

HISTORIC
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Board Matter

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Madam Chairman— On January 16th, Bob McDonnell will be inaugurated as the 71st governor of our Commonwealth of Virginia. A part of Governor-elect McDonnell's transportation funding plan is the possible privatization of the state-operated retail liquor stores. While I certainly understand and applaud his sense of the urgency in identifying additional revenue to fund transportation projects, I am concerned about the impact this idea will have on our neighborhoods and our revitalization areas.

Currently there are 28 state-operated ABC stores in the county dispersed in shopping centers from Reston to Lorton and Fairfax to McLean. We have about one store for every 35,000 residents. Governor-elect McDonnell has pointed to Senator Mark Obenshain's legislation during the 2009 General Assembly Session as a model for how privatization could be structured. Senator Obenshain's bill which died during the last session required a fixed number of licenses for each locality based on population. Even with a fixed number of licenses, Fairfax County could have seen about a 70% increase in the number of private liquor stores in the county if the bill had passed last session as presented. Where would those stores be located? Do our current Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance address private retail liquor stores? Is there any way we could limit the concentration of private liquor stores in certain areas – especially revitalization areas?

Several have argued that retail liquor stores are not a core state function. I agree. However, if the governor-elect plans to allow privatization of ABC stores to fund transportation costs, we must be ready for the unintended consequences of the free enterprise system – namely many more liquor stores in our communities – the same communities we have and are working on revitalizing. Therefore Madam Chairman, I move that the Board request the County Executive to conduct a full review of the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance and how they can limit the possible growth of private liquor stores in Fairfax County. I further move that the County Executive and legislative staff provide routine updates to the Board on this issue during regularly scheduled Legislative Committee meetings.