



January 27, 2025

Truck Stops Bill Seeks to Protect Them from Competition

This year we have been reporting on [House bill 2087](#), legislation relative to whether regulated utilities will be allowed to use ratepayer funding to install fast chargers. Of course, within our industry all new investments in locations and infrastructure are self-funded and we believe that monopoly utilities should not be able to use that status to unfairly compete with the private sector. One section of the bill authorized the State Corporation Commission to set up “exclusion zones” around privately owned and operated charging locations. Utilities would be prohibited from using ratepayer funds for charger funding within a to-be-determined number of miles from the privately owned stations. We are particularly opposed to one section of the bill being pushed by the National Association of Truck Stop Operators and their lobbying firm Capitol Results. The language states that the exclusion zone protection would only be for those locations that were in operation or have a building permit by December 2017. Who would that apply to? In our estimation 95 percent of the locations covered would be truck stops. The remaining 3,300 locations that sell motor fuels to the public in Virginia would be forever left unprotected from Dominion or Appalachian Power billing ratepayers to compete with you. This is classic special interest legislation. Unfortunately, this bill passed a House Labor and Commerce subcommittee on Thursday by a vote of 6 (Democrats) to 4 (Republicans). Over the remaining four weeks of the session and beyond, if necessary, we will continue to oppose this provision. For a copy of the bill, [click here](#).

Tobacco Issues Rise to Forefront

Readers will recall that last year the Assembly passed a comprehensive bill to address the issue of youth access to tobacco and penalties for stores that sell to underage persons. While it was not the best bill passed last year, we were able to provide significant input and eliminate some of its most egregious positions.

Unfortunately, this year there have been various bills to increase penalties for those who sell to underage persons, and add an alphabet soup of agencies who would oversee enforcement. Of course these agencies then report that they are understaffed and need additional resources to carry out their responsibilities, which has led some to call for a per store annual inspection fee of \$300 to fund enforcement. We have pointed out that the number of underage sales at convenience stores has declined precipitously and that last year’s comprehensive legislation is

only six months old and needs to be evaluated before new penalties or registration fees are imposed on the business community. You can view some of the tobacco bills here:

[HB 1946](#)

[HB 1558](#)

[SB 1147](#)

Legislation Targets Heating Fuel and Propane for Conversion

As we often mention, some of the most challenging bills are filed on the last day possible for introduction, which this year fell on January 10. Delegate Mark Sickles filed [House bill 2744](#). If passed by both branches and signed into law it would require the state to look for state and federal funds to convert locations that are heated by a “delivered fuel and stored on site.” The funding would be available to lower income households only. On Wednesday, Zach Eisenman of the Propane Association and lobbyist Mike O'Connor met with the delegate to express our strong opposition to the bill. While noncommittal, he seemed receptive to some of our arguments, particularly on the impact of independent Virginia based small businesses. This bill will likely see action in the coming week, and we will keep you apprised of events.