

Peter Schmidt, 82nd District

2009 Virginia House of Delegates Candidate Questionnaire

1. Specifically, what unique qualities and/or qualifications will you bring to the office you seek?
 - A. Fiscally conservative – As a manufacturer, small businessman and employer I have met a payroll for the past 30 years.
 - B. Public sector experience – As Director of the Department of Environmental Quality under Governor George Allen I reorganized DEQ from four departments into one. During that time I was able to eliminate waste and save Virginia taxpayers millions of dollars. My experience was the foundation of my commitment to the environment. I also developed knowledge of how state government works.
 - C. Elected official - As a member of Virginia Beach city council I saw firsthand how the General Assembly can frustrate and challenge local elected bodies through unfunded mandates. This can force localities to keep property taxes high in order to fund necessary services, like education or public safety, which the state consistently underfunds. I will not allow this to happen on my watch in Richmond.
 - D. Commitment and energy - The commitment and energy to tackle head on the biggest problems facing the commonwealth and see them through to a successful resolution.

2. What transportation changes or improvements do you advocate and how specifically would you pay for them?

Transportation is the most pressing need we face in Virginia today, and I will work tirelessly every day to remind my colleagues in the General Assembly that we must find transportation solutions, and find them now. If we are ever going to be able to protect the Port of Hampton Roads, attract new businesses and tourists to the state, have arteries for escape during emergencies (Hurricane Bill is churning in the Atlantic as I write this), and continue to compete in a global economy, we must improve our transportation infrastructure now. These improvements include light and high speed rail and some version of the six major road projects the region has proposed for some time, although I am not wedded to the specifics of every one of the alternatives as stated. One specific and necessary addition is a tie-in off Military Highway to Route 58 so traffic can be diverted off I-64 East near Bowers Hill if the Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel backs up for 20 miles as it did during last month's "pipegate", blocking any exit onto Route 58 and an escape to Route 460. In Virginia Beach and throughout the commonwealth, few major transportation improvements have been made since Governor Baliles' administration in the mid-1980's, and the roads of yesterday cannot keep up with the demands of today. Transportation funding has been a point of contention in the House of Delegates for far too

long, but it is an issue that will not be resolved without political courage. We must have an honest discussion of every possible dedicated funding source we have at our disposal, including toll roads, public-private partnerships, a gas guzzler tax tied to CAFE standards, expanding the use of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes across Virginia, congestion pricing, mileage taxes, and gas and sales taxes. Once this discussion has taken place we must have the political will to lead and enact changes that will make up for lost decades of reasonable infrastructure improvements, and I will not shirk this responsibility. Transportation solutions demand a bipartisan approach for effective resolution, and I can reach across the aisle to work towards common agreement. It is vital that we agree on a solution soon or we will become increasingly less competitive as a state. These solutions demand leadership, energy, and commitment, and I will provide all three to get our delegation and the General Assembly moving forward. We cannot be asleep at the wheel if we wish to solve transportation challenges.

3. Aside from transportation, what do you believe are two other important challenges facing the Commonwealth? Specifically, what responses do you propose and how will you pay for them?
 - A. Education. I will make it a priority to champion better educational access for our children in all facets of education, from Early Childhood Development to Workforce Readiness Partnerships to post-secondary education. A particular opportunity we have is in Workforce Readiness Partnerships between the commonwealth and private employers, public school systems, community colleges, and the military. 70% of our high school seniors do not receive a traditional undergraduate degree but should enjoy a productive life and a good job. I believe we must enhance Virginia's standing in the global economy by focusing on vocational and technical training earlier in the academic process as well as providing tax incentives to Virginia businesses to recruit and retain "certified employees" right out of high school or the military. If we are able to educate students earlier and expose them to the benefits of technical training versus a conventional educational path, we will develop a qualified workforce that provides a favorable environment for businesses to expand in or relocate to the Commonwealth. Virginia is 37th nationally in funding for education, so any money for these initiatives must come from new revenue sources, as our economic recovery allows, although the Workforce Training component can, I believe, be done with a very modest investment.
 - B. Energy. We need to develop an energy policy that focuses on clean, renewable resources and reduces our reliance on foreign oil through innovation and ingenuity. We cannot drill our way out of an energy problem - if oil is found off Virginia's coast sometime in the future it will move to global markets and not lower our price at the pump one cent. Virginia Beach has strong and consistent wind fields near our coastline in shallow water. Hampton Roads has an opportunity to be a leader in component manufacturing of wind turbines. We have ample world-class, water-accessible fabrication capacity and a well-trained workforce in place to position us at the forefront of this burgeoning field. We are well situated on the electrical grid

to bring megawatts onshore in a cost-effective manner. We can have substantial job creation, protect our tourist industry, and protect our environment by aggressively exploring this new and growing energy resource. Our philosophy must be long-term, not short-term. To move this initiative forward we must have leadership committed to these alternatives, and private investment, not public funding, will spur these new energy developments.