

Delegate Donald Merricks 2012 General Assembly Weekly Column #2

Two weeks of the 2012 session are almost complete and we are beginning to make our way through the myriad of bills and resolutions that we must finish prior to crossover, which is February 15th. As usual, there are many issues before us and most of our time is spent reading and re-reading bills.

This past week, I introduced HB 587 which allows for the construction of a 138kv electric line without having to go through the State Corporation Commission for approval. Localities may give approval provided the utility has met all the requirements. This will speed up the process and provide a faster method for approval, benefiting economic development. Currently, having to have SCC approval takes approximately two years and may make the difference in having an industry locate to an area or choose somewhere else to locate. This would be particularly helpful in rural areas such as ours. This bill passed out of Commerce and Labor Committee unanimously and will be voted on in the full House this week.

I chaired my first sub-committee meeting this past week and am proud to say that we passed a bill to require mandatory reporting when women have mammograms and there is dense tissue involved. Forty percent of women have dense breast tissue which may hide tumors in regular mammograms. The bill which passed in sub-committee will require a notice be given in such instances. We also passed a bill that defines surgery. It's hard to believe Virginia has existed four hundred years and did not have a definition of surgery in the Code. I don't know how we survived.

The most reported news this past week was the Governor's announcement regarding uranium. You can read his announcement here: <http://www.governor.virginia.gov/News/viewRelease.cfm?id=1092>. I am in agreement with the Governor's position. More information is needed before a final decision is made to lift the moratorium. There are those who feel having the various agencies develop a framework for regulations is not proper, however, I feel it is another piece of the puzzle that is necessary in order to make an educated decision. In addition, having site specific information will again be necessary to make an informed decision. Public safety is of paramount importance and this process will enable a full discussion on this issue over the next year.

It's always good to see people from home. This past week I was visited by Laurie Wardle, Will Gravely, Sandie Currie and Debbie Sparks representing the Boys and Girls Club along with Ann Walker, Donna Crotts, Delta Williams, Marsha Mendenhall, Lillie Jones, Jerron Morton and Ronnie Emerson. Dr. Gary Miller, Dr. William Hickson, Dr. Michael Caplan and Dr. Dora Pradhan

from Danville accompanied a group of medical students who visited the General Assembly Building and the Capitol. Also making the trip to Richmond were Jim Bebeau, Jessie Barksdale and Dean Jennings as well as dentists from Martinsville, Dr. Mark Crabtree and Dr. Craig Dietrich.

Please let me know your concerns and issues. Also, I have a survey posted on my website that I would appreciate your taking time to complete. Log on to www.donmerricks.org. It will not take long and will assist me as I represent you here in Richmond. Please contact me either by phone at 804-698-1016 or email, deldmerricks@house.virginia.gov. I look forward to hearing from you.