

Getting Things Done

By Bob McDonnell

I am now more than halfway through my term as the 44th Attorney General of Virginia. That's hard to believe. Time moves quickly though, and already the attention of political observers has turned to upcoming elections. However, even as we look ahead, I think a little time spent looking back is in order.

Every campaign season voters are inundated with promises and pledges. Then we move forward, and rarely is a glance back afforded. But a vibrant and participatory democracy is dependent upon faith being kept between candidates and voters. Accountability matters. Rhetoric must lead to results or citizens lose confidence.

With this in mind I have recently gone back through the platform we ran on in our 2005 campaign. I want to be accountable for how we have done once in office.

I am pleased to report that the proposals we made in 2005 have been enacted.

When I ran for Attorney General we made seven major campaign promises.

If elected, we pledged to:

- * *Protect Children from Sexual Predators*
- * *Take Dangerous Drug Dealers off our Streets*
- * *Defend Virginians against 21st Century Crimes like Identity Theft*
- * *Combat Gang Violence*
- * *Strengthen Virginians' Property Rights*
- * *Curb Frivolous Prisoner Lawsuits*
- * *Protect Virginians from Terrorist Threats.*

Here is what we have accomplished.

Protect Children from Sexual Predators

A cornerstone of our first legislative agenda was passing "Jessica's Law" in Virginia, establishing a 25-year mandatory minimum sentence for certain sexual predators who commit violent crimes against children. We created a state of the art Sex Offender Registry. We instituted GPS monitoring for certain sexually violent predators upon release, and an improved civil commitment process to detain the most dangerous. We also instituted proactive, innovative educational programs to teach children about Internet safety.

Take Dangerous Drug Dealers off our Streets

When I ran for Attorney General I spoke about the importance of getting drug dealers off of our streets and away from our children. In particular I was concerned that we were failing to go after the "mid-level" drug dealers through whom so much of the drug traffic flows.

With the help of Del. Rob Bell and Sen. Ken Stolle, we created a new "mini-kingpin" statute that imposed a 5-year mandatory minimum sentence and a fine of up to \$1 million on these mid-level drug dealers.

Defend Virginians against 21st Century Crimes like Identity Theft

Virginia has a reputation as a national leader in combating 21st Century crimes. We pledged to continue to improve our laws. We have done so. In the 2006 session we increased the number of identity theft crimes that are prosecutable as a felony. We have expanded our Identity Theft passport program for victims, publish informative booklets and educate the public about this fast growing but preventable crime.

Combat Gang Violence

I believe we have to approach the gang problem with punishment and prevention, by enacting tougher penalties for gang members, and creating new opportunities for young people to keep them out of gangs. We are doing this. We passed legislation adding to the list of crimes that make someone eligible for prosecution under Virginia's gang participation laws. We've secured legislation that punishes gang recruitment, and we've given judges the ability to impose restrictions on interaction with gang members as part of an individual's terms of probation. In southside Richmond communities our innovative GRIP program is keeping young people gang-free by giving them positive opportunities, and has led to a significant decline in the crime rate in Richmond.

Strengthen Virginians' Property Rights

In the case of *Kelo v. New London*, decided in the middle of the 2005 campaign, the U.S. Supreme Court gave the government broad authority to take private property for public purposes. It was a bad decision, and it spurred us to act. It was not an easy fight. However, on July 1st, 2007 our legislation protecting private property rights, championed by Del.

Rob Bell, Sen. Ken Cuccinelli, Sen. Steve Newman and Sen. Tommy Norment became law. This legislation creates strict limitations regarding any taking of private property, and forbids the taking of private land when the primary purpose is private financial gain, private benefit, an increase in tax base or revenues, or an increase in employment.

Curb Frivolous Prisoner Lawsuits

Frivolous prisoner lawsuits have a debilitating effect on our courts system, and the professionals who work in it. These lawsuits waste taxpayer dollars and take precious time away from more important matters. Working with Del. Terry Kilgore we passed our proposals to curb frivolous prisoner lawsuits by giving judges discretion on issuing subpoenas, and permitting the dismissal of certain inmate lawsuits without the need for hearings.

Protect Virginians from Terrorist Threats

Virginians are well aware that the Commonwealth is a target for terrorists. We must be prepared for these threats. Working with Del.

Beverly Sherwood and Sen. William Wampler we codified the mission and outlined the preparedness and security duties of the Office of Commonwealth Preparedness and the Secure Commonwealth Panel, and made this office permanent. We also changed the funding structure to be based on threat, and conducted a legal table-top exercise to prepare all state agencies for coordination in the event of an attack.

Records matter. I am pleased to say that we have kept our campaign promises, and through our work we have begun to build a safer and stronger Virginia. There is much more to be done. As we unveil new policy proposals I hope voters will look at our record and know that we are committed to solving problems and getting results for the citizens of Virginia.