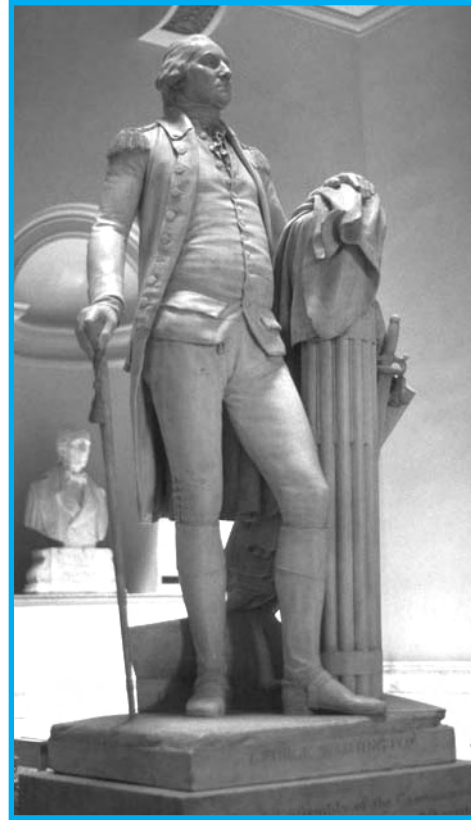


- In order to encourage greater opportunity for the bonding of families with members who are incarcerated, I offered legislation to establish “family-friendly” visiting spaces in state correctional facilities. The state has agreed to fund this initiative.
- I introduced legislation to assist independence for frail elderly people and to provide optional self-directed care among people with disabilities. Both bills were carried over until year’s end and I am hopeful that they will be enacted.
- I offered legislation to ban a new set of assault weapons available on the internet, and capable of bringing down a commercial airliner. Sadly, it was rejected.
- At the time of its House of Delegates deliberation, I was one of a few members of the General Assembly to speak against an anti-civil rights bill denying same-sex couples access to basic contract relationships. The state constitution absolutely upholds the right of individuals to make contracts and although this legislation did pass, I expect it will be overturned in the courts.



SOME CAPITOL FACTS

In 1785, Benjamin Franklin chose the great French sculptor, Jean Houdon to make a statue of George Washington for the Virginia State Capitol. It is the only statue for which Washington posed.

- I was one of four legislators honored by The Virginia Housing Coalition for outstanding achievements in housing at their Annual Awards Dinner on June 24.

- I was appointed by Speaker of the House, Bill Howell, to a joint House/Senate subcommittee to study public funding of higher education in Virginia. The subcommittee will consider :
 - alternatives to current state formulas for both funding higher education and helping students pay for their college education,
 - the efficacy of delivering degree programs through distance learning, and
 - access by state residents to Virginia institutions of higher education.

Although in previous years of public service I have often worked with the General Assembly, I found my new service as your delegate to be stimulating and challenging. I am very proud to serve you. Please access my website and feel free to contact me by mail, email, or telephone.

Al Eisenberg

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
MERRIFIELD VA
PERMIT NO. 963

Democratic Party of Virginia
1108 E. Main Street, Second Floor, Richmond, VA 23219

LET ME HEAR FROM YOU!

To contact Delegate Al Eisenberg:
Mail: P.O. Box 1511
Arlington, VA 22210
Phone: 703.276.9414
E-Mail: aleisenberg@comcast.net

Paid for by The Democratic Party of Virginia.
Authorized by Al Eisenberg.

DELEGATE AL EISENBERG

REPORT FROM RICHMOND

47TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY



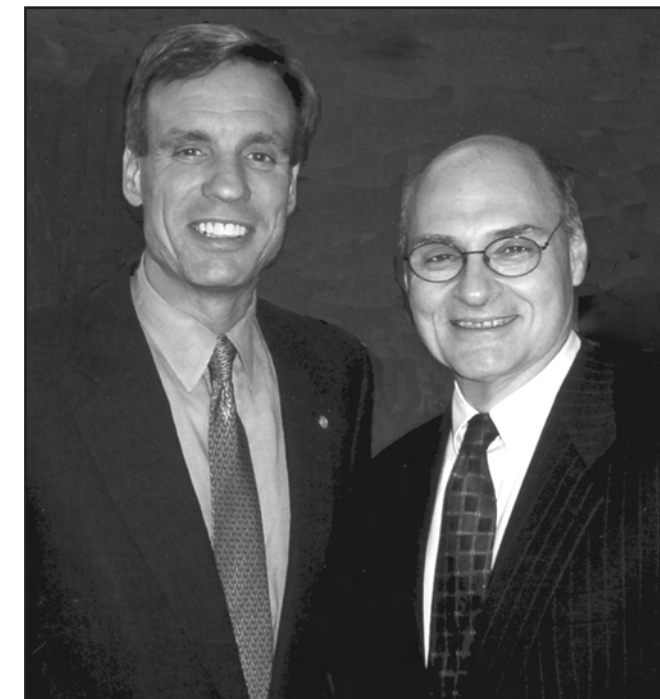
This was a momentous year for Virginia state government. For the first time in the Assembly’s 385 year history, the budget was not approved during the regular session, and the Governor had to call a special session to get the job done. As one of the freshmen Democratic delegates, I helped provide the razor thin, bi-partisan margin that allowed this important budget to pass, enabling the state to invest in core needs, including K-12 and higher education, environmental improvement, public safety, and health care.

