



Tuesday, January 24, 2012 | [Lynchburg, Virginia](#) 55° Feels Like: 55° Clear

News

[HOME](#) / [NEWS](#) / [OPINION](#) / [EDITORIAL](#) /

Del. Putney Is a Portrait in Courage

Recommend

3 people recommend this.

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Credit: News & Advance File Photo



Del. Lacey Putney, I-Bedford

By: The News & Advance | Lynchburg News and Advance
Published: January 23, 2012

Lacey Putney, of Bedford County, deserves the thanks and well-wishes of every Virginian who drives on our highways, who has a child in public schools, who supports the commonwealth's world-class public universities and who may have need of mental health services.

Why?

Because Del. Putney, chairman of the Appropriations Committee of the House of Delegates, has dared to utter the truth in Richmond: State revenues must rise pay the costs of providing core government services.

Friday, Putney, the longest-serving legislator in Virginia history, introduced H.B. 1239, legislation that would raise Virginia's sales tax by one percentage point, from 5 percent to 6 percent. The new revenue would go to pay for transportation needs and provide infusions of cash into the state's higher education system, public schools and mental health programs. Preliminary estimates are that it would result in \$900 million a year for those needs.

As Appropriations chairman, there is no person in Richmond who has a better understanding of the state's budget than Putney. Every year, he's intimately involved in its crafting, serving as a member of the conference committee that irons out final differences between versions passed by the House and state Senate. That he's served the people of Bedford County and Central Virginia in the legislature for more than half a century gives him a perspective on budgeting process few in the capital can match.

And no one — no one — can question Putney's conservative credentials on fiscal matters. He has a reputation in Richmond of squeezing blood from the proverbial turnip until the last drop and then squeezing some more.

One thing he's never done, though, is make the ridiculous promise to voters never to raise taxes, as many of his Republican colleagues have done. Putney's too intelligent, too wise to make such a promise, for he

knows that government has a legitimate role to play in society, that it has responsibilities to its citizens that must be paid for and that taxes are how citizens pay for the services they rightly expect government to provide.

Putney knows the dire straits both state and local governments face. The public school system in his native Bedford County faces a multi-million dollar shortfall because of increased local contributions to the Virginia Retirement System. He knows the transportation infrastructure needs of Northern and Tidewater Virginia. And he knows how the state's public colleges are struggling to keep tuition affordable for Virginians.

Our only quibble with Del. Putney's proposal is that its enactment is contingent upon passage in a statewide referendum. Each past hike in the sales tax rate has simply been an act of Assembly, after all, we elect members of the legislature to make just such tough decisions.


But then again, there are very few legislators in Richmond today as courageous as Lacey Putney, willing to speak the truth to party ideologues when all they want to hear is political platitudes.

Putney faces an uphill fight for passage of his bill, but whether he succeeds or not, he's a Virginia hero in our book.

[Recommend](#) 3 people recommend this. [Recommend this on Google](#)

Reader Comments

*Facebook Account Required to Comment. If you are not already logged into Facebook, please click the comment button to do so.

 [Comment](#)



Linda Ldda · Central Virginia Community College

Sales tax is perhaps the most regressive of all taxes. It hits hardest those with modest incomes with the least ability to pay. Those persons being the elderly, people with disabilities, and most non-profit workers who have modest incomes.

When increasing the sales tax came up in Lynchburg in 1999, based on news reports from that time -local concerned citizens worked to defeat it.

As for deja vu, see Mr. Putney's call for a sales tax increase in December 1994. <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1298&dat=19941221&id=E-gyAAAIBAJ&sjid=vQcGAAAIBAJ&pg=6599,4117250> Unfortunately, since 1994 funding for local public mental health services has more than quadrupled with minimal impact.

It's time to privatize.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · Yesterday at 9:07am



David Howard · Top Commenter

I really don't think it is that "courageous" to spend someone else's money. What happened to offshore drilling? We just extended the moratorium on uranium mining. How much money would that have brought in? Let people on unemployment and welfare work 20 hours a week for the state and reduce the state payroll. Drug test anyone on the dole. Privatize the public school buses, and charge students money to drive their own cars to school, etc. etc. There are a lot of things that can be done to either bring in more money or reduce spending further. Lower taxes than other states will bring in more business and jobs. That is what he should be looking at first.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 15 hours ago



Betty Brown · Lynchburg College

Please- he is just another politician..No hero.. He does what he gets paid an enormous sum to do..

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · Yesterday at 9:13am

Facebook social plugin

ADVERTISEMENT





The News & Advance ©2012 Media General Communications Holdings, LLC. A [Media General](#) company. [Terms and Conditions](#) | [Work With Us](#)

The News & Advance: [Place An Ad](#) | [Buy Photos](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Email Us](#) | [Email Alerts](#) | [Text Alerts](#) | [Site Search](#) | [Mobile Apps](#) | [Find Lynchburg Jobs](#)
Partners: [The Burg](#) | [GoDanRiver](#) | [WLSL](#) | [New Era Progress](#) | [Nelson County Times](#) | [Charlottesville Daily Progress](#) | [Virginia Newspapers](#)

