

**Senator Houck Reports to the 17th District
Week of October 16, 2006**

Greetings to the 17th District! Despite the Virginia General Assembly being considered a part-time legislature, our work has continued throughout the 2006 calendar year. While the majority of the focus has been on transportation, there are other vital issues discussed this year. One of these issues is health care.

I recently was contacted by Governor Tim Kaine to serve as a member of the Governor's Commission on Health Care Reform. It was an assignment that I proudly accepted. On October 11th, this commission, comprised of private citizens as well as state legislators, met at the capitol in Richmond.

Without question, the Commonwealth is home to some of the best health services available not only in the United States but throughout the world. As residents of the 17th Senatorial District, we should be proud to be home of two such facilities, the Culpeper Regional Hospital and Mary Washington Hospital in Fredericksburg.

Despite these outstanding facilities, we must make improvements in other areas of health care. Governor Kaine noted many disturbing trends in his inaugural address to the commission. Even with these world class facilities, many Virginians are unable to access them due to the lack of health insurance. In 2004, 786 infants died in the Commonwealth. This average is more than two babies a day which is higher than the national average. Also, the obesity rate in Virginia measured 24.1 percent in 2005. Clearly, there is a need for health care reform.

The Commission will meet several times over the next year to discuss needed reforms to our system. Ours goals as stated by Governor Kaine are as follows:

- Improve access to care.
- Strengthen long-term care.
- Improve the quality and safety of health care.
- Encourage healthier lifestyles.
- Grow our health care workforce.

As a representative on this commission, I am proud to work closely with private citizens as well as legislators from both sides of the aisle for the betterment of the Commonwealth. Upon conclusion of our meetings, we will report back to the Governor with legislative proposals.

I encourage all of you to contact my office either by telephone at (540) 786-2782 or via e-mail at ehouck@adelphia.net with any suggestions you may have to meet Governor Kaine's goals. The Governor's Commission on Health Care Reform has a daunting task before us which I do not take lightly. I look forward to hearing from you.