

## NEW GAS TAX FOR SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTY

Last year the people of Spotsylvania were promised something for nothing. Beginning February 15<sup>th</sup> they will get part of what they asked for. As the result of an ordinance passed by the Board of Supervisors last August, on February 15 all gasoline stations in Spotsylvania County will be required to impose a new surcharge of 2.1 percent of the price of gasoline. At today's prices, this means that you will pay 5.3 cents per gallon more every time you fill up. On a 22 gallon fill-up you will pay an additional \$1.16. If you fill up once a week in Spotsylvania County, the new county tax will cost you \$60.63 a year.

How and why did this happen? As representatives of Virginia's petroleum marketing industry, we obviously have one point of view, so here is what your local newspaper had to say about the issue, and the campaign materials from those who lobbied for the new tax.

## DEVELOPERS BACK PRO-VRE CANDIDATES IN SPOTSYLVANIA

Realtors and developers spent the most cash on two pro-VRE candidates in Spotsylvania County, who won re-election  
*Date published: 1/17/2010*

By DAN TELVOCK

Developers and real estate agents pumped more than \$24,000 into the war chests of two [Spotsylvania County](#) supervisors who won re-election in November.

Most of the donations came in the final two months of the campaigns by Supervisors Gary Skinner and Benjamin Pitts.

The late donations boosted the two independent candidates' campaign coffers by about \$10,000 more than their Republican opponents, D.J. McGuire and Chris Yakabouski respectively.

Fitz Johnson, president of Johnson Realty Advisors, gave \$500 to both Skinner and Pitts. He said the support from developers and real estate agents was largely because both Pitts and Skinner supported the county's becoming a member of the Virginia Railway Express commuter rail service.

Johnson's company is a broker for more than 1,000 acres near where a [VRE](#) train station is planned at Crossroads Business Park.

"[VRE](#) was the driving reason, and I supported both of those candidates in the past monetarily," he said.

From Sept. 1 to Nov. 26, Skinner received about \$12,000 from those two sectors. Pitts received about \$12,750 during the same time period.

This election also marked the first time that the Realtors Political Action Committee took a stance on Spotsylvania politics, giving Skinner and Pitts \$1,500 each. Realtors in the region have long supported [VRE](#).

John Broadway, spokesman for the PAC, said there are 29 local associations in Virginia and the PAC manages the accounts for 26 of them, including the Fredericksburg Area Association of Realtors. He said the Fredericksburg branch requested the funds for Pitts and Skinner.

The local association also helped fund a study of gas prices at the pumps in the region to show that localities that are VRE members did not have higher average gas prices than Spotsylvania, which was not a member.

The Silver Cos. donated more than \$5,000 to both Pitts and Skinner, by far the most of any developer or real estate agent or group. The development firm used entities such as Carter West LLC and Gardner Station LLC as the contributors.

Jud Honaker, president of commercial development for the Silver Cos., said the company chose to support pro-VRE candidates.

But another reason he said the company supported Pitts and Skinner was that they seemed to get along well with the other five supervisors. Honaker said he did not want to see the Spotsylvania board become contentious, as the Stafford board has been in recent years.

"That tension on that board, I don't think it was good for [Stafford County]," Honaker said.

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## VRE backers win in Spotsy

### Pro-Virginia Railway Express candidates win in Spotsylvania, ensuring the county will join the commuter rail service in February

*Date published: 11/4/2009*

By DAN TELVOCK

The two pro-Virginia Railway Express incumbents won re-election to the **Spotsylvania County** Board of Supervisors last night, ensuring the county's membership to the commuter rail service.

Supervisor Gary Skinner, who represents the Lee Hill District, won easily over challenger D.J. McGuire. Skinner won with 58 percent of the vote based on unofficial results.

Supervisor Benjamin Pitts defeated Chris Yakabouski, who held the seat from 2004 to 2007. Pitts took 54 percent of the vote.

Both Pitts and Skinner supported **VRE** membership, which became a top issue in the election after the Board of Supervisors decided in August to join **VRE**, but opted to wait until after last night's election to make it official in February.

Skinner, who held a celebration with friends and family at Danny's Pizza near Massaponax, thought his support for **VRE** was one of the chief factors in his win.

"We had such a great turnout from the **VRE** supporters," Skinner said. "The people that don't use **VRE** know it is a good thing for this county."

