

Virginia Agribusiness Council
We Represent Virginia Agribusiness with a Unified Voice

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Campaign Launched to Encourage ‘YES’ Votes for Private Property Rights

Virginia landowners will be confident that their private property cannot be taken and given to another private owner under eminent domain if the commonwealth’s voters approve Question 1 on the November 6th ballot.

Bi-Partisan legislation passed by the General Assembly was signed by Gov. Bob McDonnell on July 16 to place a proposed constitutional amendment on this fall’s ballot to protect the private property rights of Virginia’s farmers, small businesses and individuals. The amendment specifies that eminent domain cannot be used unless it is for a true public use and further ensures just compensation for the landowner including the opportunity for lost access and profits to be considered as part of just compensation. The language in the amendment also clarifies what is a true “public use” and specifies that no more land than is necessary can be taken.

The “Private Property Rights” amendment and companion legislation was supported by Attorney Gen. Ken Cuccinelli and patroned by Sen. Mark Obenshain (R-Harrisonburg), Del. Rob Bell (R-Albemarle), and Del. Johnny Joannou (D-Portsmouth).

At the July 16 bill signing, a coalition of private property rights advocates announced the launch of a campaign encouraging Virginians to “Vote YES for Private Property Rights.”

“Our members are excited about the opportunity that this constitutional amendment will provide. No longer will our farms, homes or businesses be taken and given to another private property owner under *Kelo*-type eminent domain abuses,” said Wayne F. Pryor, president of Virginia Farm Bureau Federation.

“Our members are grateful to Governor McDonnell, Attorney General Cuccinelli and the General Assembly for understanding that sometimes, the government may want someone’s property for a well-agreed public use, but taking someone’s home, farm, or business so someone else can develop the land is just plain wrong,” said Nicole Riley, state director for the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB). “This amendment ensures that if property is taken for a legitimate public use private property owners will be justly compensated.”

Elected officials “have given Virginians the opportunity to approve this historical measure,” added Katie K. Frazier, president of the Virginia Agribusiness Council. “Our job now is to educate the public on what this constitutional amendment does and why it is important to them, and we’ll be doing so through grassroots activism and communication.”

The “Vote YES for Private Property Rights” campaign is supported by the Farm Bureau, the NFIB, the Virginia Agribusiness Council, the Virginia Forestry Association, Americans for

Prosperity, the Family Foundation of Virginia, the Virginia Poultry Federation, and other advocacy groups. The coalition will be working through the fall, posting campaign signs, distributing literature, and organizing other promotional activities.

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Supporters surround Governor McDonnell at the bill signing.