather than classrooms.



Building a New Energy Economy (HB1994). Whether you are concerned about the impacts of climate change or the threat to national security posed by our dependence on foreign energy sources, sustainable energy is one of our nation's greatest challenges. This past year, I had the honor of serving as a member of the Governor's Commission on Climate Change. Based on the commission's recommendations, I successfully passed HB1994 to increase Virginia's renewable energy goal to 15% by the year 2025. This legislation, and others like it, will protect consumers in the long-run from volatile energy prices caused by our reliance on fossil fuels.

Getting Our Fair Share of Transportation Maintenance Funding (HB1993). Virginia's current transportation funding formula not only under-funds maintenance, it is also unfair to Northern Virginia. This year, I introduced HB1993 to tie distribution of funds to actual maintenance needs, which would result in a significant shift of funding to areas with the greatest need such as Northern Virginia. While the bill itself did not

pass, based on these efforts, the Commonwealth Transportation Board is adopting changes in the funding formula to incorporate the concepts in my bill.

Congenital Heart Defect Awareness (HJ684). In Virginia, nearly one in 1,200 babies are born with a heart defect each year. Sadly, it is the number one cause of infant mortality in the United States. While medical advances have increased the survival rate, one of the most important things that can keep a heart defect from turning to tragedy is awareness. This applies not only to doctors and nurses, but also to parents who often take home their newborn with no idea that he or she has a defect. House Joint Resolution 684 designates February 7th through 14th of each year as Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week in Virginia – culminating in the observance of National Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Day on February 14th.

Battles for Next Year

While my annual report focuses primarily on new laws, many constituents have asked me to highlight a few important issues where the General Assembly failed to pass legislation. While I can't go over all 1,396 bills and resolutions that failed, here are just a few items worth noting.

Transportation Funding. Our quality of life and economy continue to suffer from a lack of investment in our transportation infrastructure. I have voted in the past for measures that would provide meaningful new revenue for transportation. Unfortunately, the few bills that made it to the House Floor for a vote this year simply "rearranged the deck chairs" by taking general fund money from education, human services, and other core services.

Non-Partisan Redistricting. I believe that voters should choose their representatives – not the other way around. Our current system of redistricting results in too many non-competitive districts that are drawn for political purposes. This year, I co-patroned HB 2538 to establish a non-partisan Virginia Advisory Redistricting Commission. A similar measure passed the Senate, but failed in the House.

Insurance Coverage for Autism. Autism spectrum disorder is among our most vexing health care issues. While the causes of autism are still not known, the benefits of early intervention are enormous. Unfortunately, most insurance policies do not cover this kind of treatment. I was one of the first members of the House to sign on as a co-patron of the effort to require coverage for early treatment of autism (HB1588). While the measure failed for this year, this important issue will need to be addressed.