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John Watkins Talks About the Budget, COPN and Movies

In this third week of the General Assembly, the primary focus remains concern over the budget. I get the distinct feeling the administration, and certainly some legislators, feel the proposed federal stimulus package should be incorporated into the Virginia budget as part of the answer.

I agree it will fill some holes temporarily. It worries me, however, to assume that is part of the answer for the budget problems we face here in Virginia because the typical federal legislation has so many strings tied to it and so many prerequisites and matches that usually accompany it. I still believe we need to follow through with some tough decisions on what is nice and what is necessary. Nice may be desirable, but necessary is the only absolute. We will all watch with interest to see what Congress does, but Virginia must deal with Virginia's problems.

My bill SB1162 deals with Certificate of Public Need, a licensing mechanism utilized by the Commonwealth of Virginia when medical care facilities desire to initiate projects/expansions. A hospital expansion would be one example.

A portion of this legislation is intended to help uninsured individuals who work for small businesses that cannot afford health insurance. Under my bill, a certificate holder can satisfy the conditions of a certificate by helping fund basic insurance coverage for indigents. More information about this proposed legislation can be found at: <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?ses=091&typ=bil&val=sb1162>.

I am sure many of you saw or read about the Golden Globe Awards two weeks ago. It was extremely gratifying to see that John Adams, a movie made in Virginia, did so well in that award presentation.

It was a huge success and brought much attention, not only to the history of our nation, but to the history of Virginia as well. One of the most intriguing benefits of John Adams was what it brought to Virginia today – jobs and investment.

With my SJR 394, I hope to offer congratulations, on behalf of all the citizens of the Commonwealth, to the cast and crew of that outstanding HBO mini-series.

In both geography and historical significance, our state has much to offer to the film industry. I hope SJR394 will bring more attention to the benefits of investing in the film industry as a means of economic development for Virginia.

Another resolution I introduced is SJR 335, a Constitutional Amendment that would remove the *independent* adjective from the classification of cities in Virginia. I think this is important because we need to remove the adversarial system that currently exists where cities may have the prerogative to eliminate counties. Counties and cities should be on an equity status with regard to governing and incentives should be utilized to promote cooperation and efficiencies in government.

So far this week I, or my legislative assistants, have welcomed to my office, among many others, students from St. Benedict's, St. Bridget's and Benedictine; Dr. Marshall Smith and a group from John Tyler Community College; constituents advocating for issues such as the Clean Water Act and Multiple Sclerosis funding; the Powhatan 4H club; Andrew Smith and others from the Farm Bureau; two constituents representing the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance; and many Virginia Tech students and alumni for Wednesday's Hokie Day.

I welcome their comments, input and opinions, and we welcome yours. Don't hesitate to contact my office on issues of importance to you.

To follow the progress of any bill, please visit the General Assembly's web site at: <http://legis.state.va.us>.

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