Skinner said he wants to focus on tourism and bringing business to the county in his four-year term.

**Spotsylvania County** moved to staggered terms last year, which meant three districts would have two-year terms for one election cycle.

"It is nice to know I have four years to get something done. Two years went really, really fast," Skinner said.

The other supervisor with a shortened term, longtime Berkeley representative Emmitt Marshall, was uncontested for re-election.

Skinner and Pitts saw their campaign coffers filled late in the campaign with thousands of dollars from developers and Realtors.

The Realtors Political Action Committee, an arm of the Association of Realtors, gave both candidates \$1,500. Landowner and real estate advisor Fitz Johnson, who is a key **VRE** supporter, gave \$500 to both candidates.

Last night's results mark the second election cycle in a row in which Spotsylvania Republicans candidates lost in contested races.

Finally here is what the supporters told the people of Spotsylvania during their lobbying campaign to pass this new tax:

***Vote YES to VRE in Spotsylvania!***  
***POSITIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WHEN IT'S NEEDED MOST!***

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*VRE YES is a coalition of businesses and community interests that support Spotsylvania County joining the **Virginia Railway Express**. The VRE YES campaign to organize support in favor of a VRE yes vote by the Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors is organized and paid for by the **Fredericksburg Area Association of REALTORS®**, a registered trade association. This campaign effort is also endorsed by Spotsylvania's citizen-led *committee of 500*, a non-partisan managed-growth political action committee.*

## ***SHOW YOUR SUPPORT AT THE NEXT PUBLIC HEARING***

**Tuesday, August 18**

**6:30 p.m.**

**Courtland High School**

**6701 Smith Station Road, Spotsylvania**

*"Depending on the price of gasoline, Spotsylvania could see as much as \$3.2 million from the gasoline tax after paying its share of VRE operations." --The Free-Lance Star*

*For more endorsement information, articles, and op-eds go to the Committee of 500's web site - [www.committee500.org](http://www.committee500.org).*

### ***POSITIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WHEN IT'S NEEDED MOST!***

Bringing higher paying jobs to Spotsylvania is a common goal shared by elected officials, business leaders and citizens alike. Businesses that offer higher paying, professional office jobs *want* to be located near public transportation.

**VRE in Spotsylvania will make the county *more* attractive to expanding or relocating businesses.**

According to economic development officials in our region, firms that have expressed interest in locating here have *stressed* the need for access to the Washington metro area.

As noted in a number of articles in the Free Lance-Star, those potential employers see VRE as *critical* to that access.

Visit the [American Public Transit Association](#) for cited evidence of public Transportation's importance to both job creation and economic development.

**Research it:** [Google](#) returns over **100,000 entries** for the specific and combined search terms, ["commuter rail" and "economic development"].

***SPOTSYLVANIA CAN BE EXPECTED TO GENERATE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS FOR TRANSPORTATION NEEDS WITHOUT RAISING YOUR REAL ESTATE OR PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES!***

As a result of joining VRE, Spotsylvania will get desperately needed dollars to help keep our roads safe, to help pay for school buses, patrol cars and other safety vehicles, FRED-Bus service (or expanded FRED-Bus service) and/or to help the county board of supervisors *pay for paving and improving rural roads*.

In fact, the millions of dollars generated for localities that are VRE members must, by Virginia law, be used for local transportation-related priorities that are determined by your local county elected officials. Want Spotsylvania County to support van pool options or to build more public parking facilities? VRE can be the revenue generating engine to make these investments possible.

So how does VRE membership translate into desperately needed new revenue for Spotsylvania County? The answer: *By getting a percentage of the gas money you and other drivers ALREADY pay in Spotsylvania BACK!*

That's right, as reported in the Free Lance-Star on March 8, the small two-percent gas tax that VRE membership requires is *already* being paid at the pump in Spotsylvania; the county just doesn't get anything back in return. According to an independently compiled gas price report cited in the newspaper, which is available by clicking the gas report tab at the top of this webpage, "[motorists won't see gas prices rise if the county votes to join VRE.](#)" (Click the quoted text to read the whole Free Lance-Star report.)

