Statement of Senator Mamie E. Locke
Congressional Redistricting

Many of the principles of the Democratic Party include the pursuit of equality and justice. Those principles are at the root of the Congressional Redistricting plan adopted by the Senate of Virginia. This plan calls for the creation of one majority/minority district (Fourth Congressional) and one minority influence district (Third Congressional). This plan was supported by fifteen of the eighteen members of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus. Two voted no (one of whom has been appointed to the House Conference committee) and one did not vote.

Concern has been expressed by a few that the change in the Third Congressional district has been reduced to approximately 43% and that only Congressman Robert Scott can win at that percentage. That assertion is absurd! The purpose of SB 5004 (imposed as substitute to HB 5004) is to ensure that minorities have an opportunity to vote for candidates of choice. If a high percentage of African American voters are placed in the Third, then those in the First, Second and Fourth have their votes marginalized since those lines have been drawn by the House to protect Republican incumbents. Further, any good candidate who campaigns can win the seat in a district that remains democratic. Is it not important for Democrats to want an additional Democrat in the Congressional delegation? Why should minorities (African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans) be limited to one minority member of the Congressional delegation when they are one-fourth of Virginia's population? The Senate Congressional plan is crucial to ensuring that minorities have an opportunity to vote for a candidate of choice as well as maintain one majority-minority district. Thus, there is no retrogression.

Congressman Scott has endorsed this plan as has the majority of the members of the VLBC and all Democratic members of the Virginia Senate. The Democratic Party of Virginia should adopt a resolution in support of the Senate plan.