



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
HOUSE OF DELEGATES
RICHMOND

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COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
COUNTIES, CITIES AND TOWNS (VICE CHAIR)
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FINANCE
LABOR AND COMMERCE

April 23, 2020

Dear Neighbor,

Like you, I am closely following the latest news on the COVID-19 outbreak and what it means for our community. We have to get through all this together. While much of our recent focus has understandably been on Congress and the President, I wanted to offer a brief update on the Virginia General Assembly, which concluded its regular 2020 session yesterday by acting on all legislation that the Governor sought to amend. Information about the thousands of bills we considered can be found at lis.virginia.gov. I wanted to provide you with a quick recap of the legislative session and what legislation I carried this year. I've placed a link to the full list on my website www.steveheretick.com.

Here's a partial list of the legislation I carried this year:

PTSD Coverage For First Responders: House Bill 438 is among the most important I have ever carried, and one of the most deeply meaningful for me. It ensures that our Virginia first responders, including all law enforcement officers, firefighters, and EMTs, will finally be able to receive care for their job-related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) under the Virginia Worker's Compensation Act. It's been a long time coming and it's long overdue. We ask these heroes to go out and risk their lives for us every hour of every day. In doing so, they are exposed to unforeseen dangers, both physical and emotional. While this legislation was effectively left for dead in a subcommittee, I would not give up on those men and women who do not give up on us. I am proud to report that as a result of action that the General Assembly took only yesterday, this bill will finally become law on July 1, 2020.

Spam Telephone Calls: Like you, I'm fed up with unwanted spam calls interrupting my job and my family time at any time of the day or night. Most of these calls try to sell us things we don't really want, but many more are intended to confuse and steal from our more vulnerable neighbors. To give the Attorney General additional tools to address this growing problem, and to give us all the right to fight back, I introduced House Bill 1244, the Virginia Telephone Privacy Protection Act, to target unsolicited commercial calls to our cell phones. This legislation alone won't stop this practice, but it will give us new tools to inflict penalties on these companies who violate the law. This bill passed and will become law July 1, 2020.

Marijuana: I carried three bills related to emerging marijuana policy in Virginia. House Bill 265 decriminalizes marijuana for adults over 21, and makes possession for personal consumption a simple civil penalty. It will no longer be a crime. This bill was combined and passed with other legislation offered by the House Majority Leader, and will become law on July 1, 2020. House Bill 269 was my bill to legalize and regulate the manufacture and use of marijuana for adults over 21. While this effort was defeated, my companion bill, House Joint Resolution 130, seeking a comprehensive study of nationwide policies and best practices for marijuana legalization, was approved for a year-long comprehensive study by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC). For the first time in our history, Virginia will be taking an objective look at the science, the law, and the future of marijuana policy.

Criminal Justice Reform: I am proud to have carried three bills protecting our rights in reforming our criminal justice system. House Bill 266 would ensure that full restitution is required to be paid to the victims of crime, but would stop the accrual of excessive interest on court fines and costs. House Bill 267 would provide for the expungement of criminal records of those acquitted of a crime, so that innocent citizens can clear their names and protect their futures. House Bill 268 would allow victims of human trafficking to remove certain offenses relating to trafficking from their records. All three of these bills were advanced to the Virginia Crime Commission for further study and future legislation.

Solar Energy: As part of our initiative to make Virginia a world leader in renewable energy and to help position our local economy for the opportunities brought by clean energy, I carried three bills to expand our use of solar energy in the Commonwealth of Virginia. House Bill 655 will streamline the process for setting up new solar facilities throughout the Commonwealth. House Bill 656 will establish objective statewide standards for safe solar facility operations to protect our consumers and industry workers. House Bill 657 directs localities to provide for renewal solar energy infrastructure in framing their comprehensive plans for future development. I am happy to report each of these pro-job and pro-environment bills passed and will become law July 1, 2020.

Honor And Sacrifice Flag: I was proud to offer House Joint Resolution 42, a resolution establishing the "Honor and Sacrifice" Flag as the state emblem for honoring fallen public safety personnel. Much like the "Honor and Remember" Flag displayed to honor our fallen military personnel, this emblem will officially be authorized for display at state government buildings and other public areas as we remember and honor those who have given their lives in the line of duty here at home. This emblem was designed by one of our local residents, George Lutz of Chesapeake. This Resolution passed unanimously in both the House and the Senate!

Transportation Tolling: Our region knows better than any what impact tolling on our essential tunnels, bridges, and roadways has on our communities. Since becoming a member of the General Assembly in 2016, I have introduced repeated legislative efforts to counteract the damage that tolling has done, focusing especially on the Downtown and Midtown tunnels between Portsmouth and Norfolk. This year I reintroduced House Bill 1243, which would force future projects to identify and inform localities of the potential impact public-private partnership deals may have on us. I also introduced House Joint Resolution 58, which render void as against public policy any state transportation contract allowing tolls to contain any provision limiting the state's ability to build new tunnels or bridges or expand road capacity. Our localities must be protected in this process. I also introduced House Joint Resolution 101 which sought a study to reduce or eliminate the decades of tolls faced on the Downtown and Midtown Tunnels. Unfortunately, all three of these commonsense measures were defeated by the Assembly. We will continue this fight next year or as long as it takes.

This legislative session, I was assigned to serve on four different full legislative committees and six subcommittees of which I chair three of them. I serve as Vice Chair of the House Committee on Counties, Cities, and Towns, and Chair the subcommittee on statewide land use planning. I continue to serve on the House Labor and Commerce Committee, where I Chair the subcommittee on healthcare and insurance, and I also sit on the subcommittee on energy. I maintained my seat on the House Finance Committee, and now chair the subcommittee on local and state tax policy. Finally, I was most recently assigned by the Speaker of the House to serve on the House Courts of Justice Committee, where I also serve on the Subcommittee on Civil Laws.

It's been an honor to represent you in the General Assembly. It is a privilege that I value deeply and take seriously. Like you, I'm worried about the health and safety of my family, and about the economic security of our future. My business, too, has been deeply affected by all this. This is a trying time for all of us. But I know this community. I know that we will make it through whatever obstacles we face. Please know that I'm here, and that I'm working for you. Let me hear from you, and let me know how I can help.

Stay well. Stay safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Heretick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "H".

Steve Heretick

