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High Rise Signs Under Attack - We Need Your Help

Legislation to Be Considered Wednesday

Last March a major wind storm caused the sign in front of the Potomac Mills mall along Interstate 95 in Prince William County to buckle, leading to its removal. That one incident has led to a bill ([SB1535](#)) offered by Senator Scott Surovell (D-Fairfax) that threatens the future of any private sector sign in Virginia if its height is greater than the distance of the sign to the shoulder of any interstate highway.

Among its provisions:

- Mandatory inspections of every covered sign beginning January 1, 2021
- Inspections will have to be done by licensed professional engineers (estimated cost \$5,000.)
- Any report that indicates that the sign exhibits or is at risk of structural instability or poses any other risk to highway or public safety mandates sending the report to the regional VDOT office. VDOT will then have the authority to enter your property without notice, remove the sign, and send you the bill.
- Most egregiously, a locality may independently seek to remove any sign using the current building codes, not those in effect when the sign was erected.

We need you to call (calls are far better than emails) senators who are on the Senate Transportation Committee. Their contact information follows. You need not live in their specific district so long as you have business in the area. Senators will be in Richmond so use that number.

Make these points:

- Last March the high rise sign at Potomac Mills buckled during a severe wind storm.
- The sign was quickly removed.
- Because of this one incident Senate Bill 1535 proposes to allow the VDOT to enter private property unannounced, to remove signs, and then send me the bill
- The bill will require us to spend thousands of dollars for inspections instead of allowing us to continue to do these inspections internally.
- It also allows localities to remove signs at will.
- Before imposing burdensome and expensive legislation that will harm our ability to compete, VDOT needs to work with impacted stakeholders to determine the scope of this issue as well as its impact to the private sector. We are happy to participate in that process but request that you vote NO on Senate 1535.

Your Calls are needed TODAY!

[Here is a copy of the bill.](#)

If you don't know who your legislator is, you can use this link. [Who's My Legislator?](#)

Members of the Virginia Senate Transportation Committee

[Bill Carrico: Southwest Virginia](#)

[Steve Newman Lynchburg and Suburbs](#)

[Creigh Deeds Charlottesville west to Bath County](#)

[David Marsden Fairfax County](#)

[Barbara Favola Arlington](#)

[John Cosgrove Chesapeake](#)

[John Edwards Roanoke to Blacksburg](#)

[Bill DeSteph Virginia Beach](#)

[Amanda Chase Chesterfield County](#)

[David Sutterlien Roanoke area](#)

[Jennifer McLellan Richmond City](#)

[Mark Peake Goochland to Lynchburg](#)

[Jennifer Boysko Loudoun and Fairfax Counties](#)

Gambling

This past week the Virginia Senate advanced legislation to allow for casinos in Bristol, Danville, Portsmouth, and Norfolk, but requires that no licenses be awarded until July 1, 2020, assuring that the issue will be reconsidered next year. It seems that these localities may be allowed to hold the necessary referendums later in the year to gain local approval, but actual state approval would be in the future. The issue of legalized sports betting is still alive in the gambling bill but actions by the US Justice Department mean that expansion of the lottery to internet sales is almost certainly dead for the year. One Senate bill to outlaw "games of chance" has been withdrawn, but another to severely limit them will be heard tomorrow afternoon in a senate committee.

Politics Threaten Kinder Morgan Expansion of Plantation Pipeline

Delegate Sam Rasoul of Roanoke filed legislation aimed at eliminating the use of fossil fuels in the Commonwealth. One portion of it prohibits the expansion of any pipeline carrying fossil fuels in the Commonwealth. If enacted this would end Kinder Morgan's plans to move additional product thru the Plantation Pipeline, which is designed to assist in replacing some of the gallons lost when Line 25 closed in September. [This bill](#) passed committee last week by a vote of 9-8. Several committee Republicans were absent when the vote was held, a maneuver designed to send the bill directly to the House floor forcing a vote legislation which is universally opposed by every segment of the business community. All 100 seats in the House are up for election where Republicans hold a 51-48 margin (there is one vacancy in a strong democratic district). This bill is very unlikely to pass, but the process has left much to be desired.

Interstate 81

There has been no legislative activity on Interstate 81 repair and the debate on how to fund the various projects. We have been emphasizing our opposition to imposing a 7.6 cent gas tax, and early this week legislators will receive the following from us demonstrating why this new gas tax is a bad idea.

[2 Virginias](#)

For a full listing of bills we are following, [click here](#).