

Legislative Report
April 2018
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1. 2018 General Assembly Summary: Over 3722 bills and other recommendations submitted to committees in the House and Senate of which 1833 were passed at that level and submitted for further review within the General Assembly review process. It was frequently noted by many that there was less bipartisanship, more transparency and a greater willingness to find alternate ways to solve State problems, issues and concerns during many of these discussions. The biggest disappointment was failure to approve a State budget for the next fiscal period. This will require the Assembly to meet again in Richmond in April to come up with an acceptable solution.

2. Medicaid expansion. For several years efforts have been made to provide affordable health care to our needy citizens under the Affordable Care Act and/or thru other programs. This year Governor Northam made this one of his most important legislative objectives. Unfortunately, again there was not enough support in the Assembly to do so. Opponents continue to explain that the cost of doing so would be harmful to other State programs (education, safety, roadways) and possibly require increasing State income taxes. Proponents respond the need is so severe that in some cases it could increase the harm to individuals to unacceptable levels. They also refer to our recent State elections to support their requests which show many of our State voters support doing this. This impasse was one of the major reasons why the Governor and the Assembly could not reach agreement on a State budget. Be hopeful that the impasse can be solved soon as we MUST have an approved budget by July.

3. Consumer protection: big financial institution vs. small rural/community banks. (Dodd-Frank Bill) There are important revisions being discussed in Washington about some changes to this Bill which was in response to the financial collapse in 2008 of a number of banks and other institutions in the financial industry. It was frequently stated by and believed by many that risky and bad practices of many were the primary causes of the collapse and we needed very "tough" regulations at the Federal level to stop this. So the tough regulations were approved. Ever since the major firms along with a number of small rural banks have voiced the same complaints: that the regulations are so "heavy" it is hurting their business. It appears to be a well-accepted condition that small community banks are an important factor for economic development in rural areas. Our two U.S. Senators (M. Warner and T. Kaine) support selective revisions as long as they help the small rural banks and at the same time retain adequate controls over the large/Wall Street financial institutions. The two of them remind us that few small banks have opened in Virginia in the past several years even though we have reduced the number of these banks thru mergers and closings.