

Some Very Good News

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The Virginia House of Delegates celebrated its 385th birthday recently, making it the oldest continuous legislative body in the western hemisphere. On July 30, 1619, colonists met in the church at Jamestown to form a government. John Pory, Clerk of the House of Burgesses as the body was then called, recorded the event:

But forasmuch as men's affaires doe little prosper where God's service is neglected, all the Burgesses tooke their places in the Quire till a prayer was said by Mr. Bucke, the Minister; that it would please God to guide and sanctifie all our proceedings to his own glory and the good of this Plantation... The Speaker...delivered in briefe to the whole assembly the occasions of their meeting. Which done he read unto them the commission for establishing the Counsell of Estate and the general Assembly, wherein their duties were described to the life... And forasmuch as our intente is to establish one equall and uniforme kinde of government over all Virginia &c.

While this column typically deals with issues and problems, this week I want to share some good news as to how Virginia is doing. The Center for Digital Government ranks Virginia third among the states in the use of information technology in running 21st century government. Just two years ago Virginia was in the bottom half of the rankings. As the Center for Digital Government Executive Director Cathilea Robinett expressed it:

Virginia has taken this survey by storm. They have done more than any other state in the shortest amount of time. It is extremely impressive. I have the utmost respect for Governor Warner and Secretary Newstrom. They have exhibited an inordinate amount of vision and leadership and have helped make Virginia one of the top Digital States in the country.

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership recently compiled information on other Virginia rankings. *Forbes* magazine placed Virginia third on its annual U.S. Economic Freedom Index which ranks the most business-friendly states and metropolitan areas. The Northern Virginia-Washington region ranked fourth, and Richmond ranked tenth.

The Milken Institute's 2004 State Technology and Science Index ranked Virginia fifth on its measure of how well a state will perform in today's knowledge-based economy. The May issue of *Site Selection* magazine named Virginia the ninth most competitive state in the country. In the National Policy Research Council's *America's Best Cities and States: The Annual Gold Guide to Leading Rankings*, Virginia was ranked fourth. Northern Virginia was ranked twentieth in *Inc.* magazine's "Top 25 Cities for Doing Business in America."

Virginia has a proud history and a very successful economy. It has a strong basis for building and enhancing the quality of life for all its citizens.