

Senator Houck Reports From Richmond

February 4, 2008

Greetings from Richmond! Last week, the Senate worked in a bipartisan manner to unanimously pass my bill repealing the abusive driver statute. It is now before the House of Delegates for its consideration.

My legislation will:

- Repeal the abusive driver fees.
- Refund fees paid by an individual since July 1, 2007.
- Allow an individual to file a petition with the General District Court to have the court order vacated with respect to such fees.
- Cease collection of fees imposed but not paid.
- Prevent an individual from losing his driver's license for failure to pay the fees.
- Become effective immediately upon Governor Kaine's approval.

The abusive driver statute was included in last year's transportation package upon the House of Delegates' insistence and its rejection of the Senate's proposal to use traditional transportation revenue sources for all drivers, including out-of-state motorists. The program's supporters projected an estimated \$65 million in additional transportation revenues by FY 2010.

However, in a study conducted by the Joint Leadership Audit and Review Commission, an uncertainty existed in the revenue estimate affecting the optimistic projections. Thus far, only \$4 million has been collected in Virginia.

Since its implementation, individuals throughout the Commonwealth have contacted me to voice their displeasure with the abusive driver statute. Similarly, over 175,000 individuals have signed a petition urging the General Assembly to repeal these fees. As I have said before, the current abusive driver fee law is beyond repair and that now is the time to take appropriate action. An immediate repeal of these fees is essential to restore public trust in our state government.

I am proud of the Senate for listening to our constituents' opinions and unanimously passing my bill. It is my sincere hope that the House of Delegates will follow our lead.