

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

HARRY B. BLEVINS
4TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT
PART OF THE CITIES OF
SAPEAKE AND VIRGINIA BEACH
POST OFFICE BOX 16207
ESAPEAKE, VIRGINIA 23328
(757) 546-2435



SENATE

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT
AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION
NATURAL RESOURCES
COURTS OF JUSTICE
EDUCATION AND HEALTH
TRANSPORTATION

October 8, 2008

Elizabeth Palen, Executive Director
Virginia Housing Commission
c/o Division of Legislative Services
General Assembly Building, 2nd Floor
910 Capitol Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Ms. Palen,

I write to express my continued strong interest in seeing SB 167 enacted into law by the 2009 General Assembly. During the 2008 General Assembly session, the Senate General Laws and Technology Committee reviewed several pieces of legislation related to fire safety, an issue of great importance to me. Senate Bill 167 proposes a change intended to improve certain fire safety aspects of the Uniform Statewide Building Code. This bill "...requires the Board of Housing and Community Development to promulgate regulations establishing standards for requiring the use of noncombustible materials in the construction of assisted living facilities, residential dwelling units designed or developed and marketed to senior citizens, nursing homes, and nursing facilities."

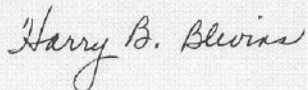
The Committee heard significant testimony both in support of and opposition to SB 167. After careful consideration and comments from committee members, it became apparent that intent of the bill was strongly supported by several members of the Committee. While the General Assembly is reluctant to legislate policy changes to regulatory codes, we will do so if circumstances so require. Because of this reluctance, the Committee voted to continue the bill until the next General Assembly session and request that the Board of Housing and Community Development take the appropriate actions necessary to address the policy concerns embodied in SB 167 and report back to the Committee. I believe that Senator Locke sent a letter to the Chair of the Board of Housing and Community Development in this regard.

I recently learned that the issue raised in SB 167 is also being studied by the Virginia Housing Commission and that the issue is on a work group agenda for Tuesday October 14. I have worked closely with members of the Virginia Fire Safe Construction Advisory Committee of the Virginia Masonry Association on this matter over the past year. I have asked a representative of the FSCAC make about a 30 minute presentation on the issues raised in SB 167 to the VHC work group next Tuesday. Mr. Ron Jordan (804-228-4506) and Mr. Mathew Stanley (804-228-4496) are the contact persons for the FSCAC. I have little to add to the FSCAC presentation at this time but will do so as we get closer to the upcoming session. During the Senate General Laws and Technology Committee discussion, members of the fire service also expressed great interest in this matter since the structural integrity of burning buildings has a significant impact on the lives of fire fighters. You might contact Mr. Ed Rhodes (804-360-8992) of the Virginia Fire Chief's Association to see if they have anything to add to the FSCAC presentation. The Virginia Chapter

of the American Association of Retired Persons also took a strong position in support of this matter. As you are aware, the AARP is the largest organized voice for the senior citizens of the Commonwealth, the group most directly affected by SB 167.

I am hopeful that the legislative members of the Virginia Housing Commission will support SB 167 and help me advance it through the 2009 General Assembly session and would appreciate it if you will convey my thoughts to them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Harry B. Blivins", is written on a light-colored rectangular background.