

## *You Tell Me*

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Elected representatives at all levels of government reflect their own values and beliefs in the votes they cast. And, too, they need to represent the views of the people they represent—the voters who put them in office. Hand wringing occurs when the beliefs of an elected official conflict with what seems to be the popular position on an issue. The real challenge to all elected officials is determining where the majority of people stand on an issue. Staying in touch with a broad base of community leaders throughout the year is very important.

And there are formal ways to stay in touch. Most notable are surveys of voters and public hearings. This is a time of year that I need to check in with my constituents to see what they are thinking as I prepare to head to Richmond for the annual General Assembly session. Later this week, you should receive a voter survey from me in the mail. Please take some time to fill it out; I really need your views on the issues.

I also have public hearings to provide opportunities for individual citizens and representatives of groups to present their views. Senator Janet Howell and I are having a public hearing at the Reston Community Center at Lake Anne on Wednesday, January 7, beginning at 7:30 p.m. The entire Fairfax County delegation is having a public hearing on Saturday, January 10, 9 a.m. at the Fairfax County Government Center.

As you will see from the survey there are a myriad of issues before the legislature for which your views are solicited. Should we, for example, make the tax structure fairer as Governor Warner has proposed by reducing the sales tax on groceries to 2.5 cents? By lowering the income tax rate on the first \$20,000 of income? By increasing the standard deduction? By increasing the personal exemptions? Should we raise additional revenue as the Governor has proposed by increasing the sales tax from 4.5 percent to 5.5 percent? By increasing the cigarette tax to 25 cents a pack? By closing tax loopholes for corporations? By creating a 6.25 percent income tax rate for incomes over \$100,000?

Should we increase state support for public schools by a half billion dollars to meet the cost of Standards of Quality? Should we provide vouchers or tuition tax credits for families who send their children to private schools? Should college tuition be allowed to rise to market rates? Should we restrict the number of out of state students in our colleges and universities?

Should we extend the Metrorail Orange Line through Tysons Corner into Loudoun County past Dulles Airport? Should we just rely on buses rather than build the rail line? Should the federal government pay at least half the cost of the project? Should tolls on the toll road be raised to help pay for the construction?

Should the state Constitution be amended to permit the governor to succeed him/her self? Should marriages between gays and lesbians be legalized? Should the use of cellular phones while driving be prohibited? Should the electric utility industry be deregulated by 2007? What do you think are the most important actions the 2004 session of the General Assembly should take?

You tell me what you think, on these or other issues. Use the survey form, the public hearing forum, or e-mail me at [kenplum@aol.com](mailto:kenplum@aol.com). Your opinions are important to me. Thank you for responding.