



## **Senator Houck Reports From Richmond**

*February 5, 2007*

The Senate Finance Committee has approved amendments to the second year of the Governor's introduced budget. The Committee worked diligently to strengthen governmental services in a fiscally responsible manner. Due to my position as a senior Senator with 24 years of experience, a member of the Senate Finance Committee, and a Budget Conferee, I am able to play a key role in drafting Senate amendments to fulfill our current obligations while limiting any major new initiatives.

As a public educator for 34 years, I believe that education is a valuable part of Virginia's services, therefore, I continue to seek funding to improve the quality of K-12 public education in the Commonwealth. Specifically, the Senate's budget sets aside additional funds for the retiree health care credit to aid Virginia's retired teachers. This money is in addition to a three percent salary increase for teachers. Additional amendments continue the Senate's long standing support for the Virginia Preschool Initiative and for the Early Intervention Reading Services to First and Second graders who need it.

The Health and Human Resources Subcommittee continues its tradition of placing an emphasis on social services for vulnerable and low income citizens. Funds are provided to expand services to treat individuals with sickle cell disease, to increase the number of home-delivered meals for the elderly, and to expand brain injury services provided in centers for independent

living. An additional amendment allows for individuals currently receiving Medicaid also to receive substance abuse treatment if needed.

In the area of public safety, money is provided for additional staffing in Commonwealth's Attorney's departments and for enhanced retirement benefits for state police and sheriffs. In another area of interest, the budget provides for additional staff for Virginia Cooperative Extension to continue its working relationship with the agriculture community. Additionally, the following non-state agencies were rewarded budget funds:

Brandy Station Foundation Graffiti House

Culpeper State Theatre Foundation

Fredericksburg Area Museum and Cultural Center

Friends of Wilderness Battlefield

James Madison Museum

Louisa County Historical Society

Louisa Town Hall and Art Center

Montpelier Foundation

Museum of Culpeper History

Northern Virginia 4-H Educational Center

I will report on the General Assembly's further budget actions in the weeks to come. As always,

I can be reached via e-mail at [district17@sov.state.va.us](mailto:district17@sov.state.va.us) or via telephone at (804) 698-7517 if

you have any comments or questions. I look forward to hearing from you.