



News Release
Phone: (804) 643-7489, ext. 10

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Senate Commerce & Labor Democrats Defeat Workforce Development Reform *~VCCS Chancellor Leads Opposition~*

RICHMOND, VA – In a surprising vote yesterday, Democrats on the Senate Commerce & Labor Committee voted on party lines to defeat Delegate Kathy Byron’s workforce development reform bill. HB 1041 was focused on the Virginia Workforce Council (VWC) - an advisory Board to the Governor on the use and implementation of resources associated with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in Virginia. The bill was supported by Governor McDonnell’s Administration, VMA, Virginia Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Career College Association and a host of others involved with the work of the VWC.

Delegate Byron has championed workforce development, specifically Virginia Workforce Council reforms, for 13 years as a member of the VWC. The abrupt opposition from the VCCS Chancellor and the Senate Democrats caught the proponents by surprise. Each cited a scripted opposition that all VWC bills should be vetted by the VWC itself before being introduced in the General Assembly - a practice that has never existed or been used in the last eight years. Organized Labor was also opposed to the bill on the House side, but they did not testify against the bill in the Senate. The bill passed the House 97-1.

The Chancellor was not speaking for the VCCS Board and his testimony was in direct opposition to the position of the Governor’s Office and the business community. The Chancellor’s focus was that the bill somehow reduced the VCCS’s authority with regards to the VWC and Workforce Investment Act spending recommendations. Delegate Kathy Byron countered this argument by stating that it was her intent for this legislation “to strengthen the Virginia Workforce Council.”

If passed, this bill would have focused the efforts of the VWC on reporting “measurable results” in skills certification, work readiness, career readiness, STEM education, military transition services, employment, employment retention, and a work-ready community pilot project. It would have created more options for representation on the Council from the VA Hospital and Healthcare Association and from technology employers. It also would have focused the VWC on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) educational opportunities for women, minorities and youth as well as creating a Military Transition Assistance Committee to advise the Governor on reforms necessary to better connect employers with transitioning military personnel. Finally, the bill would have produced a plan to increase the number of private and non-profit training providers accessible to the people of the Commonwealth.

The legislation was an effort to continue reforms from the 2003 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) report and the 2005 Joint Subcommittee.

These important reforms will be delayed another year unless Governor McDonnell acts independently as the Chief Workforce Officer of the Commonwealth. While the bill has been carried over to the 2011 General Assembly session, the VWC and stakeholders are committed to developing a final resolution to move these efforts forward for the people of the Commonwealth to have improved resources in these critical areas of workforce development.