



**February 10, 2025**

## **Bill to Double Penalties for Underage Tobacco Sales Dead for the year**

As we have previously reported, Senator Timmy French of Woodstock filed legislation ([SB1147](#)) that would have doubled penalties for sellers who completed sales of tobacco products to minors. Just last year, the General Assembly passed compromise legislation that significantly increased these same penalties including possible license revocation for a fourth underage sale in three years. Further, the 2024 bill mandates the installation of electronic verification equipment in stores after a second underage sale. We demonstrated that this legislation only became effective last July 1, and that federal guidance has demonstrated that that youth access had declined substantially over the past several years due to increasing the legal age to purchase to 21 and stepped up efforts at industry education. Over the coming year there will be a study of tobacco enforcement by various state agencies and how each was financed. This ended discussion, for the time being, at least of imposing a new \$300 per location fee on each location selling tobacco products to fund enforcement. We will continue to follow that process closely between now and the 2026 session.

## **Problematic Bills Advance to Convert Heating Oil and Propane to Electricity**

Advancing this week are two extremely problematic bills that seek to convert low income heating oil and propane customers to electricity. While neither bill is funded, both seek to identify future federal and state funding sources to "substantially reduce or eliminate the household's reliance on fuel delivered to the household, stored onsite and utilized for household heating, cooking, or water heating". This is an obvious attack on the continued viability of propane and heating oil businesses that are almost exclusively owned by independent Virginia based businesses, and we will continue to oppose.

[Delegate Sickles - HB 2744](#)

[Senator Bagby - SB 1342](#)

## **Extreme Weather Relief Act Targets Industry**

This year we saw two bills ([SB 1123](#), [HB 2233](#)) modeled after New York and Vermont legislation, with the goal of holding parties responsible for covered greenhouse gas emissions between the covered period of January 1, 1995 to December 31, 2024, for the parties' share of the Commonwealth's costs due to climate change. The legislation targeted fossil fuel producers and sellers and would have required untold hundreds of millions of dollars of payments to the state treasury to address undefined extreme weather relief. Fortunately, Virginia decided not follow the New York and Vermont paths, and both bills were defeated decisively.

## **Truck Stop Bill Now Pending in the Senate**

[HB 2087](#) is legislation ostensibly to allow electric utilities to expand fast electric chargers using ratepayer funds. We have argued that state sanctioned utility monopolies should not be allowed to compete unfairly with small businesses such as our members, which must self-fund any expansion efforts. One provision of the legislation would guarantee a lifetime non-compete from utility ratepayer subsidization to any fast charger in operation or under permit by 7/1/2007. HB 2087 garnered national attention last week when Oil Express published a story revealing that the National Association of Truck Stop Operators (NATSO) is leading and bankrolling this unprecedented stealth attack on small business competitors. The story also detailed that NATSO is funding the Richmond based lobbying firm Capital Results to lobby on their behalf. Unbelievably, Capital Results also runs the co-called "Charge Ahead" partnership of which VPCMA is a member. The Charge Ahead partnership states on their website that: "We believe the growing electric vehicle charging market should be inclusive, competitive, and fair". Capital Results have yet to explain how they can run such an organization while simultaneously being paid to lobby for House 2087, which is the antithesis of inclusive, competitive, and fair.

This bill has passed the House of Delegates on an almost exclusive party line vote and will be considered in the Senate Commerce and Labor committee in the coming days.

## **Skill Games**

The Senate has included a proposal to re-start skill games in its version of the state budget. The House of Delegates has not done so, meaning that this issue will be decided next week by a small conference committee of delegates and senators authorized to settle conflicting issues between each body. Should the conference committee agree to include the skill provision, it will then be subject to review by Governor Youngkin who vetoed the bill last year and has recently expressed his continuing concern relative to skill games.