



COUNTY OF AMHERST



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For Immediate Release

February 3, 2021

Board of Supervisors Sends Letter Addressing Gubernatorial Emergency Powers

During their January 19, 2021 meeting, the Board of Supervisors discussed a resolution to address Governor Northam's emergency powers. Instead of adopting the resolution, the Board unanimously voted to send a letter to the Speaker of the House, Lieutenant Governor, and Governor outlining their concerns.

The letter calls on the General Assembly to "step up to its responsibilities to the citizens of the Commonwealth and cease foisting responsibility for the pandemic response onto a single individual." The Board also urged the General Assembly to "restore the proper balance of authority between our respective branches of government by inserting limits on the grant of emergency powers to the Governor."

A copy of the full letter, signed by all five board members, is included below.



COUNTY OF AMHERST

Amherst County Board of Supervisors

P. O. Box 390
AMHERST, VIRGINIA 24521

Jennifer R. Moore, Chair - District 5
David W. Pugh, Jr., Vice-Chair - District 4
Tom Martin, Supervisor - District 1
L. J. Ayers III, Supervisor - District 3
Claudia D. Tucker, Chair - District 2

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January 20, 2021

Virginia House of Delegates
Eileen Robin Filler-Corn, Speaker
P.O. Box 523082
Springfield, VA 22152

Virginia Senate
Justin E. Fairfax, Lieutenant Governor
P.O. Box 1195
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Governor Ralph S. Northam
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Speaker Filler-Corn, Lieutenant Governor Fairfax and Governor Northam,

Re: Review of Gubernatorial Emergency Powers

We write to insist that the General Assembly restore balance to the Commonwealth's government.

It is the role of the General Assembly (GA) to legislate standards of conduct. It is the role of the Governor to execute the laws so passed. The Governor was not elected to create and issue laws. When the GA delegates its responsibility to govern conduct to a single individual it fails in its responsibility to the people. It places an unreasonable burden on that individual and subjects the people to the interpretations of a single person who decides which businesses will fail, which citizens will be protected, which students get educated, which citizens must have their rent and utilities paid for them, which communities get extra resources and which do not. The people have not granted this power to an individual, they have granted it to a body of their representatives because the resolution of such issues requires a broad range of perspectives.

Government does not exist to play favorites, to pick winners and losers; it exists to protect the rights and civil liberties of all. Yet, the commonwealth's economy and the lives of many families have been devastated by the measures put into place by using a one size fits all approach.

We recognize the spectrum of interests that you must balance: the dissemination of information based on science; precautions and guidelines that protect public safety while maintaining a recoverable economy; ensuring that both big AND small businesses are part of the solution and not collateral damage. It is the role of the legislature to balance these interests and fulfill the function of the government in protecting the people and their rights. That is not the role of the Governor.

The emergency powers granted the Governor via Section 44-146.17 of the Code of Virginia (1950, as amended) have no reasonable time limits, checks or balances. The pandemic is not a hurricane whose affects can be addressed and mitigated in weeks. The GA has had ample opportunity to review the effectiveness of the Governor's emergency actions and confer regarding appropriate measures going forward.

We call upon the General Assembly to step up to its responsibilities to the citizens of the Commonwealth and cease foisting responsibility for the pandemic response onto a single individual. The General Assembly's inaction needs to come to an end. Please restore the proper balance of authority between our respective branches of government by inserting limits on the grant of emergency powers to the Governor.

Sincerely,



Jennifer R. Moore
District 5, Chair



David W. Pugh, Jr.
District 4, Vice-Chair



Tom Martin
District 1



L.J. (Jimmy) Ayers
District 3



Claudia D. Tucker
District 2