

# No car tax. What next?

Have you seen the movie, "As Good As It Gets"? Well, that could be the title of Gov. Jim Gilmore's administration at this point.



Gilmore ran his campaign on one major issue — no car tax. Gilmore pledged to eliminate that pesky bill and took the daring stand that he was in fact against taxes. Very unpopular in an election year, by the way.

And so in the land of Jefferson, Madison and Monroe, Gilmore said he wanted to be governor to give out the electoral equivalent of candy. What do you do once the candy is gone?

In just four short months, Gilmore has passed a bill through the General Assembly that will, in the next two years, reduce the car tax by 50 percent. Next year being an election year, you can guess when the other 50 percent cut will go through. Then that's it — no more car tax and apparently no more Gilmore agenda.

Bill Clinton said he wanted to invest in the American people.

That means improving education through increased standards of performance, increased spending on school construction and tax cuts for the college bound. It can also mean environmental protection, job training and any number of other things. Whether you like it or not, Clinton has a governing philosophy.

Ronald Reagan wanted to reduce the size of government and destroy Communism. Sweeping tax cuts were for Reagan, just a part of the overall picture. They were not the means to an end.

In Virginia, former Gov. Doug Wilder helped Virginia ride out the recession by maintaining our fiscal responsibility. Budget cuts, agency downsizing and an iron will against tax increases made Virginia the best run state in the country for three years in a row. That is a governing philosophy.

Gilmore, no offense intended, developed a governing philosophy based on a bumper sticker. "No Car Tax!" OK, so there's no more car tax. There is now a \$400 million hole in the budgets of state and local government. Funds that can't be used for schools or economic development. Fine, no car tax. What next?

"No Car Tax!", is the answer. Poor guys can't seem to get their bearings.

"No Car Tax," as a governing philosophy, has run out of gas. And the evidence is already clear. A recent public opinion poll had Gilmore's approval rating hovering below the 50 percent range.

In the past few weeks, Gilmore has been casting about for a new theme for his administration. His handlers prepared a video about his first 100 days in office — comparing Gilmore to FDR. Please.

Then they had the governor pose with a bald eagle that had been injured on a power line. The environmental governor. We'll see how long that lasts when it's a choice between environmental protection and telling a corporate polluter no.

The Gilmore crowd promised they would eliminate the car tax. They have promised and, by Jove, they have delivered. But with low approval ratings and no discernible governing philosophy to guide them over the next three years, the Gilmore crowd, led by political pros driven by the latest public opinion polls, must be wondering, "Is this as good as it gets?"