

## Biofuels, Protecting our Family Farms

With the tobacco buyout over and the age of tobacco in the Old Belt coming to an end, many are wondering what is next. The answer is biofuels. With climbing gas prices and foreign oil a national security crisis, the need for homegrown fuels is greater than ever. This need is creating a market for Virginia's family farms. The research has been done. It is time to apply it in our fields, in our cities, and in our gas pumps.

I will work to establish Southside as a home to the biofuels industry to:

- **Protect Family Farms**—Farmers, and our rural communities, have been the backbone of Southside for generations. To survive, family farms need a new, high-yield crop. Ethanol can be efficiently refined from switchgrass, a native prairie grass which grows well in Virginia. Switchgrass can bring in over \$500 an acre, is less labor intensive than tobacco, and can be harvested using standard equipment.
- **Create New Jobs**—Jobs will be created through the construction and operation of refineries, gas station modifications, and feedstock transportation. Local businesses are already creating a demand for switchgrass. As supply and demand grows, so will investment in the region.
- **Invigorate the Local Economy**—Over two-hundred-million gallons of gasoline are used in Southside every year. That is over four-hundred-million dollars that leave the region, most of it leaving the country. If each gallon was just 10 percent locally produced ethanol, over forty million dollars would stay in the local economy. That is the equivalent of two thousand \$10 an hour jobs. This number will increase as we increase the level of ethanol.
- **Ensure National Security**—As George Bush has said, it is time to end our addiction to oil. As George Bush has not done, we must take steps to reduce our dependency on governments in unstable regions of the world. For our national security, we must begin developing our own fuel now.
- **Protect the Environment**—Greenhouse gases are slowly destroying our environment. Studies show that corn based ethanol reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 21 percent and cellulosic ethanol reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 86 percent. The difference is dramatic. We must protect our future by investing in biofuels.