

FROM THE OFFICE OF SENATOR STEVE MARTIN  
LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER  
January 19, 2009

On Wednesday the General Assembly convened for what is expected to be a 46 day session. Of course, the main issue will be the budget as we work to update the budget we passed last year and close the shortfall we are facing. The governor presented a budget as is his constitutional responsibility. Now it is up to the General Assembly to improve on it based on our experience and the feedback from citizens. In addition, there are issues like smoking in public, medical malpractice caps and the effect they will have on doctors; right to work issues, judgeships; energy and environmental issues.

I have introduced a number of bills as part of my legislative program for this session. Included are bills on the voting process, prayer at public events and a bill to include a capital murder penalty for the killing of Fire Marshalls in the line of duty. I encourage you to visit my website or the following link to follow the progress of bills of interest at <http://legisl.state.va.us>.

One of the things that I look forward to most about the session is the opportunity to meet with those who visit my office to express their opinions and concerns to me. This week we have seen local bankers, members of the Agribusiness Council, and members of the Virginia Dental Association. I appreciate the time that they take to weigh in on the issues and to ask questions that promote open discussion so that I can better represent my constituents.

As I stated above, the budget is going to be front and center this session. It will require some tough choices and significant cuts are going to be necessary. Last year and again this year the Governor has proposed significant new spending, last year on pre-kindergarten programs and this year on environmental needs. Also, he has put forward as part of the budget a doubling of the tax on cigarettes. As you are probably aware, Phillip Morris has moved their headquarters and plants to Virginia. They contribute significantly to Virginia's economy and we do not want to send a message to other companies that Virginia is not "business friendly".

Next week we will see the inauguration of a new President. I am always proud to watch our system work as we have another peaceful transfer of power, something many countries do not have. Regardless of partisan affiliations, I admire what Barack Obama has achieved and the barriers he has broken.

I will continue to communicate with you throughout the session. Please do not hesitate to contact my office with comments or questions. Our phone number during the General Assembly is (804) 698-7511 and our email is [district11@sov.state.va.us](mailto:district11@sov.state.va.us).

*“On some positions, Cowardice asks the question ‘Is it safe?’ Expediency asks the question ‘is it politic?’ And Vanity comes along and asks the question ‘Is it popular?’ But Conscience asks the question ‘Is it right?’ And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must do it because Conscience tells him it is right.”*

*---Martin Luther King, Jr. from “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution”*