As your delegate, I took an active role in the issues that came before the House of Delegates and was able to attain or make substantial progress on my objectives during the General Assembly. I am pleased to report to you on some of the highlights of my service:

- With Delegate Bob Brink, I helped lead the fight to prevent an outrageous 29 percent increase in towing company fees
- I pushed legislation to prevent insurance companies from canceling homeowners’ policies on the basis of inquiries about policies and claims, when no money changed hands. I secured an agreement with the insurance industry to halt this practice. I expect the

agreement to be codified by the end of the year.

- As a member of the Agriculture, Chesapeake, and Natural Resources Committee, I worked hard to advance environmental protection, receiving a leadership award from the Virginia League of Conservation Voters.
- I introduced a bill to prohibit the execution of juveniles for capital crimes. The United States and several Middle East and African countries are the only jurisdictions in the world to apply this penalty. Although the bill didn’t pass, it gained an unprecedented number of bi-partisan copatrons and raised the profile of this important human rights issue. The American Bar Association has endorsed the legislation and it will be included in amicus briefs before the Supreme Court when the constitutionality of this penalty is considered.
- I was active in the defeat of legislation to prohibit unrelated households from securing loans from the Virginia Housing Development Authority.
- I secured enactment of legislation to prohibit the sale of veterans grave markers, which are being stolen from cemeteries and sold as artifacts on the web.



Governor Mark Warner with Delegate Al Eisenberg

Continued on page 4

HIGHLIGHTS OF IMPORTANT 2004 LEGISLATION



Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry. America was born on a farm in Virginia. The secretary will be responsible to the Governor for the following agencies: Department of Forestry, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Agricultural Council, and Virginia Marine Products Board. Agriculture is Virginia's largest and oldest industry. It's been the backbone of the state economy for almost four centuries, generating approximately \$36 billion per year or 12.3 percent of all sales in the state.

"21-day rule." Courts do sometimes make mistakes, and innocent people do sometimes serve time for crimes they did not commit. In Virginia, prisoners had just 21 days after they were sentenced to put forward any new evidence of their innocence. After that, with the single exception of DNA evidence, prisoners could present any new evidence only to the Governor.

In contrast, 38 states set no time limit at all for new evidence to be presented to a judge. Nine other states gave defendants a year to present evidence of innocence. The General Assembly this year established a procedure that will allow prisoners to petition the Court of Appeals for a writ of actual innocence based on new evidence.

Infrared transmitters. Virginia has outlawed the use of infrared transmitters that are used to change a traffic signal. It will also be illegal to sell these devices in Virginia.

Sunday sales at ABC stores. In Northern Virginia and the Tidewater area, ABC stores will be allowed to open to sell alcoholic beverages after 1:00 p.m. on Sunday.

Stormwater management. Virginia's stormwater management programs will be consolidated within the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Oversight responsibilities will be transferred to the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board from the Board of Conservation and Recreation. This should improve government efficiency and strengthen the Commonwealth's ability to protect our environment.

Helping Adults Complete High School. The General Assembly took two important steps to help adults who have not earned their high school diplomas. The Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Fund will assist students who were enrolled in Virginia's public schools between 1954 and

1964, when many public schools were closed. Funds will allow these individuals to earn a high school diploma, a General Equivalency Degree (GED) or an undergraduate degree from a public college or university in Virginia. The Race to the GED program will work with NASCAR to encourage adults who have not earned a high school diploma to complete their GED.

