

SENATOR STEVE MARTIN
GENERAL ASSEMBLY UPDATE
FEBRUARY 6, 2009

We have had a number of controversial bills considered this week and each day's calendar is getting longer. Crossover day is next Tuesday the 10th which means that each Chamber must have acted on all matters originating in their body by the end of the day. The following day we will begin working on bills which passed the House. This week as crossover day came nearer our committee meetings grew longer as well.

This Sunday, The Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Committee will reveal their budget proposals. On Thursday of next week, each house will pass its own budget. I have been hearing from my constituents that we need to reduce spending. However, many are concerned about cuts in the K-12 public education budget and want careful consideration of the depth and permanency of the reductions. There is also a sense that we must make reductions in spending and not add additional taxes. I have attached to this update a copy of the letter that I have sent to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and members of the General Assembly sharing my concerns and those of my constituents.

This week a bill passed the Senate under the pretense of saving money. It would allow emergency assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) once per year instead of once every five years. The argument among those supporting the bill is that this saves money by keeping these families from the welfare rolls. I opposed the legislation because it is hard to calculate a savings when you are potentially paying out money five times more frequently.

One of the most important responsibilities that we have as members of the General Assembly in Virginia is to elect judges. As a result I believe that we are accountable to the public for those we choose to sit on the bench and apply and interpret the laws that we pass. There may be no greater role for us or especially one which more directly impacts the lives of our citizens. Sometimes these elections become controversial and yet we are called upon to stand up for what we consider to be the right and proper course. I have and will continue to do so.

I had interesting and informative discussions with a number of groups and individuals this week as well. The Chesterfield Education Association, the Virginia Education Association, the Jewish Community Federation, CHIP of Greater Richmond, students from the Medical College of Virginia and students from Norfolk State University all met with me to review issues and legislation important to them. We also met with those interested in changes in insurance coverage for families with autistic children, leaders of local Republican committees and individuals who have been working with me on legislation I am carrying. I appreciate the time that these folks took out of their schedules to share their thoughts and concerns with me.

Thank you for the privilege to serve. I look forward to continuing to hear from you. Many

of you have responded to these updates and given me additional opportunity to communicate with you and I appreciate that as well.

--Steve Martin

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