

Talking Points
2009 VFC State Legislative Plan Pro Tem

Protect retirement funds including 401-k and other investment vehicles from legal settlements.

Currently, federal retirement, SS retirement funds, and TSP accounts are protected from garnishment and many other legal settlements, except from the IRS. Once one retires and moves ones TSP funds into a 401k plan, this protection vanishes. For FERS employees this represents 1/3 of their retirement that could be subject to seizure. For non federal retirees the future of retirement will be based on various forms of investment vehicles. To protect the future retirement income of all residents there needs to be some protection of retirement vehicles. Two bills were introduced in the 2008 legislative session. One, HB1256, would protect up to \$750,000 and was left in committee, the other HB1559, would protect the full amount of an IRA and was continued until the 2009 session.

Encourage VDOT to alter transportation policies to accommodate the needs of the rapidly increasing seniors population:

Previous legislative actions have called for changes in state Transportation policy to recognize the special needs of the increasingly aging population, but there is little evidence that this is happening.

Policy must call for larger and more visible signage for street signs, and route numbers. Lane markers and edge designators must be clearer and visible under adverse weather conditions. While our society has been designed around the use of private automobiles for decades, the state is projecting a significant increase in the population of citizens aged 80 and more. As members of the community age their ability to use a private auto is compromised, and they find themselves trapped in their own homes with inadequate access to medical services and the normal amenities of life. In much of the state no alternate form of transportation is available. Public transportation to meet the needs of seniors should be developed and made available in more areas of the state. Seniors who relied on their own private transportation options need help converting to the use of public facilities.

Nursing Homes in the state are still a concern. Many issues identified in the JLARC10 study still need addressing:

Implement and enforce certification requirements for all workers, both professional and non-professional, in nursing homes. Projections by the State Council on Higher Education indicate that by 2020 the state will need about 69,000 registered nurses, but will have only available 47,000, making trained certified workers hard to find. This will also make the implementation and enforcement of a maximum caregiver to patient ratio in nursing homes, extremely difficult.

Require nursing homes to provide more options to patients for obtaining prescriptions and other needed drugs and medicines. Most nursing homes use an in house pharmacy which often makes using FEHBP pharmacy options difficult if possible at all.

Evidence has shown that there is a significant amount of elder abuse both in home care and in nursing homes. The State needs to implement more programs to secure and encourage the utilization of volunteer ombudsmen for patients.

Implement and require activity programs, both mental and physical, for patients in nursing homes.

Implement a requirement for geriatric training for medical professionals and medical support personnel. Just as pediatric doctors are trained to deal with issues in a manner appropriate to children, the medical profession has found that Geriatric training is needed to properly deal with the special ways that elderly patients respond to treatment

Encourage more Seniors to age in place by increasing the tax credit from \$500 to \$1000 for residents who upgrade their homes to increase the accessibility and visitability as defined in Virginia code 58.1-339.7.

Current law covers benefits for new construction, and for retrofitting older dwellings with features that make access and livability to dwellings by the disabled possible, but provides only a \$500 residential tax credit which is insignificant when compared to actual costs. With the stagnant real estate market many homeowners find it advantageous to remain in their own homes, and would like to make modifications to make them easier to live in as their ability to get around is compromised with age. The current program adopted in the 2007 session of the Legislature, was implemented January 1 2008, but little knowledge of it has spread to the senior population of the commonwealth. This program is primarily designed to provide assistance to disabled persons who use wheelchairs for mobility assistance. Increasing the credit to \$1,000 would better align the credit with the costs of construction.

Change the Rules of the House of Delegates to require formal reporting of votes taken in House Subcommittees

For several years the Republican majority in the House of Delegates has adopted a rule that permits bills to be disposed of in subcommittee. Previously bills were discussed in subcommittee, but all bills were voted on in full committee, with the committee vote recorded and displayed on the General Assembly web site. Placing these votes on the web site for all to see will remove the veil of secrecy that gives the appearance that the leadership is unwilling to take responsibility for actions taken on behalf of the citizens of the Commonwealth. Subcommittee meetings are frequently held early in the day with little public knowledge of the agenda, and votes often have only 4 to 5 Delegates on the prevailing side. While disposing of bills in subcommittee may help in dealing with the significant workload of the members of the House of Delegates, hiding the identity of the voters is not consistent with the otherwise openness of the operation of the General Assembly.