

**Coalition for Smarter Growth, Virginia League of Conservation Voters,
Audubon Naturalist Society, Virginia Conservation Network, Piedmont
Environmental Council**

PRESS RELEASE

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Sweetheart Bill for Builders Almost Derailed in Senate

“The significant division in the Senate vote on SB768 today demonstrates the serious problems with this bill,” said **Lisa Guthrie**, Executive Director of the Virginia League of Conservation Voters. “Had the bill not been filed at the last minute and had there been even a couple more days for all legislators to realize the damaging fiscal impacts, this bill would not have passed.”

The bill was universally opposed by local governments through their associations – VACO, VML and Coalition of High Growth Communities. “This was a homebuilder bill which pushes through sweeping changes to existing law and passes on the costs of infrastructure to Virginia taxpayers in future property tax increases and state tax increases for transportation,” said **Chris Miller**, President of the Piedmont Environmental Council. “The bill will destroy efforts by local communities to negotiate contributions to affordable housing, parks and trails, libraries, and historic preservation. It will bring mixed-use and transit-oriented development projects to an end in Virginia, reducing economic investment,” said **Stella Koch**, of the Audubon Naturalist Society, and member of the Tysons Corner Land Use Task Force.

“It is worth noting that the General Assembly has been wrestling with whether to approve a homestead exemption to reduce property taxes – a bill which could help seniors and others on fixed incomes who are hurt by rising assessments and taxes. The effort has failed in the House. Certainly, General Assembly members should not then turn around and approve SB768, which is a defacto property tax increase.” said **Stewart Schwartz**, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth.

“Many Senators deserve credit for responding to the concerns of their local jurisdictions and constituents, but we are concerned that others did not vote against this bill. We believe that the fiscal impacts and the structuring of public and private contributions to infrastructure need extensive study,” said **Guthrie**. Senator Mark Herring of Loudoun County was a leader in the fight against the bill on the Senate floor.

“SB768 undermines Governor Kaine’s effort to support local communities and better growth management. We urge Governor Kaine to work in opposition to this bill and to veto it if it survives the House,” said **Martha Wingfield**, Chair of the Virginia Conservation Network.

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