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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUBJECT: End of the 2014 General Assembly

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The 2014 Virginia General Assembly adjourned this past Saturday, March 8th. My first session representing the 55th House District in the Virginia House of Delegates has been challenging and also rewarding. I believe that the General Assembly has enacted many positive changes including reforms to public education and mental health in Virginia, reducing the growth of higher education tuition costs, and improving our transportation infrastructure. The General Assembly also focused on public safety and maintaining Virginia's number 1 pro-business ranking. Unfortunately, the 2014 General Assembly adjourned this past Saturday March 8 without passing a state budget.

The responsibility for the failure to pass a state budget rests with the Governor and the VA State Senate, who insist on attaching an unrelated, but important issue, Medicaid expansion to the state budget. It is important to note that Medicaid expansion is part of the Federal "Affordable Care Act" (Obamacare), which was originally mandated on the states, but was ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. The House Leadership summed up my thoughts on the budget stalemate stating that we are all "deeply disappointed that the Governor and his allies in the Democrat-controlled Senate have prevented the General Assembly from passing a budget on time. Crafting the state budget is the General Assembly's most important obligation."

The House Republican leadership called for a special session to debate Medicaid expansion on its own merits and as a standalone issue. The House offered this as a responsible compromise, which would have allowed the General Assembly to pass a budget that would have ensured that funding for our teachers, schools, firefighters, police officers and local governments are not used as leverage to implement Medicaid expansion.

I believe that the House leadership is correct in that passing a State Budget this past Saturday, and then addressing Medicaid expansion only in a special session is the right thing to do. This alternative would have allowed legislators to go home and talk to constituents about this critical issue. It also would have allowed us to craft meaningful legislation that can stand alone and be considered on its own merits and would have allowed us to avoid a government shutdown. It is important to note that major issues in the past such as parole reform, personal property tax relief, and transportation have been resolved in "special" session of the Virginia General Assembly. I believe that the expansion of Medicaid is far too important an issue to be rammed through via a budget fight reminiscent of the Washington DC style politics that disgusts us all. Medicaid expansion is too important to stakeholders and the potential long term financial obligation to taxpayers so great that the General Assembly must get it right.

Unfortunately, the Governor has made it very clear to the House Republicans that he will not negotiate unless ObamaCare is part of Virginia's budget. The Governor and Senate continue to ignore the basic, critical fact that local governments, schools, college Boards of Visitors, and numerous political entities around the state need Virginia's budget passed long before July 1, the deadline before a potential

government shutdown. Nearly 50 percent of Virginia's General Fund spending is passed through as aid to our localities.

More specifically, school divisions will now have to rethink teacher position openings, new school supplies, employee healthcare plans, and expanded extracurricular activities if they do not have a State budget to work from. College Board of Visitors have to set tuition rate for the next year by this spring. If the State budget is not released by that time, Boards will be forced to assume a worst case scenario which could result in double digit tuition increases versus the low single digits expected with a passed budget.

The House Republicans will continue to insist that we pass a clean budget. The House and Senate budgets bottom lines are very close separated by only \$26 million-less than one tenth of one percent of the entire state budget. These differences could be easily worked out.

At this time, the Governor has delayed the special session until March 24 so he can continue to campaign around the state for Medicaid expansion. According to the House leadership, "he was adamant when he met with House leaders...that he will not budge, no matter what the stakes."

With the close of the 2014 session, I have moved back to my district office, which is located on 10321 Washington Highway, Glen Allen. My office number is (804)305-8867 and my email address is delbfowler@house.virginia.gov. If you have any questions, or suggestions, related to the 2014 General Assembly, I welcome your input. Also, if I can be of any assistance to you or your family with an issue involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office.