



NOVEMBER 4
is ELECTION DAY!

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The **HAMILTON HERALD**

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Hamilton Calls for State Budget Reform

Virginia's financial situation demands strong action

In August, Governor Kaine addressed members of the House Appropriations Committee and members of the House and Senate Finance Committees, providing a bleak report on the status of Virginia's revenues.

The good news was that FY 2008 ended with a \$6.5 million surplus. The bad news was that the revenue projections for FY 2009 were lagging significantly behind revenue projections. While difficult to identify a specific dollar amount, most project the shortfall to be \$2 billion or more.

With national revenue forecasts being adjusted downward because of the downturn in the national economy, it is not surprising that Virginia is facing the same economic challenge.

For many, the news was not unexpected. When the Governor's budget was presented in December 2007, Delegate Hamilton and others expressed serious concern that the Governor's revenue projections for FY 2009 and FY 2010 were overly optimistic. This most recent report by the Governor validates those earlier concerns.

The impact of the declining revenues will be felt with significant adjustments to the state's two-year spending proposal that took effect on



Delegate Phil Hamilton talks with a group of teachers in the House Appropriations Committee meeting room about the state budget process. Hamilton is vice chairman of the committee.

Hamilton has called for a budget process that requires every state agency to examine every program and spending request to ensure that it is addressing a core service of state government in a cost-effective manner.

July 1. Until the General Assembly reconvenes in January, the Governor has the legal authority to reduce spending by up to 15 percent. Any immediate reductions made by the Governor will have to be approved by the General Assembly during the 2009 session.

In the past, reductions to spending for public education, public safety and health care funding have generally been spared. This new round of reductions will more than likely impact all areas of state spending.

Delegate Hamilton believes the economic downturn provides an opportunity to have an open, honest, and candid discussion to identify the core service functions of state government and the challenge of redefining the state's spending priorities accordingly.

As he has in the past, Hamilton once again calls for reforming the state's budgeting process to require

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Leaders Must Act to Establish Budget Priorities

This article by Delegate Phil Hamilton was first published as an Op-Ed in the September 26 Daily Press.

At a time when state government leaders will be challenged to reduce state spending to balance the budget, isn't it time to have an open, honest, candid and public debate to define the core service functions of state government? For me, that time is long overdue.

Are the programs that target at-risk youth producing the tangible results to justify the continuation of their funding? Should state government continue to provide funding to localities to maintain the annexation moratorium that has been in place since 1979? Should taxpayer dollars be used to provide tax incentives or subsidies for business and industry to locate or expand in Virginia?

I ask these questions because given the current fiscal situation in Virginia it is important that state government leaders ask these and other similar questions about current government expenditures and programs and evaluate each to determine if the core service needs of Virginians are truly being met.

Before such an analysis of state expenditures can begin, there must be a discussion on what constitutes the core service functions of state government. A good place to start this discussion would be the Constitution of Virginia. This document serves as the framework

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for state government's role in the lives of everyday Virginians.

According to the Constitution, "government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security of the people, nation, or community; of all the various modes and forms of government, that is best which is capable of producing the greatest degree of happiness and safety." Other than education and the conservation of natural resources, the mandated services for citizens are less specific.

While these appear to be the only direct constitutional mandates on state government in providing services to the people of the Commonwealth, additional state and federal laws also will dictate what is included in establish-

ing the state government's core service function baseline.

Once the mandated core service function baseline has been established, the cost to appropriately provide these services must be established. Then, the discussion and debate shifts to the values of society in addressing the government's role in providing additional services to create a quality of life in which all citizens have the opportunity to enjoy.

If government is to be "of the people, by the people, and for the people" as proclaimed by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address, the priorities of government must be reflective of these principles in the way in which it funds the identified core service functions for which it is responsible.

The current state budget shortfall offers state leaders the opportunity to reaffirm the priorities of state government in providing the core service functions of state government that citizens are unable to provide for themselves. This is an opportunity that must be not be squandered.

The real challenge of the current state budget shortfall is for state leaders to demonstrate the willingness to have the difficult discussions that define the role of state government and provide the funding to make it function in accordance with the consent of the governed. This is the challenge of leadership.

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that within a ten-year rotating cycle every state agency must submit a zero-based spending plan.

Such a budgeting process will require every state agency to systematically examine every program and spending request to ensure that it is addressing an identified core service

function of state government through a thorough cost-benefit analysis.

"Difficult financial times require difficult choices," Hamilton said.

"Virginia's leaders must be willing to provide the leadership necessary to meet this challenge."



NOVEMBER 4TH

Hamilton Receives Most Effective Legislator Rating

Virginia FREE, a non-partisan organization made up of government affairs professionals, has released its 2008 evaluation of incumbent members of the House of Delegates.

According to the new ratings, Delegate Phillip Hamilton and Speaker William J. Howell (R-Stafford) received an effectiveness rating of 85 percent. This is the highest rating received by any House members for 2008.

The effectiveness rating is based on the results of an annual survey of the Virginia FREE-member government affairs professionals who offer their evaluation on how effective each House member is in accomplishing his or her legislative objectives without regard to the legislator's position on business issues.

