

Legislative Report
November 2018
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1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY (GA). Each year prior to the opening of the GA I meet with our two State representatives - Senator Edwards and Delegate Hurst in order to get their view on current State issues and their current forecasts on major issues likely to come-up in the 2019 General Assembly. Since there are many issues in both subject areas and we have limited time limits I ask them to respond to specific questions from me. On current issues these questions were: 1. Arming teachers in the class rooms; 2. Gerrymandering; and 3. Economic Development. Their responses were: Senator Edwards: We should not arm teachers in the classrooms as this may interfere with their primary mission; we should appoint a group of technical experts with GA guidance to establish our voting districts; economic development is dependent on several important conditions such as an up-to-date work force with the technical skills in demand by employers and improved infrastructures (roads, bridges,) and supportive regulations and government assistance that make our area a desirable place to do business and to live. Delegate Hurst: We should not arm teachers in the classroom but improve school resources in companion areas to set-up appropriate warning signals to address early the most likely trouble spots and have effective means to correct them; we should remove gerrymandering from political control and establish an independent State appointed commission to take over this function; this will be difficult as both political parties over the years has enjoyed their power to perform the tasks to their particular advantage; we must provide much more broadband capability in SW Virginia to respond to the current needs of the more aggressive employers and their customers who deal in highly competitive industries.

Next question: What are some of the issues you plan to concentrate on in the 2019 General Assembly? Senator Edwards: reducing health care costs; reducing the significant income disparity among various citizen groups; major improvements on Interstate 81. Delegate Hurst: improving health care for the needy; improving conditions for our teaching staffs; more cost-effective economic development and targeted programs in SW Virginia.

2. Interstate 81. Both of our representatives (Senator Edwards and Delegate Hurst) passionately stated that Interstate 81 must be improved. It has been overloaded for years. Some keys statistics mentioned by many are that it is 50 percent over the traffic capacity for its design and its traffic load has more than doubled in the past 20 years. The Virginia portion sees 2,000 accidents a year. What always appears to be a road block in taking action by the GA is: HOW ARE WE GOING TO PAY FOR IT?? The two most frequently mentioned responses are: increase the gas tax and make certain portions of the road a toll road for certain classes of vehicles. But the GA has appeared reluctant to do that. Could it be that are waiting for a BIG roar from us to fix the problem along with a vote to approve their solution with no strings attached. With the conditions of the roadway as described above I will probably be extra careful using this roadway!!!