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Virtual General Assembly Update

The first ever virtual Virginia General Assembly session is moving along toward crossover, the date when bills in their house of introduction have to pass that branch or are dead for the year. Following is a quick review of some of the legislation we are working on your behalf.

Skill Games

Members will recall that last year skill games were extended for one year only because of an 11th hour agreement with Governor Northam to tax and oversee the industry, with all proceeds from licensing going to COVID relief. As it stands today, skill machine authorization will expire on July 1 of this year unless the General Assembly acts. 2020 saw unprecedented legislative action on gambling, with assembly members authorizing casino gambling, sports betting and internet lottery. This year has been the opposite with virtually all gambling legislation put on hold. This includes HB 1880 by Delegate Paul Krizek of Alexandria that would have authorized the skill machines thru July 2022. He withdrew the bill after determining that it may not pass subcommittee. As there was no Senate bill on skill games, the path to extension must go thru the state budget. We are hopeful that the House Appropriations Committee will include extension language in its version of the state budget when it is released Sunday afternoon. If that occurs, the issue will be reviewed in a behind closed doors conference committee with little opportunity for further public input. Here is our letter to members of the appropriations committee urging favorable action on skill games. Here is the list of appropriations committee members. We urge you to call or email those in your area to support skill games in the House budget.

Tax on Dyed Diesel Killed

Delegate Mark Keam filed legislation (HB 2118) to create a state fund to capitalize the conversion of diesel school buses to electric. He proposed to tax off road dyed diesel at five cents per gallon to fund the entity. Working with our colleagues at the Virginia Propane Gas Association we opposed the legislation and were eventually joined by the state's roadbuilders and golf superintendents opposing to the bill. This week the diesel tax was withdrawn and replaced with a study of ways to promote electric school buses and broadened to include a review of all uses of dyed fuel in Virginia, as well as the costs associated with converting to electric. Interestingly, the DEQ then testified that they were too busy to conduct a study and the language was changed to make it voluntary with an undetermined date for reporting to the General Assembly,

Tobacco Licensure Bill Defeated

Previously, we have reported on [House bill 2164](#) that would have required all sellers of tobacco products to obtain a license from the state. We had worked with Delegate Patrick Hope over the summer and he removed registration fees and mandatory suspensions from the bill and assured that enforcement would be overseen by Virginia ABC. When this bill was heard in committee, the ABC Department testified that expansion of inspections would cost the agency more than 2.5 million dollars yearly. With that, the bill was moved to the Appropriations Committee. It was heard there this week where it was gutted in favor of another study between industry and public health groups to be held prior to the 2022 session.