

## **Elliott working on roads, education for District 28**

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By Judy Corley  
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Staying on top of coastal insurance concerns, schools, roads and a changing economy is a challenge for any political leader today. And it's one that District 28 Sen. Dick Elliott welcomes and meets head on whether he is in Columbia serving in the state senate or at his office in North Myrtle Beach.

Elliott is a man who loves his community and that fact is evident in his work for the area. People who know him describe the senator as a hard-nosed, southern conservative Democrat.

This week Elliott announced he has identified funds available for the paving of Water Tower Road, a key access road for people living in Barefoot Resort and also a player in the proposed land annexation the city of North Myrtle Beach is considering.

"This is a great unfolding event. We have been able to identify funds to pave Water Tower Road giving Barefoot residents a back exit. These funds will come from county road dollars, (North Myrtle Beach) Mayor Marilyn Hatley has agreed to put in \$300,000 and the balance will come from state CTC funds through the transportation committee," said Elliott.

"Not having a back door exit has worried me considerably. This project should have never been permitted for construction without having a dependable back exit. The swing bridge was obsolete when it was installed. The project should have had a span bridge over the waterway similar to the Grande Dunes project (in Myrtle Beach)," he said. "The safety of these people has worried me for many months and I am tremendously proud of the funding sources we have in place to get this project moving forward."

Continuing work on future road development is high on Elliott's list and he says he will continue pressing forward on these issues.

"We continue to work on other area major highways and I-73 is important to get in place. Now that 22 and 31 are in place I intend to return to work on Highway 9 to get it upgraded to four lane status all the way to I-95 and beyond. This would be a tremendous boost to the entire North Strand region," said Elliott.

According to Elliott a lot of changes occurred while the General Assembly was in session this year.

"We eliminated the PACT test in education because it was designed so the teachers had to teach the PACT test not teach the lesson they wanted and needed to," Elliott said.

According to him the turn around on receiving results from the test came too late for the teachers to be able to help students in areas where they might be deficient.

The passing of the “toughest immigration law in America” during the 2008 session is also another thing Elliott is proud of. The law is now being used as a model in other states. On the issue of tourism and funding for increased marketing initiatives, he says the extra promotional dollars earmarked for tourism will move many projects along.

“In tourism we were able to get additional promotional dollars in the state budget and as a result of the work of a lot of people, beach renourishment is currently underway in North Myrtle Beach,” he said. According to Elliott the state is assisting in paying for the project.

“We must expand our economic development efforts beyond tourism to bring diversity and bring more stability to our region,” says Elliott.

Healthcare received a lot of attention this year and is the fastest growing part of the sate budget. Elliott says the legislature approved several healthcare issues including increased in-home healthcare services for seniors and the authorization of additional nursing home beds. The in-home healthcare will provide many services for seniors including any help needed that will allow families to remain intact and seniors to remain at home.

“We gave tax relief to property owners and took sales tax off food,” Elliott said, citing another benefit to residents of South Carolina.

When Elliott returns to the senate in 2009 he wants to work on toughening up campaign disclosure laws. He says currently too many dollars come from outside the state to finance campaigns. “We must ban lobbyists from being involved in any way in the political process,” says Elliott. “We must require anyone and everyone that spends money in a political campaign be required to disclose the source of the income as well as how it is spent.”

He will also continue pushing the legislation he introduced this year requiring all checks written by the state of South Carolina for over \$1,000 be posted on the internet “so the public can see clearly how their tax dollars are being spent.”

The effort he undertook two years ago has stemmed the tide of rising insurance rates on the coast. “It served notice that we were looking for insurance fairly priced, based on hurricane losses here in South Carolina, not in other areas,” he said.

Elliott believes if the insurance consumer is going to have an advocate then the position of Insurance Commissioner needs to be elected by the voters, not appointed. He would also like to create a catastrophic insurance model for the state “assuring policy holders do not pay for losses in other states.”

Having served in the state senate since 1992, Elliott now has the seniority needed to take a seat on the influential Senate Finance Committee. He says he has already served notice that he plans to accept the position. Since records were kept, Horry County has only had a senator serve for three years on this committee.

With Horry County having five percent of the state population and generating 11.3 percent of the state's income, a seat on this committee would be a boost to the county and District 28, says Elliott. "Horry County and the Pee Dee regions will receive a huge boost when it comes to getting our fair share."

Elliott says he was elected to the senate in 1992 and has never missed a day. "I have been on the job working every day the senate is in session," he says. "During those years, in my most troubled hours, I found refuge in my faith and with my family."

Elliott says he will continue working hard as he serves the citizens of Senate District 28.