



## General Assembly Update Week 6- February 15, 2019

### **The Lull Before the Storm**

At this point in the session, the focus is on completing all bills related to the budget as well as the budget itself. The process is similar to making sausage—if you're familiar with that messy process, you know what I mean!

Only four bills that are still active truly concern me. Two bills, HB1659 and SB1257, would require pastors to become mandated reporters of child abuse. So long as there are no further changes to these bills, I believe our pastors will be properly protected in their pastoral duties. The Senate and House versions are identical and should soon be on the governor's desk for his signature.

***The storm that was to hit next week for VAIB has been averted!*** The two other active bills have a related purpose: to protect sexual orientation and gender identity from discrimination. One bill, SB1109, involves areas related to housing (rental and sales), while the other bill, SB998, involves public employment (government only). VAIB continues to oppose creating another special class of protected citizens.

The House General Laws committee chaired by Delegate Chris Peace announced Thursday at the end of their meeting that there would be no further meetings. When interviewed by Graham Moomaw of the Richmond Times Dispatch about the failure to hear SB998 and SB1109, Del. Peace explained that these were bills that had been heard by this committee in the past and failed. Knowing that the membership of the committee had not changed, the chairman felt it unnecessary to hear the Senate bills. He further explained that a nondiscrimination bill for public employment, HB2791, passed earlier in the session. This bill clarified that individuals will be hired and fired in public employment based "solely upon merit and fitness." This is a huge victory and something I had advocated for with those on this committee.

**Therefore, SB998 and SB1109 failed!** Please pray that nothing changes to allow for SB998 and SB1109 to be brought back for a vote by the full House. It is clear that there are enough votes to pass these bills in the House.

I'm excited to still have visitors coming to the Capitol. Last week Pastor John Dooley and Joel Wegner of Colonial Baptist Church in Roanoke visited. And next week I hope to have three more visitors. If you were unable to come this year, make plans to come next year. You will be encouraged by what you see and hear, and you will be a blessing to legislators and to me!

Sincerely,  
Eddy Aliff