



October 7, 2024

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
Office of the President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write in strong support of Speaker Don Scott's pardon application. As former governors, we have also experienced the heavy burden and responsibility of deciding such applications correctly. This one is a no-brainer.

Don Scott has lived a life right out of a novel or a movie. As one of five children born to a single mother in Texas, Don grew up in poverty, experiencing food insecurity and power shutoffs. He also stuttered as a child. But Don overcame these challenges to graduate from Texas A&M University, serve in the U.S. Navy, then attend law school at Louisiana State University (LSU).

Then Don made the biggest mistake of his life, unraveling the decades of hard work. In 1994, he transported money from a drug deal for a friend. He ultimately pleaded no contest to one charge of conspiracy to possess crack cocaine with intent to distribute. Don and his lawyer believed that he may be given some leniency given that he was a first-time offender, but Don was sentenced to ten years in prison.

Instead of giving up, Don immediately began his long journey toward redemption by using his knowledge of the law to help other inmates with their legal cases. He also taught them to read. In 2002, Don was released from prison after serving 7 ½ years.

He continued to rebuild his life, first by working hard jobs like ironworking, then by joining KRA Corporation, a workforce training company that worked with local governments to help welfare recipients. During this time, Don also met and married the love of his life, Mellanda, and became a father when their daughter Peyton was born.

Don and his family moved to Portsmouth, Virginia in 2005. Encouraged by his wife, Don decided to take the Virginia bar exam in 2014, twenty years after he had graduated from LSU Law School. He passed the bar on his first try and opened his first law office. Don quickly developed a reputation as an effective civil and criminal litigator.

In 2019, Don was elected to the Virginia General Assembly as a Delegate representing Portsmouth. During his first re-election campaign in 2021, a distraught neighbor shared with Don that he needed a kidney transplant and had not been able to find a donor match. Don

immediately agreed to be tested, found that he was a match, and went through the arduous process of donating a kidney to his friend in the last weeks of the campaign. His reasoning—“I’ve been given a second chance so I should give a second chance to someone else.”

In 2023, he was not only re-elected as a Delegate but also became the Speaker of the House of Delegates for the Virginia General Assembly, the first African American to hold that position in 405 years of Virginia history. Don’s mother, who wept with despair in the courtroom when he was convicted was there to weep with joy as her son assumed the mantle of leadership of the first elected legislative body in the New World. A body that passed many of the laws institutionalizing American slavery was now led by a redeemed man whose election signified a redemption of the body itself.

You should grant Don’s pardon request not only because of his remarkable life story but also because Don’s life trajectory shows every person who has made mistakes that they need not be defined solely by those mistakes. Like Don, if they can overcome their despair and work hard to help themselves, their families, and their communities, they can lead not just productive lives but achieve their wildest dreams and may even make history.

Sincerely,



Senator Mark Warner



Senator Tim Kaine