



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
RICHMOND

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
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**The Honorable Lacey E. Putney**  
**Request for Unanimous Consent to Introduce a Budget for the 2010-12 and 2012-14**  
**Biennial Periods**

**March 1, 2012**

Mr. Speaker, I rise for a request and a point of personal privilege.

Mr. Speaker my request is for unanimous consent to introduce legislation. Speaking to the request.

Several weeks ago I was humbled by this body in recognizing my 50 years of service in the House of Delegates. Your accolades and kindness meant a lot to me and my family.

As I look back on my tenure in this great institution, I have witnessed a lot of change both in Virginia and in the General Assembly. Some might say that the changes I have seen would qualify me to be Forest Gump.

Mr. Speaker, I have been a member of the Appropriations Committee since 1966. At that time, as a junior member of the committee, we met on the fourth floor of the State Capitol. The meetings were closed to the press, public and even to members of the Committee. Only the executive committee and the Governor's budget Director were allowed in the Committee room. I was allowed in only by invitation.

Of course back then, the General Assembly only met every other year. All that began to change in 1971, with the adoption of a new State Constitution, which called for annual meeting of the General Assembly.

Why did we need to meet annually? Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite simple. The Commonwealth of Virginia was changing and was becoming an emerging economy. The fact of the matter was that as a modernizing state, our budget was not just any old piece of legislation; rather it drives our policies that fund the core service of government both at the state as well as the local government level.

Simply put Mr. Speaker, the budget is the single most important piece of legislation we vote on.

Mr. Speaker, the move to an annual Session was just the starting point with regards to the importance of our responsibility as Members of the General Assembly to develop and adopt a biennial budget.

Clearly the responsibility of the state's finances ultimately and constitutionally belongs to us. The Constitution is very clear, "No money shall be paid out of the State treasury except in pursuance of appropriations made by law".

Mr. Speaker, I believe that would be House Bill 30 that the Constitution is referencing.

Mr. Speaker, as the years passed, the House of Delegates too began to modernize. In 1976, Delegate Ed Lane of Richmond hired the first professional staff of the Appropriations Committee. Of course, at that time, the budget originated in the House of Delegates.

The House would adopt a budget and send it to the Senate of Virginia. The Senate had about 5 days to make its changes prior to sending the budget back and setting up the budget conference committee.

It was not until around 1982 that the Senate, under then Senator Ed Willey, also of Richmond, demanded that the budget be introduced in both bodies. While the Senate had their own budget, the long standing tradition and practice has been to leave the Senate budget in the House Appropriations Committee and use the House Budget as the vehicle from which the budget conference would work.

Since that time, the Senate has never failed to adopt a budget, at least until now. Likewise, the Senate has never failed to adopt amendments to the House Budget in order to set up a conference committee, at least until now.

During my tenure, there have been three occasions in which a budget impasse has occurred -- 2001, 2004, and 2006.

In each of those cases, the impasse was between the House and Senate. Despite these impasses, in each case, both bodies adopted their respective budgets and a committee of conference was called. Never have we had a situation in which there was no budget from either chamber to work with.

Mr. Speaker, call me a bit old fashion, but I truly believe that we, in this House of Delegates, are duty bound, both constitutionally and based on our long tradition to have a House budget in which to set up a committee of conference.

Mr. Speaker, in my 51 years as a member of this House, I have not risen and requested of the body the unanimous consent to introduce a bill. However, I feel as Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, it is my responsibility to introduce, with unanimous consent, budget bills for the current 2010-12 biennium and for the 2012-14 biennium. The bills are identical to HB 29 and 30, which I introduced in December. If consent is granted, the Committee will meet to adopt the identical amendments that were approved by the House last Thursday.

While I could ask his Excellency the Governor, to use his authority and do so, I believe that as clearly articulated in the Constitution, the appropriations process is the responsibility of the General Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, throughout this Session, the Appropriations Committee has reached out to all 100 members. We received your input, and I believe the budget we adopted was reflective of that collective input.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Gentleman from Charlottesville for the courtesy of meeting with me prior to the Session to discuss my request.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that this body will honor my request for unanimous consent to introduce two new budgets.