NEW LAWS GOVERN DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Nearly every two minutes, someone is injured or killed by a driver who is driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI). This year, Virginia passed tough new laws to keep our highways safer. Here are some of the new DUI laws in Virginia:

Increased jail time for repeat DUIs. About one-third of all drivers arrested or convicted of driving under the influence are repeat offenders. These drivers are 40 percent more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than those without prior DUIs. Virginia has increased penalties for repeat offenders. For a second conviction within 10 years: 10 days in jail. For a second conviction within 5 years: 20 days in jail. For a third conviction within ten years: 90 days in jail. For a third conviction within 5 years: 180 days in jail.

Vehicle forfeiture. If you are convicted of a third or later DUI offense, any car owned and operated solely by you may be forfeited.

Elevated Blood Alcohol Content. In 2001, 58 percent of alcohol-related traffic deaths involved drivers with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .15 or above. These drivers are at least 382 times more likely to be involved in fatal crashes than non-drinking drivers. Virginia law already included harsher penalties for persons with high BAC levels. New laws will add an additional five days of mandatory jail time to anyone whose BAC is .15 or higher. BAC levels of .20 or higher will result in a mandatory ten additional days of jail time. An additional fine of \$250 will be added in these cases.

This session of the General Assembly is known as the "long session." In a typical year, we stay in Richmond for 60 days and pass a budget.

This year, infighting among members of the Republican majority made this the super long session. Week after week, in an unprecedented and historic logjam, we debated the future of Virginia.

As Democrats, we had 3 important goals:

- Providing funding for core services like public education, environmental protection, and caring for our most vulnerable citizens;
- Protecting our fiscal integrity, restoring the Rainy Day fund and preserving Virginia's sterling AAA credit rating;
- Making the tax code more fair.

The budget we passed will do all those things.

EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN

The budget for the next two years provides more than \$1.5 billion in new investments in public education. This makes it **the largest single investment in public schools in Virginia history.** It will provide:

- State support for almost 10,000 teachers, including art, music, and physical education teachers in elementary schools and extra tutoring for students who need it at every grade level.
- Additional funding for Head Start. By FY 2006, all of Virginia's at-risk four-year-olds will be enrolled in this important program.
- A major investment—\$262 million—in higher education. This should support growing student enrollments and offset rising tuition costs.

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

The new budget provides the largest infusion of funds for natural resource programs in Virginia history. The budget includes:

- \$35 million new dollars to invest in Virginia's water quality and land conservation programs. It is estimated that these funds will keep more than 800,000 tons of sediment, almost 4.6 million pounds of nitrogen, and almost 950,000 pounds of phosphorus from entering state waters. Additional state dollars also enhance Virginia's ability to leverage federal dollars.
- \$1 million to replace state park rangers lost to budget cuts and restore other cuts in state park funding.
- \$5 million to protect critical open space lands. This should save approximately 2,500 acres of important natural and historic resource lands each year.

SERVING OUR MOST VULNERABLE CITIZENS

The new budget adds a total of \$2 billion more for Health and Human Services. In human terms, that means:

- More than 1,265 more Virginians with mental retardation will receive support in their communities. A total of 700 retarded citizens will move off waiting lists and into group homes. For them, the homes open the door to gratifying lives. For their aging parents, it means relief from care and the security of knowing their children have permanent homes. There's also money for day-time support so parents or caregivers can work and still provide services for family members in their homes. More babies and toddlers who are developmentally delayed will get the early help that can make an enormous difference in their progress.
- At the other end of the age range, more adults with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia will receive the care they need to remain in their homes or communities, delaying, or avoiding altogether, the need to be in institutions.

THE NEW BUDGET

KEEPING THE BEST STATE EMPLOYEES

The budget provides raises for all state employees. There is a 4.8 percent raise for state troopers—many of whom have been eligible for food stamps. It is a disgrace that the men and women who put their lives on the line every day have been so poorly compensated by the Commonwealth, and this budget will begin to correct that.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY—TAX FAIRNESS

This budget will allow Virginia to pay its bills without the sort of gimmicks we've seen in the past few years. At the end of the biennium, Virginia's Rainy Day Fund balance will be in excess of \$430 million. The bond rating agencies reacted quickly. Virginia has maintained its AAA bond rating.

The revenue package adopted by the General Assembly will lower the tax on food. It will raise the income tax filing threshold so that 141,000 fewer Virginians have to file. It eliminates the marriage penalty. It provides tax relief to military and National Guard families.

Only one state—Hawaii—will have a lower sales tax rate than Virginia's new five-cent rate. Virginia should still rank as a low-tax, well-managed state.

Is it a perfect budget? Of course not. There is no funding for transportation, for example. But all in all, it is a budget that meets the needs of the Commonwealth.