

## **Moran brings campaign to Martinsville**

Democrat hopes to run for governor next year

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Del. Brian Moran, Virginia House Democratic Caucus chairman and a candidate for his party's nomination for governor in 2009, sees investments in education, transportation and alternative energy sources as keys to economic development.

Those things could be keys to improving Southside's economy during the coming years, he said.

Moran, of Alexandria, who grew up as the youngest of seven children in a middle-class family, said Monday night during an interview in Martinsville that he can identify with the economic setbacks and job losses many people in Southside have experienced in recent years. He said his father once was laid off and, as a result, lost the family station wagon, which was a company car.

Moran said he has been to Southside in good times and bad. On the good side, Moran said, he attended the opening of the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

On the other side, he was with Del. Ward Armstrong (D-Collinsville, who is now House minority leader), after Tultex closed in 2000, putting nearly 2,500 area residents out of work.

"I was very touched ... when Tultex left," he said, noting that "we did our best in responding" to workers' needs.

Prompted by Tultex workers who lost their jobs, Armstrong was author and Moran was co-patron (or co-author) of the Textile Workers Relief Act, which was introduced in the 2000 General Assembly session, said Jesse Ferguson, Moran's communications director. Then-governor Jim Gilmore, a Republican who now is running for U.S. Senate, vetoed the act. It would have increased unemployment benefits and extended health care insurance for a year for anyone who lost a job due to a plant closing related to the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA).

Gilmore has said he rejected the Textile Workers Relief Act because he did not want to treat one region of the state differently from another or set a precedent.

Moran said Monday that people want to work and provide for their families, and there should be opportunities for them to do that.

That's where his three-pronged plan for more jobs/economic development comes in:

- Education — Quality education is needed from preschool all the way to college or vocational school so students will be competitive, Moran said. This year, the General Assembly approved investing \$22 million to expand preschool, and in a year or two, the effectiveness of that action should be studied to see if further preschool expansion is warranted, he said.

Locally, he said, the "outcomes" at New College Institute should be studied, and if economic spinoff (such as spinoff industries, jobs, research, intellectual capital/graduates) is as successful as he expects, he would like to see NCI grow, he said.

Also, he supports increasing state teachers' salaries to the national average, making sure the Standards of Learning are doing their job in helping prepare students, and making sure school curricula are challenging.

- Infrastructure — Roads, bridges and rail are important for safety and/or economic development in the state. Locally, he said, he supports coming up with funds for Interstate 73 and four-laning U.S. 58, as recommended under the six-year plan of the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

- Alternative energy sources — With the energy crisis, Virginia needs to be a leader in developing energy alternatives, such as switchgrass, wind and solar power, he said.

Moran said he would be committed to running a fiscally responsible government, being a careful steward of taxpayers' money but also making wise investments; he would encourage more emphasis on healthful lifestyles and prevention, beginning in schools to address such things as childhood obesity; and he would work to replace partisan redistricting, traditionally done by the majority party, with bipartisan redistricting.

Also, he would continue to work to expand funding for Alicia's Law, which invests in local law enforcement's ability to crack down on online child sex predators, he said.

Monday was the first day in a two-day trip, in which Moran came for a series of private meetings and to meet some local Democratic officials.

A news release from Moran's campaign says that during the first six months of 2008, he outraised state Sen. Creigh Deeds, D-Bath County, and Republican Attorney General Bob McDonnell. They also are seeking the governor's post.

He said he started working when he was 14, doing such jobs as bagging groceries, and put himself through college working such jobs as pumping gas, digging ditches and bartending.

Moran received a law degree from Catholic University and became a prosecutor in Arlington County. He owns a law firm.

He was elected to the House of Delegates in 1995, and House Democrats elected him House Democratic Caucus chairman in 2001, a position he has held since then.