

Life Outside the General Assembly

Delegate Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum

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I write this column about a week before you read it. With the ebb and flow of budget discussions it is impossible to predict where the negotiations will stand next week when this column is printed. Two things have become clear over the past several weeks: the House of Delegates now recognizes that additional revenue is needed to fund even the skimpiest of budgets. The House grudgingly, by a one-vote margin, agreed to a half-cent increase in the sales tax. Also obvious is the looming deadline by which a state budget must be adopted.

That a budget agreement is likely to be reached in the near future is good news. The terms of agreements that are being discussed leave much to be desired, however. Already it has become apparent that under the currently discussed budget deals the state will not meet its funding obligation for public schools; local property taxpayers will have to make up the difference. College tuition and fees will rise with parents having to make up the difference. The waiting list for mental health and mental retardation services will continue to have more than 1500 persons on it. No new money will be available for transportation.

Between my weekly trips to Richmond, life does go on. One of the activities to which I have been directing my attention is the American Cancer Society's annual Relay for Life. Relay for Life events are held throughout the country and are the biggest fundraising events put on by the American Cancer Society. Last year nearly a half million dollars were raised at South Lakes. Relay for Life at South Lakes High School will be held May 15-16.

For the past several years I have had the pleasure of working with the Top of the Town team, a group of highly motivated and successful fundraisers. Some members are cancer survivors as I am. Others have family members who have had cancer, and then there are those who recognize the Relay as a good way to give back to the community. We raise money through direct solicitation of our friends and families, a raffle for dining at the best restaurants in town, and selling food at the Relay. It is great fun with lots of personal satisfaction.

While the odds of getting cancer continue to be great, the results of American Cancer Society sponsored research are finding new evidence of healthy tips for living to reduce the incidence of cancer, early diagnosis, and many more avenues of treatment. All that costs a great deal, and that is where the money raised at Relay for Life makes a difference.

Please help when a Top of the Town or another Relay for Life team member asks you for a contribution. If you are not asked, please feel free to send your check payable to the American Cancer Society to Delegate Ken Plum, 2073 Cobblestone Lane, Reston, VA 20191, and I will see that it gets to the American Cancer Society and is acknowledged by them.

Important work and a great deal of life goes on outside the General Assembly.