

Following Lead of Everyday Heroes

Delegate Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum

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Seventeen "maverick" Republicans joined with Democrats in the House of Delegates to vote for a revenue measure to break the budget impasse in the General Assembly. The three-quarters of a billion dollars the bill would raise narrow the gap with the Senate but is still nearly a billion dollars short of funding core services. Only a token amount of money is provided for transportation, and public schools are underfunded by about a half billion dollars.

One Republican delegate who voted for the measure showed me a copy of the oath of office which we both took and that he carries with him. He explains that his vote for the tax increase was in keeping with his oath to uphold the Constitution of Virginia that requires the legislature to pass a balanced budget.

While a budget deal is still elusive, the vote by moderate Republicans demonstrates political courage in the face of threats that they will face opposition in the election primaries next year. And there apparently have been hints that committee assignments may be taken away. The courage and strong, early leadership of Delegate Jim Dillard of Fairfax cost him a seat on the conference committee working to resolve differences between the House and Senate.

In perspective, these acts of bravery are reflective of the activities of everyday citizens who do not stand for political office but who make significant contributions to the quality of life in our community in their own way and within their sphere of interest. Congratulations are in order for the Best of Reston award winners for this and previous years who deserve recognition for their individual and corporate contributions to our community. And congratulations are given to Joe Ritchey and Chuck Veatch as Fairfax County Citizens of the Year for their substantial contributions to preserving the environment of our community. Likewise, the volunteers recognized recently by Volunteer Fairfax deserve our thanks and admiration.

The General Assembly this past session passed a resolution I introduced commending the Save Our Stream volunteers who work tirelessly under the leadership of the statewide coordinator Jay Gilliam to monitor water quality in streams throughout the state. They receive no compensation other than the satisfaction of an important deed well done.

Founder's Day in Reston reminds us of the uniqueness of our community and of the historic significance of its founding. It took vision, a lot of guts and substantial investment of money and otherwise for Robert E. Simon to bring about a community with a futuristic vision.

I am pleased and proud of my colleagues who stepped up to do their part in resolving the budget crisis in the state. But as I have suggested to many of them, what good does it do to be in public office or be on a legislative committee if you cannot vote your conscience and do what you know is right for the people of the state? It is better to lose the legislative positions we hold in pursuit of what we know is right than to occupy a legislative seat with no power to act. We need only look to constituents we represent to get the inspiration we need to be brave, committed, and persistent in our goals. Our everyday heroes show us the way to follow in doing what is best for our community today and in the future.

Note: Click on Photo Gallery to see a photo of Delegate Plum presenting a copy of a resolution to Jay Gilliam, state coordinator of Save Our Streams, commending the work of the volunteers in the program for their stream monitoring activities.