

OUR CLIENTS ISSUE

Our client owns a 1,000-acre tobacco farm in rural Virginia. The farm has been in the family since before the Revolutionary War. In 1986, a geologist accidentally found 200 acres of high grade uranium within the 1,000 acres of farmland. In 2006, when the price of uranium rose to a high in 2007, the company submitted a plan to mine the 200 acres. The client required approvals on the local, state and federal levels. A major hurdle was to have the Virginia Assembly of Delegates lift a 35-year-old statewide ban on uranium mining. The first step in the process was to have the Assembly approve a study to determine the impact of uranium mining on the state. Local and statewide opposition to our application quickly formed and multiplied.

DELIVERABLES

- We conducted a political assessment on the legislature working with a lobbyist and to identify specific delegates who could be convinced to vote yes.
- We began speaking to business groups and business owners highlighting the benefits, including the local taxes on \$10 billion worth of uranium, that the mine would bring to the community.
- We formulated a concrete message that uranium mining is safe. We had to work with our client on this after an interview where he stated “if the study found uranium mining to be safe”.
- We infiltrated the opposition and their meetings to gain access to their strategy and message.
- We countered the opposition with a “fact vs. fiction” piece exposing the misinformation that was being put into the community, including the “50 mile circle of death”.
- We began using a patch through call system that connected constituents to their Assembly Delegate urging them to approve the study being done.
- We conducted a statewide email and letter campaign to identified delegates urging them to vote yes.

THE RESULTS

The legislature approved the conducting of a study on uranium mining that took 18 months. The study was completed expressing some concerns, but overall saw limited issues with lifting the ban on uranium mining. Shortly thereafter a gubernatorial election was held and the current governor was elected, he vowed to keep the ban in place. The project was put on hold due to that issue and the rapid decline of uranium prices after the Fukushima Nuclear accident in Japan.