



WILLIAM J. HOWELL
SPEAKER

TWENTY-EIGHTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
RULES (CHAIRMAN)

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Speaker Howell Announces Government Spending Cuts for VA House of Delegates Totaling at least \$775,000 in 2011

-- \$50,000 in Budget Reductions being returned by Speaker's Office to General Fund by end of This Year --

-- \$275,000 in Overall New Cost Savings on top of \$500,000 Already Approved in Current Budget --

-- Virginia Ranks 46th in Per Capita Spending on Legislature, Improving from 40th in 2003 --

RICHMOND, VA – Continuing to share in the budget sacrifices being faced by taxpayers, business and families, Virginia House of Delegates Speaker William J. Howell (R-Stafford) today announced the latest round of budget reduction strategies being implemented by the Republican-led House of Delegates. The \$275,000 in new cuts equals 5% of the non-constitutionally mandated duties of the House, with overall total cuts totaling \$775,000 in the current 2011 budget. Since 2003 when Howell became Speaker, the House has returned over \$5.5 million to the General Fund.

“State lawmakers are not immune from making the same kind of tough decisions to cut costs that all Virginians are grappling with in these tough economic times, and today’s \$275,000 in new cost savings are further proof that Republicans are serious about reining in government spending” said Speaker Howell. “I have made identifying ways to improve House operations while reducing costs wherever possible a high priority as Speaker, so it is good that we’ve been able to return over \$5.5 million from the House to the General Fund since 2003. With the economy still weak and private sector still struggling to grow and create jobs, ongoing fiscal discipline with state finances remains imperative.”

The \$275,000 in latest savings by the House of Delegates is the result of: leaving vacant for over nine months a staff position in the Speaker’s Office; keeping delegate and eligible legislative staff in-session expenses well below what the federal Internal Revenue Service authorizes for the conduct of legislative business for the coming Session; maintaining the 1991-approved two percent pay cut in delegates’ \$17,640 per year salary; and continuing to require that legislative meetings outside of Session be held only on certain days and weeks to save unnecessary expenditures. Speaker Howell will offer a budget amendment in the 2011 Session to realize the \$275,000 savings. The other \$500,000 in House budget cuts was approved earlier this year by state lawmakers in Chapter 874 of the Acts of Assembly.

The Republican-led House of Delegates, under Speaker Howell, has taken many steps over the years to reduce costs and increase efficiencies, while not inhibiting the House’s fulfillment of its constitutional duties. For example, in 2003, the House economized and returned \$800,000 to the General Fund to help balance the budget. In 2004, due to operational efficiencies and cost-cutting measures, the House was able to revert an additional \$900,000 to the General Fund. Between 2005-2007, continued budget-saving strategies enabled the House to return \$2.0 million. In Fiscal Year 2010, the House cut and returned over \$1.1 million to help share in the sacrifices everyone was making. And, by the end of the current Fiscal Year (2011), at least \$775,000 will be returned by the House to the General Fund.

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Given this time of stagnant wages and workers, taxpayers and families struggling to live within their means, it is especially worth noting that the reduced delegate salary level of \$17,640 annually remains in effect. Prior to 1991, delegates and senators were each paid \$18,000 annually. In May 1991, delegates agreed as a cost-savings to reduce House members' salary by two percent to its current level. Over the past 19 years, the delegate pay cut – and lower amount than state senators are paid by taxpayers – has saved the Commonwealth a total of \$708,000.

Since 2003 when Speaker Howell was first elected to his legislative leadership position, the Commonwealth has improved its national rankings – dropping from 40th to 46th in the nation in *per capita* spending on its legislature, according to data compiled by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), while remaining the 12th largest state in population.

For the most recent fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2010, the budget for the entire General Assembly and all legislative agencies was less than one-half of one percent – 0.46% – of the total General Fund budget of \$14.8 billion.

William J. Howell is the 54th Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates. First elected a delegate in 1987, he represents the 28th House District which includes parts of Stafford County and the City of Fredericksburg. For more information regarding Speaker Howell, please visit his website – www.williamjhowell.org .

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