

## **Candidate has three priorities**

Gubernatorial hopeful makes stop in area

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Virginia will elect its next governor in November 2009, but state Sen. Creigh Deeds is campaigning as if the election were tomorrow.

Running for governor in 2009 “was my plan all along,” he said Friday during a visit with former delegate Bernie Day in Patrick County.

The trouble is, that plan hit what Deeds calls a “speed bump” three years ago.

Deeds ran for attorney general in 2005, losing by 360 votes to Bob McDonnell. Undeterred, Deeds launched his campaign for governor with a goal of “creating opportunity in every corner of the state.”

Deeds, D-Charlottesville, said a Democratic Party primary likely will be held in June 2009. Del. Brian Moran, D-Alexandria, also is running for the party’s nomination.

Deeds said he has three main “tiers” to his campaign now — transportation, the energy crisis and work force development.

He spoke the day after the General Assembly’s special session on transportation closed without any progress on raising funds for the state’s roads, bridges and other transportation needs.

“We have to have the guts to come up with the money to complete U.S. 58 and Interstate 73 and improvements to the U.S. 220 corridor,” he said, noting that the Senate had passed bills providing a revenue stream for transportation, only to have them killed in the House of Delegates.

If elected governor, Deeds said he would take a “business-like approach” to the issue, much like former governor and Patrick County native Gerald L. Baliles did two decades ago when the state passed its last transportation package.

Baliles “brought together the smartest people he could to develop a plan. Then he took it on the road and sold it to the public. He told people exactly what it would build. He sold it to the people in the state and he sold it to the legislators. It takes elbow grease,” Deeds said.

He added that he tried to help former governor Mark Warner and current Gov. Tim Kaine come up with a solution that would raise funds and get through the legislature, without success.

But, he added, “as time goes on there is more and more pressure to fix this problem.”

On the energy crisis, Deeds wants to see alternative sources of energy developed using the example set by the Research Triangle in the Raleigh, N.C., area. He proposes attracting energy-based research into Virginia’s higher education institutions. While energy sources of the future are being devised inside, a new economy would grow outside around these institutions, he said.

“We can’t corner the market” on energy research, “but we can get a chunk of it. ... There’s all the incentive in the world to try and figure this out here,” he said.

Deeds also proposes retooling Virginia’s community colleges to “create the smartest work force in the world” and increasing broadband Internet capabilities throughout the state to provide jobs in all regions that would keep young people at home.

The Tobacco Commission has funded much broadband Internet development in Southside, but in other areas — including some closer to metropolitan areas — that has not happened.

“Fauquier County is looking at the county issuing bonds to pay for satellite connections for broadband,” Deeds said.

But with broadband Internet in place and a well-trained work force, jobs being created in Northern Virginia could be filled by workers in Southside and Southwest Virginia, he said.

Deeds said in North Carolina, community college retraining has turned the \$14,000- to \$16,000-a-year textile worker into a \$40,000- to \$50,000-a-year pharmaceutical industry worker.

“If North Carolina can do it, we can,” he added