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Senate Thwarts Government Reforms Advanced by House Republicans

– Senate Kills Greater Oversight & Transparency of How Lobbyists Do Business –
– Like it did on Transportation & Autism, Senate Chooses to Say “No” to Positive Reforms –

RICHMOND – Highlighting the ongoing actions of House Republicans to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency in state government, Virginia House of Delegates Speaker William J. Howell (R-Stafford) and House Republican Majority Caucus Chairman Samuel A. “Sam” Nixon, Jr. (R-Chesterfield) today expressed disappointment at the defeat of many good open government bills that were squelched by the Democrat-led Senate. The measures had won overwhelming, bipartisan support in the House earlier in the 2009 session.

Speaker Howell and House Republicans in the run-up to the start of the 2009 Session announced a number of common-sense good government initiatives. Building upon this positive momentum, House Republicans sponsored and passed a package of practical government reform legislation to improve government efficiency, provide greater oversight and public transparency of lobbying interests, and wisely increase the separation between campaign fundraising and governing for the benefit of all Virginians.

The bills encompassed in the package that passed the House and were killed in the Senate include:

- [House Bill 2463](#), patroned by Delegate John M. O’Bannon III (R-Henrico), would have created an Efficiency Review Commission to systematically review every agency of state government to ensure they are necessary and are performing their work efficiently and without redundancy.
- [House Bill 1883](#), patroned by Delegate Nixon, would have strengthened the transparency and oversight of lobbyist registration by instituting fuller public disclosure by lobbyists of gifts and entertainment of elected officials.
- [House Bill 1738](#), patroned by Delegate H. R. “Bob” Purkey (R-Virginia Beach), would have expanded from one year to two years the period that former legislators and executive branch officials must wait until becoming a registered lobbyist, ending a revolving door.
- [House Bill 2657](#), patroned by House Majority Leader H. Morgan Griffith (R-Salem), would have prohibited the use of Virginia’s Governor’s Mansion for partisan political fundraising events.
- [House Bill 1634](#), patroned by Delegate Christopher B. Saxman (R-Staunton), would have closed a loophole on fundraising by elected officials while in legislative session in order to eliminate the influence of campaign contributions on the consideration and outcome of legislation.

“Virginians rightly expect their elected leaders to continually seek out ways to run government in as ethical, efficient and effective manner as possible,” said Speaker Howell. “House Republicans advanced a strong reform agenda this session that accomplished those goals. It is disappointing that partisan politics has led defenders of the status quo to reject the common sense reforms championed by House Republicans to ensure more fiscal discipline, responsibility and integrity in government.”

“I regret that the Senate has defeated legislation that would have increased government openness to the public we serve,” noted Delegate Nixon. “These bipartisan-endorsed, practical solutions offered by House Republicans would have improved Virginia’s position as the Best Managed State. Squandering this opportunity to implement sensible reforms displays an aversion to fiscal responsibility and a rejection of change. Like other issues this session – such as transportation funding and expanded services for those with autism – House Republicans have advanced a positive legislative agenda to which the Senate has reflexively said ‘no.’”

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