Commonwealth of Virginia

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
RICHMOND

December 10, 2009

The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Kaine:

As you complete your work on the 2010-2012 budget for introduction on December 18, we recognize you undoubtedly face many difficult decisions in balancing the Commonwealth's budget.

No Governor or General Assembly wantonly enjoys making difficult choices to cut spending or to end non-performing government programs providing services to the people of Virginia. Yet, the fact remains that we, as elected officials, have an obligation to the taxpayer to live within our existing revenue constraints. This is no different than what taxpayers, families and businesses must do every day in their own lives.

This past August, in your remarks to the Joint Money Committees, you stressed up front the fact that unlike many other states, Virginia did not increase the "tax burden on our citizens and businesses." We applaud the fact that you recognized then that a tax increase would be an additional burden on Virginians who already are getting squeezed on many fronts.

Over the last several weeks, published reports indicate that a tax increase remains on the table as part of your soon-to-be-released budgetary package on December 18. Today, we write to strongly encourage you to maintain the course of balancing Virginia's budget without a tax increase.

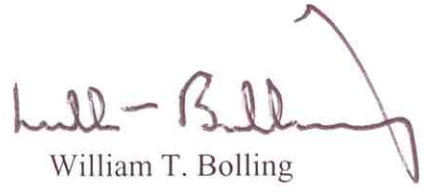
The incoming administration has set forth very clearly that they will not support a tax increase, a position that was strongly affirmed by the voters throughout Virginia in November. Likewise, members of the House of Delegates, while running for election this year, did not advocate a tax increase. Accordingly, we believe it would be counterproductive at the very least if your final proposed budget included any increase in existing taxes, proposals of new taxes or reductions to major tax relief programs.

With Virginians already uneasy about their employment status and personal finances, they clearly have withdrawn from making major non-discretionary purchases, as evident from monthly state tax collections. So, it seems unfathomable to us that government might now extract from them involuntarily additional tax revenue that they seemingly are unable to pay voluntarily.

As witnessed in the past, injecting an unworkable and economically harmful tax increase into the state spending blueprint would serve only to delay the inevitable. It would put at risk the many positive steps we have advanced together over your term in office. Embedding tax increases within the state budget also would do a huge disservice to those of us who will continue serving the Commonwealth in the upcoming session.

Virginia has a proud and long-standing tradition for fiscal prudence and sound budget practices. It is a legacy we intend to protect in the legislature. And, it is a legacy we sincerely hope you will join us in respecting and safeguarding in your final days in office.

Sincerely,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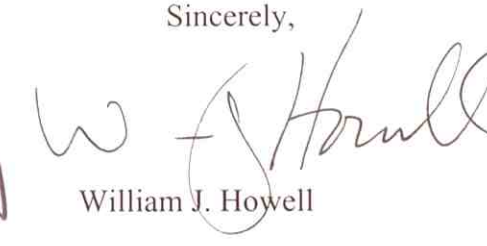
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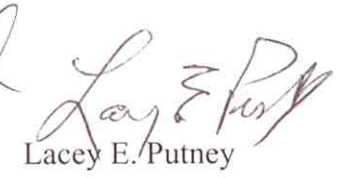
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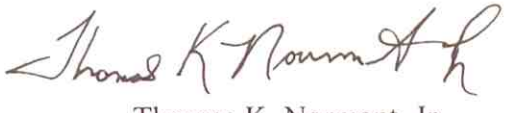
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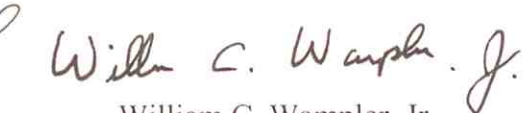
William C. Wampler, Jr.