



WILLIAM J. HOWELL
SPEAKER

TWENTY-EIGHTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
RULES (CHAIRMAN)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 13, 2007

Contact: G. Paul Nardo
(804) 698-1228

gpnardo@house.state.va.us

www.williamjhowell.org

Statements of House Speaker William J. Howell and Appropriations Committee Chair Lacey E. Putney

-- Regarding Higher Education Bond Package --

RICHMOND, VA – Virginia House of Delegates Speaker William J. Howell (R-Stafford) and incoming House Appropriations Committee Chairman Lacey E. Putney (I-Bedford) today issued the following statements regarding the higher education bond package proposal announced this morning by Governor Timothy M. Kaine:

“Access to education is the key that unlocks and opens wide the doors of opportunity that lead to a better life – and better livelihoods – for everyone,” declared Speaker Howell. “Throughout our history, Virginians have shared a bedrock belief in support of education’s positive and transforming power. Today, achieving excellence in education requires modern, world-class facilities to accommodate and help ensure places for the rapidly increasing number of college-bound students who want to benefit from all that Virginia higher education has to offer. Without additional space, Virginia’s ability to produce world-class research would suffer, adversely impacting people’s quality of life. Additionally, educational research is crucial to Virginia’s competitiveness, economic development and future job opportunities. Companies want to locate or expand near colleges and universities – which are powerful engines contributing to progress, discovery and prosperity – to take advantage of a well-educated and well-trained workforce. For these and many more reasons, all of us understand and value the return on investment provided by our outstanding community colleges, and our public four-year colleges and universities.”

“Over the last two legislative Sessions the General Assembly has approved \$28 million in planning for higher education and Mental Health and Mental Retardation facilities,” noted Chairman Putney. “Some of these projects appear to be included in this proposal. However, funding for construction of Western State Hospital, the Central Virginia Training Center, and the Southeastern Virginia Training Center is absent. Another factor that needs to be carefully examined is the cost estimates of these projects. The 2002 General Obligation Bond package has now exceeded by \$300 million more than the amounts approved by the voters.

“It is my intention that the Appropriations Committee will properly vet these projects to ensure that the cost estimates are accurate and reasonable before going to the voters. Our goal is to ultimately send to the voters for consideration a comprehensive bond package that includes the rebuilding of the mental health facilities as well as addressing the needs of higher education.”

###