



PARTNERSHIP TO Save Highway Communities

January 19, 2010

The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell
Governor
Commonwealth of Virginia
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor McDonnell:

On behalf of the Partnership to Save Highway Communities, we congratulate you on your inauguration as Virginia's 71st Governor. We look forward to working with you and your administration over the next four years. The Partnership of Highway Communities is a coalition of businesses and organizations who rely upon the economic activity provided by interstate highway motorists. The coalition consists of restaurants, gas stations and truckstops that serve motorists as well as community-based organizations that rely on the tax revenues provided by these services. Businesses like ours have been providing these services to motorists since the inception of the Interstate Highway System, when Congress saw the need for a diverse network of businesses along these new highways to serve the needs of the traveling public.

As you take office, we would like to bring to your attention an issue that has been at the top of your short-term transportation agenda: the reopening of Virginia's rest areas that were closed in July 2009. We are encouraged by your comments regarding innovative measures to keep these rest areas open, and would like to work with the Virginia Department of Transportation to implement solutions that will benefit both motorists and the highway-based businesses that serve them.

One solution that has been suggested would be to seek changes to federal law to allow for the commercialization of rest areas in the commonwealth. We strongly oppose this proposal and believe it would significantly damage communities located along Virginia's interstate highways that serve highway motorists. A 2003 study by the University of Maryland has found that in states that are allowed to operate commercialized rest areas, there is half as much economic activity in the counties with commercialized rest areas compared to those that operate under the ban on commercial activity. In Virginia, approximately 2,300 of these interstate-based businesses employ more than 65,000 people. If the current federal ban on commercialization is lifted, thousands of Virginians will lose their jobs as

highway businesses close, unable to compete with the state-sponsored businesses that would be located directly on the highway right-of-way. The commercialization of Virginia's rest areas would be met with businesses closed, jobs lost, and a substantial loss of tax revenues for cities and counties.

As you begin the process of reopening Virginia's rest areas, we encourage you to pursue policies that keep rest areas open while also preserving the role of highway-based communities in meeting the needs of the traveling public. Commercialization of Virginia's rest areas will only harm the cities and people that rely on such traffic, and will ultimately reduce competition for motorists. We would be eager to work with the Virginia Department of Transportation in helping to develop proposals that meet the needs of all interstate highway stakeholders.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue, and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

The Partnership to Save Highway Communities

Association of Kentucky Fried Chicken Franchisees
Blind Entrepreneurs Alliance
Brinker International
Burger King Corporation
Coalition of Franchisee Associations
Franchise Management Advisory Council
Indiana Petroleum Marketers & Convenience Store Association
International Pizza Hut Franchise Holders Association
McDonald's Corporation
National Association of Convenience Stores
National Association of Shell Marketers
National Federation of the Blind
National Franchise Association (Burger King franchisees)
NATSO, Representing America's Travel Plazas and Truckstops
Nebraska Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association
OSI Restaurant Partners (Outback Steakhouse and other brands)
Petroleum Marketers Association of America
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America
Taco Bell Franchise Management Advisory Council

CC: The Honorable Sean Connaughton, Secretary Designate, Virginia Department of Transportation