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NEWS RELEASE

Norment Announces Legislative Reform Agenda

Senate Republican Leader introduces package of bills to reduce length of legislative sessions, increase budget transparency and hold legislators accountable

Richmond, VA, January 21, 2011: Senate of Virginia Minority Leader Thomas K. Norment, Jr. (R-James City) today detailed three bills he is sponsoring as part of a legislative reform agenda. If enacted, Norment's bills would shorten the length of General Assembly sessions held in odd-numbered years, provide greater transparency and accountability to the budget process, and prohibit lawmakers from receiving additional compensation when the General Assembly goes into overtime.

Norment has introduced [Senate Bill 1183](#), which would effectively restore the provisions of the Virginia Constitution for legislative sessions held in odd-numbered years. Under the provisions of Virginia's constitution, the General Assembly is supposed to meet for 60 days in even-numbered years, but for just 30 in odd-numbered years. The sessions in the odd-numbered years were originally intended to be limited to making amendments to the Commonwealth's biennial budgets. They have since grown to 46 days in length with few limitations on the legislation that can be submitted.

Norment's bill would limit legislation being considered by the General Assembly in odd-numbered years to amendments to the biennial budget, constitutional amendments, legislation continued from the previous session, emergency legislation requested by the governor or introduced by a member of the General Assembly with unanimous

consent, legislation pertaining to procedural matters, and commending and memorial resolutions.

“Historically, the Virginia General Assembly met every other year,” noted Norment. “The creation of the short session in odd-numbered years was supposed to be just for amending the biennial budget, not to vote on thousands of pieces of additional legislation. Now, the only difference between a regular session and a short one is the number of days. Over 2,000 bills have already been introduced in this “short session” and more are being introduced every day. My bill would return us to the original intent of our Constitution, limit government, and save taxpayers money.”

To discourage the practice of extending legislative sessions, Norment has introduced [Senate Bill 1355](#). The legislation would prevent legislators from receiving additional compensation when General Assembly sessions are extended beyond their scheduled adjournment date. Extensions of General Assembly sessions were once rare, but have become more common in recent years. Under the provisions of Norment's bill, members of the General Assembly would not receive their per diem allowance nor additional mileage reimbursement for the days that a session is extended.

“Legislators should not be rewarded for not completing their work on time,” declared Norment. “No business would reward employees for failing to complete their work on time and neither should state government. With my bill, legislators would not be allowed to receive additional compensation for going into overtime, a sensible protection for taxpayers.”

Norment has also introduced legislation to make the process of approving the Commonwealth's biennial budget more transparent while increasing the accountability of lawmakers. [Senate Bill 1353](#) would require the Chairmen of the House Appropriations Committee and Senate Finance Committee to provide a report specifying items included in the conference committee report on the budget that were not in the House or Senate versions of the budget, or were provisions of legislation that

failed to pass either house. The bill is part of the Senate Republican Legislative Agenda for 2011.

"This common sense reform will hold our elected officials accountable for budgetary excess, and keep Washington-style budget practices out of Virginia," said Norment. "The public and legislators should be made fully aware of what is in the budget and how it got there. There have been instances where legislators have slipped earmarks into the budget at the last minute, leaving most legislators in the dark until after the budget has passed. This is simply unacceptable. I introduced this bill before I became a budget conferee and I continue to push this measure as a budget conferee. Including such items in the budget undermines public confidence in the legislative process. This much needed measure would add needed sunlight to the budget process."

Senate Minority Leader Thomas K. Norment, Jr. is currently serving his fifth term representing the Third District in the Virginia Senate. The Third District includes Gloucester, James City and New Kent Counties, the City of Williamsburg, and portions of York County and the City of Newport News.