***Keeping our Community Safe***

***Protecting Law Enforcement.*** Recently in a Richmond City Court, a criminal convicted of Capital Murder of a Law Enforcement Officer received a sentence of 30 years which caused incredible outrage across the Commonwealth. The General Assembly responded by passing HB2615, which provides that any person convicted of capital murder of a law-enforcement officer or certain other public safety officials who was 18 years of age or older at the time of the offense shall be sentenced to no less than a mandatory minimum term of confinement for life. *I voted in support of HB2615!*

***Domestic Violence.*** During the 2019 General Assembly session, **I was proud to Co-patron**, and support, legislation introduced by Delegate Kathleen Murphy (D-Fairfax) that would have provided for a stiffer penalty for domestic violence. HB2042 would have provided for mandatory minimum term of confinement for anyone convicted of assault and battery against a family member if such person has been previously convicted of such offense against a family member within a 10 year period. Such person shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor and shall include a mandatory minimum term of 60 days in jail. HB2042 received overwhelming support and passed the House of Delegates by a vote of 85-12. *Unfortunately, Governor Northam vetoed this important legislation and I found his explanation to be puzzling.*

***Move Over Law.*** A major public safety problem on our highways and roads has been protecting our “first responders” that are on the medians or sides of roads rendering assistance to motorists, clearing accidents, or issuing citations. This problem really hit home for Hanoverians when Lt. Brad Clark of the Hanover Fire/EMS was tragically killed in the line of duty on I-295. In response, Delegate Chris Peace introduced HB1911, which made failure to move into a nonadjacent lane when approaching a stationary vehicle displaying flashing, blinking, or alternating blue, red, or amber lights, or, if changing lanes would be unreasonable or unsafe, to proceed with due caution and maintain a safe speed, **reckless driving, which is punishable as a Class 1 misdemeanor.** Under current law, a first such offense is a traffic infraction punishable by a fine of not more than $250, and a second such offense is punishable as a Class 1 misdemeanor. I was proud to be a Co-patron of HB1911, and I am happy to report that this important legislation passed and is now law.

***Distracted Driving.*** HB1811, would have greatly improved highway safety by prohibiting any person from **holding** a handheld personal communications device while driving a motor vehicle. Current law prohibits only the reading of any email or text message and manually entering letters or text in such a device as a means of communicating. The problem with the current law is that it is practically unenforceable. HB1811 would have changed that and I am enthusiastically in support of this legislation. **I supported passage of HB1811**, but unfortunately, this bill ended up in a Conference between House and State Senate versions and failed to pass in the House by a vote of 45-50. I am confident this legislation will be reintroduced in 2020.

***Sex Trafficking.*** Sex trafficking, especially of minors, is a serious and growing problem. In an effort to hold those found guilty of sex trafficking accountable, HB2586 will increase the penalty for any person who commits an act of aiding prostitution or illicit sexual intercourse or using a vehicle to promote prostitution or unlawful sexual intercourse, when such act involves a minor, to a **Class 6 felony**. Under current law, such acts are punishable as a Class 1 misdemeanor. The bill also adds the two new felony offenses to the definition of a "violent felony" for the purposes of sentencing guidelines, and to the definition of a “barrier crime” for background checks for volunteers providing care to children, elderly, and the disabled. Finally, the bill also provides that each violation of commercial sex trafficking is a separate and distinct felony. ***HB2586 passed the House and I was proud to be a Co-patron of HB2586.***