

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
HOUSE OF DELEGATES
RICHMOND

KENNETH R. PLUM
2073 COBBLESTONE LANE
RESTON, VIRGINIA 20191-4039

THIRTY-SIXTH DISTRICT
CHAIR, HOUSE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

December 15, 2010

Mr. Pat Mullins
Chairman
Republican Party of Virginia
115 E. Grace Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Pat:

Your letter of December 10 to the Senate and House of Delegates Democratic Caucuses seems almost frantic in tone!

Clearly you recognize the transportation funding problem in the Commonwealth.

As you say in your letter, “we’ve all spent hours stuck in traffic jams caused by roads with too few lanes, too many pot holes, and too many cars. There’s not a person in Virginia who doesn’t want to see this problem fixed.”

Interestingly, you do not plead for us to get behind Governor Bob McDonnell’s plan for fixing transportation – you know the plan that the Governor said he had during his campaign.

You never asked us to get behind the Governor’s plan to triple the number of liquor stores in Virginia while giving up a steady stream of income to only get enough one-time money to build a highway interchange.

You never told us to “drill, baby, drill” in order to fix our roads and expand mass transit.

Nor did you endorse the Governor’s latest Washington-like borrowing proposal that would shift \$4 billion in costs to future generations while amassing the greatest debt Virginians have ever experienced. You did not ask us to support the use of paper toll-credits as matching funds not unlike the financing schemes financial institutions were using before the most recent bank failures.

No place in your letter did I see you ask us to risk our triple-A bond rating or our best managed state recognition to go along with these borrow and spend proposals.

Your letter did not even mention the latest “lock box” proposal to prevent the transfer of transportation funds to schools, police, and mental health programs while at the same time increasing the amount of money taken from these programs to fund transportation.

Instead your letter in a tone that I can only read as frantic pleads with us to give you some ideas. “What we need are ideas,” your letter says in the second paragraph. You mention “ideas” a dozen times in your letter.

I believe that you can see what the public has already been able to see.

There is no Republican plan to fix our transportation problems. Now you plead with Democrats to give you ideas.

All the audits that were promised are yet to produce one new nickel for transportation. Offshore drilling will not provide a dime for transportation in our lifetime. Selling liquor stores is a terrible deal for taxpayers. And the borrowing of billions may be the way it is done in Washington, D.C., but it has never been the Virginia way except for Governor Gilmore who amassed such debt that we are still paying it off.

Governor McDonnell was correct in his most recent statements that this is the time to fix our transportation infrastructure when prices are low and we have people to put to work. He sounded almost like President Obama promoting his stimulus spending plan.

Your party controls two of the three bodies necessary to pass legislation, the House of Delegates and the Governor. The people expect you to lead. I do not think that your explanation in the next election cycle for your failure to lead that “Democrats did not give us any ideas” will likely resonate favorably with voters.

It was always said that only Nixon could go to China. Only Governor Bob McDonnell can solve Virginia’s transportation problems. But in order to do so, he needs to get out from behind the lame excuse that Democrats will not give him any ideas.

May I suggest that you inform the Governor of the dialogue we have had with this exchange of letters. He will see that neither party, Republican or Democrat, supports his current plan of action. Tell him about your drop box in the atrium of Republican headquarters on Grace Street. Invite him to drop something in it.

The Governor needs to be what you term “The Architect of our Transportation Solution.” We will join you in applauding him when he proposes a real solution rather than gimmicks and borrowing for which you obviously also have some aversion.

I return to you the hope expressed in your letter that this finds you well and in good spirits this holiday season. As you said and with which I fully concur, “We truly live in a beautiful Commonwealth, and that beauty is especially pronounced around the holidays.”

Happy holidays,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth R. Plum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'K'.

Kenneth R. Plum
Chair, House Democratic Caucus