During the 2008 session, Hamilton was the chief patron of significant legislation, including, but not limited to, mental health law reform; the Higher Educational Institutions Bond Act of 2008; initiatives to enhance health insurance coverage; liability protection for health care providers responding to disasters; the definition of professional services for medical malpractice; improvements to the state's Medical Facilities Plan; and Certificate of Public Need (COPN) application criteria. Hamilton is also noted for his efforts related to the development of the state budget.

Hamilton currently holds numerous legislative leadership positions. He is the chairman of

the Health, Welfare & Institutions Committee and the Health & Human Resources subcommittee for Appropriations. He is the Vice-Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and after a two-year term as chairman, he currently serves as the Vice-Chairman of the Joint Commission on Health Care. Hamilton is also a member of the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission.

In learning of the effectiveness rating, Hamilton said, "I am humbled to learn that those government affairs professionals involved with the work of the House of Delegates have identified me as an effective member of the House. I have always done my best to listen, learn, and help with a goal of improving the quality of life in Virginia."

Pediatrics Organization Honors Hamilton for Child Advocacy

The Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics has announced the selection of Delegate Phillip Hamilton as the recipient of its 2008 Child Advocate Award.

Hamilton is being recognized for his long-standing support of many of the Academy's proactive initiatives protecting the safety of all children.

The Child Advocate Award was initiated 20 years ago to recognize persons, who in the course of more than a year, had significantly contributed to the advancement of child health and welfare in the Commonwealth.

The 2008 Child Advocate Award was presented to Hamilton

during the Academy's annual meeting on October 4 in Williamsburg.

On receiving the news of his selection, Hamilton said, "I am honored to be selected for this recognition. My legislative colleagues and I have worked hard to address children's issues across Virginia."

Award Honors Hamilton's Work for Virginians with Disabilities

Delegate Phillip Hamilton (R-Newport News) has been notified that on behalf of the Virginia Association of Community Rehabilitation Programs *Db a vaACCSES*, the Virginia Association of Persons in Supported Employment, and the Virginia Rehabilitation Association, he has been chosen as this year's recipient of the "Collaborations Leadership Award" for 2008.

The award is a joint effort by three statewide associations in Virginia to recognize an individual for outstanding leadership in making a difference in the lives of Virgin-

ians with disabilities. Hamilton was nominated because of his tireless efforts as an advocate for Virginians with disabilities.

The letter that informed Hamilton of the award stated, "The Collaborations Leadership Award recognizes an individual whose outstanding efforts on behalf of people with disabilities merits special recognition. The recipient of this award continually demonstrates the importance of teamwork in public service and is a role model for all. Collaborative efforts on behalf of this individual must have resulted in improved and

expanded services for citizens with disabilities in the Commonwealth of Virginia."

This is the second time that Hamilton has received this award. He is the first legislator in Virginia to be receive the award more than once.

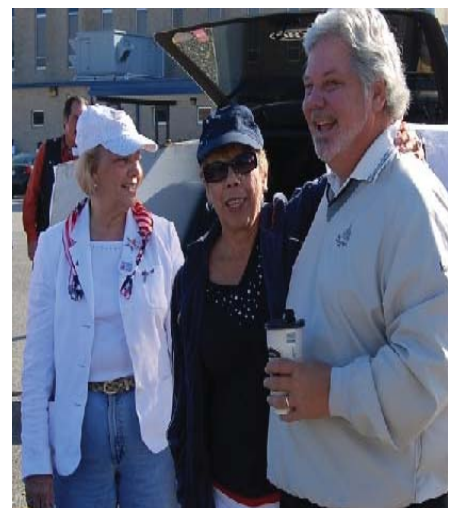
In responding to the notification of the award, Hamilton said, "During my tenure in the House of Delegates, I have tried to *listen, learn, and help* in an effort to improve the quality of life for Virginia citizens. To be recognized by those who provide services to these special citizens of Virginia is truly an honor."



Photos by Mike Hazlewood

DENBIGH DAY 2008

The annual Denbigh Day celebration was attended by thousands of residents, including Delegate Phil Hamilton, who has participated in every Denbigh Day since 1987.



Perspectives from the Transportation Special Session

In February 2008, the Virginia Supreme Court ruled certain portions of last year's legislation related to the regional transportation plans passed for Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia unconstitutional. After that decision was rendered, Governor Kaine decided a special session was needed to address the transportation issue, and he embarked on a series of town meetings across Virginia to build support and consensus for his transportation plan.

The Governor's legislation for addressing transportation was introduced in the House, but not the Senate. It was heard by committee and reported to the House floor for debate, amendments, and a full vote. The Governor's chief patron of the legislation, Delegate Ward Armstrong (D-Henry), refused to permit the bill to be advanced to the point in the legislative process where it could be debated and voted on, and eventually, he even made the motion to return it to the committee. Even so, the Governor's plan was offered as an amendment to another bill where it was debated and defeated by a 0-98 vote.

