Excerpts of McDonnell's speech

Posted: Thursday, January 10, 2013 12:00 am

We must be determined this session to create more jobs and new opportunities for the attainment of the American dream for the people of Virginia. They have sent us here to work together on their behalf and find solutions for the challenges they face in their daily lives.

They've sent us here to do legislatively what they do personally in their own homes, businesses, churches and schools: Act responsibly, solve problems, spend wisely, serve one another, and make life better for those around us.

We must have a zero-tolerance policy for failing schools.

Therefore, I'm asking you to approve a bold initiative to establish a statewide Opportunity Educational Institution to provide a high-quality education alternative for children attending any chronically underperforming public elementary or secondary school.

The Opportunity Educational Institution will be a new statewide school division to turn around failing schools. If a school is consistently failing, the Opportunity Educational Institution will step in to manage it. If the school has failed for two years, the institution can take it over and provide a brand-new approach to a broken system.

Massachusetts has 72 charter schools. Pennsylvania 164. Florida 520. Virginia has just four!

We still have one of the weakest public charter school laws in the country. The best public charter school operators in the nation will not come here because we make it nearly impossible for them. We need new charter school laws that demand excellence, set clear standards and welcome the best charter schools into our communities. This session I'm asking you to join me to pass a constitutional amendment to allow the state Board of Education to authorize charter applicants. And I am asking your support of legislation to eliminate the requirement that local school boards that originate a charter school application must first apply for authorization from the state Board of Education. These ideas will make it much easier for proven charter schools to open up.

- We must reform and reinvest in transportation infrastructure, or job growth and quality family time will suffer.
- Therefore, I ask that you not conclude this session without approving a long-term transportation funding plan for Virginia. Do not send me a budget that does not include new transportation funding. We are all out of excuses. We must act now.
- Yesterday, I announced a plan to invest an additional \$3.1 billion in Virginia's transportation networks over the next five years and provide new funding of \$845 million annually by 2018. ... I know there are parts of this plan you will like and parts you won't. That's true of any innovative and comprehensive transportation plan.
- But we cannot let another session be lost as each member holds out for their perfect plan. The more we sit and debate, the longer Virginians sit and wait.
- I expect to sign a plan into law this year. Better transportation means better jobs!
- The cost of Medicaid in our budget has grown 1,600 percent in the past 30 years to 21 percent of the general fund in fiscal year 2012. Virginia simply cannot afford to become the bank for a federally designed expansion of Medicaid. ... Without dramatic reform, I cannot recommend a dramatic Medicaid expansion.
- Health benefit exchanges as designed in the (Patient Protection and Affordable Care

Act) are a bad idea. Federal mandates will increase the costs of insurance for most Virginians and will crowd out other opportunities for markets in insurance to develop. The ongoing failure of the federal government to provide clear guidance and regulation made establishment of a successful state-run exchange impossible by October 2013.

Virginia will have a federal exchange. I have informed the Obama administration that we will not operate a state-based exchange that gives limited state control but distinct financial risk. We will work to ensure that Virginia maintains her traditional regulation of the insurance market.

Like all Virginians, Maureen and I were in shock at the tragic news from Sandy Hook Elementary School one month ago where 26 people, most of them beautiful little children, were killed.

While some evil acts can never be fully understood, we must do our best to prevent them. I am proposing targeted new mental health funding.

I ask you to approve \$5 million for specific adult and child crisis services and an additional \$1 million for children's mental health services. And I am proposing \$750,000 to assist in discharging individuals from state hospitals who are ready to transition home.

Caring for our fellow Virginians with mental health issues is an expression of who we are as a society.

I have also established a School and Campus Safety Task Force to review all security policies in effect in our schools and colleges and to make initial recommendations to me by Jan. 31. I will be sending you legislation this session to improve school safety for our young people.

While we have significantly improved and fast-tracked the restoration of civil rights process, it's still an executive process.

As a nation that believes in redemption and second chances, we must provide a clear path for willing individuals to be productive members of society once they have served their sentences and paid their fines and restitution.

It is time for Virginia to join most of the other states and make the restoration of civil rights an automatic process for nonviolent offenders.

Prepared text of McDonnell's address