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The End is Near

With the end of the regular session of the 2010 General Assembly only days away, let me take this opportunity first to thank you for taking time to read these weekly newsletters. I also appreciate the feedback we have received from many of you.

What I have sought to do is both inform you and clear up some confusion that naturally arises during the course of events here at the General Assembly. My focus has been primarily on the actions of the Senate where I serve. Some have written asking why I have not been critical of actions, or lack thereof, in the House, such as the failure of non-partisan redistricting. While I have supported non-partisan redistricting throughout my legislative career, commenting on the House is outside the scope of these weekly reports.

Speaking of confusion, there was some stirred up when an email message went out that the Senate had passed a "24 percent tax increase on every phone in Virginia." In actuality, it is an increase of 18 cents, or only \$2.16 *per phone line* per year on the E 911 fee.

The money raised will help pay for an increase in the cost of the death and health insurance premiums for first responders injured in the line of duty. I believe most Virginians would approve of that action when it is accurately described.

Anyone who has ever needed the services of these brave men and women knows how they put their own personal safety, and indeed their lives, on the line every day to help others who are at their most vulnerable point and are in dire need of assistance.

In the last couple of days, most of the significant action takes place in conference committees. Made up of groups of six legislators, or 12 for the budget, committees seek to hammer out the differences between House and Senate versions of the same bill. It is a job that both senators and delegates take very seriously, because if a compromise cannot be reached, the bill dies. Then it is up to each body to approve the agreed upon version.

As of the writing of this newsletter, negotiations are ongoing with regard to the budget. But, once the budget conference report is voted on, our work for the 2010 session will largely be done. I trust that will occur by Saturday so that we can adjourn on time.

It is my hope you have found these weekly reports credible and a reliable source of information, not just about ongoing issues, but also about the legislative process itself. In the coming weeks I will communicate with you again with a wrap-up of this year's General Assembly session. I look forward to communicating further as the year progresses.

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