Senator Richard Saslaw (D-Fairfax) introduced a transportation plan that increased several taxes statewide with additional taxes and fees for Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, and other regions. His bill passed the

Two Senate committees refused to allow most of the transportation funding ideas and accountability measures that passed the House to even reach the Senate floor for discussion, debate, or vote.

Senate, 21-16. It was referred to the House where it was reported from the Rules Committee to the House floor for a full discussion, debate, and vote. After the bill was successfully amended to remove the statewide gasoline tax increase, the bill was defeated, 39-59, in a bipartisan vote.

There were over fifty other transportation-related bills introduced in the House, and more than 20 percent of these bills passed the House and were reported to the Senate for consideration.

While the Governor's and the Senate's plans were afforded the full measure of the legislative process in the House of Delegates, the leaders

of the Virginia Senate exercised their prerogative and, unfortunately, chose to operate differently. Two Senate committees refused to allow most of the transportation funding ideas and accountability measures that passed the House to even reach the Senate floor for discussion, debate, or vote.

A review of the legislative initiatives from the Governor, the Senate, and the House, however, identifies one common component – ideas to address the unique transportation needs in Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia. Unfortunately, what was missing was any desire or effort by those who wanted statewide tax increases to focus on that one, common component. Instead, a "line was drawn in the sand" – no statewide tax increase equals no regional solutions.

The result of this decision was that specific, regional transportation needs were going to be held hostage by the desire for statewide tax increases.

While sometimes frustrating, the legislative process embodies the separation of powers and system of checks and balances in our representative democracy and these concepts distinguish us from the dictatorial tyranny of many other governments. Hopefully, these concepts will remain the cornerstone of our system of government in Virginia.



Delegate Hamilton wants your opinion on issues likely to come before the 2009 General Assembly session.

Please indicate your opinion by marking YES, NO or UND (undecided).

Do you support...	YES	NO	UND
1) any increase in the state sales tax if dedicated for transportation?	___	___	___
2) a regional sales tax increase for transportation projects in Hampton Roads?	___	___	___
3) a 1 - 10 cent per gallon increase in the state gasoline tax for transportation?	___	___	___
4) an 11 cent+ per gallon increase in the state gasoline tax for transportation?	___	___	___
5) abolishing the 17.5 cent per gallon gas tax and replacing it with the 5% state sales tax on gasoline purchases for transportation?	___	___	___
6) imposing tolls if all toll revenue is dedicated to improving, maintaining, or expanding lane capacity only on the facility being tolled?	___	___	___
7) dedicating a portion of future tax revenues from economic growth at Virginia ports for transportation projects throughout Virginia?	___	___	___
8) allowing for the exploration and/or drilling for oil and natural gas off of the Virginia coast?	___	___	___
9) continuing to provide state funding for research on alternative energy sources?	___	___	___
10) including the funding for operations and maintenance of school buildings, student transportation, and food services as essential educational expenditures for public schools in Virginia?	___	___	___
11) banning smoking in all buildings, restaurants, and bars that provide access to the general public?	___	___	___
12) allowing concealed firearms in a restaurant that serves alcoholic beverages?	___	___	___
13) requiring a criminal background check for all firearms sales in Virginia?	___	___	___
14) banning the use of cell phones while driving?	___	___	___
15) lowering the legal drinking age from 21 to 18 years of age?	___	___	___
16) permitting college professors and college students with a concealed weapons permit to carry firearms on a public or private college campus in Virginia?	___	___	___
17) eliminating all current business and corporate sales tax exemptions?	___	___	___

Please rank order (1 - 8) in importance to you, the following core service functions of state government:

Economic Development	___	Public (K-12) Education	___
Environmental Quality	___	Public Safety	___
Health Care Services	___	Social Services	___
Higher Education	___	Transportation	___

Completed surveys should be mailed to: Delegate Phillip Hamilton, P.O. Box 1585, Newport News, VA 23601

General Assembly Proactive in Seeking Energy Independence Solutions

In August 2006, the Virginia General Assembly passed the landmark "Virginia Energy Plan" which establishes a foundation for the research and development of future renewable energy resources. The Virginia Coastal Energy Research Consortium (VCERC) was established in the legislation.

The VCERC was created to "serve as an interdisciplinary study, research, and information resource for the Commonwealth on coastal energy issues" with an initial focus on offshore winds, waves, and marine biomass and the development of marine energy resources. The General Assembly has also provided state funds for this important energy research which began prior to the current rise in gasoline and other energy prices.

These funds are also necessary for energy resource assessment, char-

acterization of extreme storm survival conditions and sea floor anchoring and foundation properties, identification of potential environmental concerns, new technology research and development to enable project installations in deeper offshore waters "over the horizon," and realistic evaluation of economic benefits and new business opportunities for Virginia's maritime industry.

The Consortium is made up of researchers from eight partner universities.

In 2007, the General Assembly also passed legislation to create a sales tax "holiday" for certain energy-efficient products. Virginia now provides a sales tax exemption for purchases of certain Energy Star qualified products with a sales price of \$2,500 or less which are made during a four-day period each year in mid-October.

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