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## JOHN WATKINS TALKS ABOUT HIS BILLS

Although it seems like the General Assembly session just started, we are actually approaching “crossover,” the mid-point in the session. That is the day bills in the Virginia Senate must be acted on so that they “crossover” and the House of Delegates has time to consider the Senate bills.

As I write this, there are hundreds of Senate bills that still require action before the February 6 crossover deadline. With that much still left for the Senate to consider, my office has been filled with constituents who have made a special trip to the Capitol to talk to me about the legislation they are most interested in. These meetings with you and your neighbors help me when it is time to vote about issues you care about.

One of the issues I am often asked about in these meetings is taxes. As a fiscal conservative, I am dedicated to making certain the Commonwealth does not take one penny more than it absolutely needs in order to provide the core services you and your family expect.

This year, I have sponsored legislation to provide targeted tax relief that will help ensure a strong economy for Central Virginia.

One bill I am pushing would protect businesses from being double taxed on fuel purchases. Currently businesses that retail motor fuels are being assessed on their gross receipts that include the federal excise taxes and state gasoline taxes. This legislation removes these taxes from the gross receipts total. This, in turn, will lower the amount of gross receipts tax having to be paid by these businesses. My proposal has passed the Senate unanimously and is awaiting action in the House of Delegates.

Another bill I am sponsoring would create a sales-tax holiday for energy-efficient products. With oil prices fluctuating due to uncertainties in the Middle East, most people agree that we need to do more to limit our dependence on foreign energy sources. To encourage Virginians to invest in new technology that reduces home and small business energy costs, my bill would create a four-day period where purchases of energy-efficient products less than \$2,500 would be exempt from the sales tax. This bill is still awaiting action in the Senate.

A third bill I have proposed would protect income tax credits currently in place that encourage the re-use of recycled materials. These credits are based on a fractional part of the cost of new equipment purchased for production of recycled products. These efforts also reduce foreign energy dependence while protecting our natural resources. Many local companies have invested in new technology and created jobs in order to make products from recycled materials. If action is not taken, these credits would expire. I am working to ensure that does not happen.

I am also co-sponsoring a bill with Senate Majority Leader Walter Stosch that would increase the income limits for seniors to qualify for real estate tax relief. This legislation will help seniors on fixed incomes afford their tax bills at a time when real estate assessments have been skyrocketing in Central Virginia.

Next week, I will give you an update about some of the other major legislation that has made it through “crossover.” In the meantime, please know that it is truly an honor to serve you as your voice in the Senate of Virginia. You are welcome to contact me or my staff if you have questions or suggestions about any of the issues that come before the General Assembly.

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