

ON PERSONAL DECISIONS

Government has no place in personal or family decisions. I have consistently supported the following positions:

- A woman's right to choose an abortion must be preserved and protected.
- Information about a person's genetic makeup is private and should not be disclosed without the person's permission.
- End-of-life decisions are best made by families with advice from physicians and clergy, without government intrusion.

RIGHT TO CHOOSE

An area where government should not intrude is in a woman's decision on whether to have an abortion. We need to do all we can to make other options available to her but we must not limit the access to a safe and legal abortion if that is her choice.

GENETIC INFORMATION

One of the most frightening areas where we could lose our right to privacy is control of information about our own bodies. As genetic information about individuals grows, we must protect the privacy of that information. I have become nationally recognized for my work on genetic information privacy. I introduced the most sweeping legislation in the country to keep genetic information confidential. Under my legislation, medical insurers covered by Virginia law cannot use the genetic information about an individual in any way when making coverage decisions. They cannot use it to deny coverage, they cannot use it to determine rates, and they cannot share it with other firms without the consent of the individual.

Another piece of legislation I crafted expanded citizens' protections to include employment discrimination. Employers can no longer require genetic testing or use genetic information in employment decisions.

END-OF-LIFE DECISIONS

The most painful experience I have had in Richmond was watching Governor Gilmore oppose Michele Finn's claims bill for reimbursement for legal expenses. She had to pay \$61,000 in legal costs when the Administration fought her decision to discontinue treatment for her husband, Hugh. Six physicians concluded he was in a persistent vegetative state. Under state law, Mrs. Finn had the right to make end-of-life decisions for him. Despite losing every legal battle, the governor orchestrated not only opposition to the reimbursement of Mrs. Finn's legal bills, but also cruel, personal attacks on Mrs. Finn.

As a member of both the subcommittee and full committee that heard the bill, I voted to have the state reimburse her for her costs. The amount of the claims bill will help this widow put her children through college. However, the pain she was forced to endure and the fracturing of the family that resulted from the governor's interference in a decision that should have been private and personal will probably never end.

As privacy issues come before the General Assembly, you can count on me to protect your privacy from government intrusion.