***ADMITTEDLY, THE ONLY WAY TO PROVE THIS SMALL VRE TAX WON'T RAISE THE PRICE WE PAY AT THE PUMP IS TO SHOW A RECORD OF THE SAME OR LOWER PRICES PER GALLON, AT THE SAME STORES, IN THE CITY AND STAFFORD WHERE THE TAX IS CHARGED...***

# PROOF:

The **gas price report** includes regional listings of recorded gas prices and comparisons between localities of specific fuel brands. North America's leading gas related consumer advocacy group **www.GasBuddy.com** provides daily gas price information throughout the United States and Canada. Their gas price data is used by Google, consumer-advocacy organizations and newspapers throughout North America, including the Free Lance-Star. (The Free Lance-Star publishes the region's ten cheapest per-gallon gas prices, by location, every Friday.)

The gas price data contained within the report was recorded and provided by **www.GasBuddy.com**; it is specific to Spotsylvania, Stafford and Fredericksburg and includes daily per gallon gas prices by station name, address, date and time. The data in this report spans a two month time period ending January 27, 2009.

**WHAT YOU WILL FIND:**

If you buy gas at WaWa in Spotsylvania, for example, the evidence shows you are paying the *exact* same price *at the same time* someone is buying gas at WaWa in Fredericksburg. More over, this same evidence shows you are paying *more* than those buying gas at the same time at a WaWa in Stafford.

Two conclusions can be made from this and related evidence provided in the **gas price report**:

- 1) **the tax is too small to affect the market-determined price of gasoline;** and
- 2) **Spotsylvania gas stations are already collecting the difference without passing any of the revenue on to the county.**

*Either way, this evidence means Spotsylvania is needlessly giving up millions of dollars it desperately needs for county transportation priorities each year.*

***SO HOW MUCH HAS SPOTSYLVANIA BEEN LOSING BY NOT BEING A VRE MEMBER?***

As shown in the **gas price report**, in just the eight years since 2001, *After* generating all the money required to pay for the cost of VRE membership, **Fredericksburg and Stafford have pocketed nearly \$25 million to spend on local transportation needs.** Spotsylvania has paid the same prices for gas and received nothing.

*From the gas price report:*

<b>2% Gas Tax Collections, Associated VRE Costs and New Revenue (2001-08)</b>			
	<b>FREDERICKSBURG</b>	<b>STAFFORD</b>	<b>SPOTSYLVANIA</b>
<b>Total 2% Tax Collected (2001-08):</b>	\$9,875,413	\$23,360,455	\$0
<b>VRE Member Costs (2001-08):</b>	\$1,143,448	\$7,440,013	\$0
<b>New Revenue Remaining:</b>	<b>\$8,731,965</b>	<b>\$15,920,442</b>	<b>\$0</b>

***THESE NUMBERS MEAN MOST OF THIS REVENUE IS COLLECTED FROM NON-RESIDENTS DRIVING THROUGH OUR REGION!***

Two-percent of a \$2.00 gallon of gas is four cents. The total amount collected by Stafford and the city in the above years since 2001, from a two-percent levy, totaled just over \$33 million. *Even with fluctuating gas prices, there are not nearly enough residents or cars in these two localities to buy the millions of gallons required to turn a few pennies per gallon into over \$33 million in just eight years.*

**This means most of the revenue was collected from non-residents driving through these two localities (which can be explained by the fact one of the world's busiest highways bisects our region).** The evidence also shows Stafford and Fredericksburg kept over two-thirds of the total revenue generated from this small, market absorbed tax (\$25 million of the total \$33 million collected).

According to the **Fredericksburg Regional Alliance**, two-thirds of the US population live *within* a one day drive of our region. So, with millions of gallons sold in our region each year, most of the two percent tax collected in Spotsylvania could just as well be coming from drivers from New Jersey. Regardless, as the evidence shows, ALL those who buy gas in Spotsylvania are already paying the difference. Why shouldn't Spotsylvania get its fair share of the revenue?

***WITH THIS EVIDENCE IN MIND, JOINING VRE IS SIMPLY A SMART BUSINESS DECISION***

*Click here to read the entire gas pricing report.*

***LET YOUR SUPERVISORS KNOW YOU SUPPORT SPOTSYLVANIA JOINING VRE.***

The VRE YES! campaign is organized and paid for by the **Fredericksburg Area Association of REALTORS®**, a registered trade association.

This campaign effort is endorsed by Spotsylvania's citizen-led **Committee of 500**, a non-partisan managed-growth political action committee.

VRE YES!

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Paid for and authorized by the Fredericksburg Area Association of REALTORS®.



Domain Registration