

Delegate Ken Plum's *Virginia E-News*



December 5, 2007

COMMENTARY

College Competitors Come Together in Need Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum

The Virginia Tech flag is hanging in front of our house this week. Our family tradition is that the university winning the Commonwealth Day football game the day after Thanksgiving gets its flag hung in front of our house for at least a week. We are a family divided: I have a master's degree from the University of Virginia; Jane has two degrees from Virginia Tech. Our youngest daughter, Augusta, graduated from the University of Virginia; her husband, Donald, graduated from Virginia Tech. The four of us went to the game. While we each pull for our school, we were pleased and impressed by the pre-game activities that emphasized the partnerships and support the two schools have for each other. The Commonwealth is blessed to have such outstanding institutions of higher education.

Virginia has many more excellent colleges and universities varying in size, specializations and character. Space will not permit me to list them all and to enumerate their special qualities, but I would be happy to communicate with parents and students who are still shopping for the school to which to apply. Just direct your questions to me at kenplum@aol.com.

The challenge to the Governor and the General Assembly is to keep colleges and universities adequately funded to enhance quality and to expand to meet future growth. A recent report by the Virginia Business Higher Education Council points out the "downward spiral" in higher education funding that has colleges and universities receiving less funding in the 2007-08 school year than in 2000-01. In actual dollars, the average state support for four-year institutions in 2000-01 was \$8,566. In 2007-08, it is \$7,647. In constant dollars the drop is even sharper. The \$7647 for this year would have been \$10,191 in 2000-01, a drop of 25 percent. Community colleges have fared a little better. In actual dollars the average went from \$3,956 to \$3,985. In constant dollars there was a drop of 15 percent.

The shortfall in state funding has meant that tuition charges have gone up. National rankings continue to give Virginia low scores on accessibility to its institutions of higher education because of its rising tuition rates and its relatively low rate of financial aid. At a time when the

rate of revenue growth is slowing for the state, the State Council of Higher Education is asking for nearly \$400 million additional operation funds, \$120 million additional in student financial aid, and \$2.1 billion for capital outlay.

As tough as our universities compete on the gridiron, they are together in their need for additional resources. Our family is not divided on this issue: all our institutions need funding to meet the needs of the students applying to them.

Constituent Survey – 2008 General Assembly Session

Please take a moment to complete my annual Constituent Survey. Your responses to questions about current issues will help me as I prepare for the 2008 General Assembly Session. Take the survey by clicking on the following link. Thank you in advance for sharing your views.

[Click here for Survey](#)

Pre-Session Town Meeting in January



Join Senator Janet Howell and me for our annual Public Meeting prior to the upcoming General Assembly session on **Thursday, January 3, 2008, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Community Room of the Reston Community Center at Hunters Woods.** Let us hear from you about issues affecting our neighborhoods and our region.

I have also scheduled a Public Meeting with Senator Mark Herring on Monday, January 7, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. at Fox Mill Elementary School, 2601 Viking Drive, Herndon. Senator Herring and I look forward to seeing you and having your views.

Please plan to attend one of these important Public Meetings. I look forward to talking with you and finding out what is important to you.

Delegate Ken Plum's Weekly "Virginia Report" on Reston Comcast Channel 28

View Delegate Plum's *Virginia Report* online at <http://www.rctv28.com/videosVR.htm>.

Tonight – Wednesday, December 5 at 10:30 p.m. – Max Croes, Sudan Divestment Task Force – "The Divestment Movement: A Catalyst for Change in Darfur"

Tuesday, December 11 at 7:30 p.m. and Wednesday, December 12 at 10:30 p.m. – Megan Seals and Jim Dunstan, The V Prize Foundation – "Challenge to the Commercial Space Community"

Announcements

Help save the life of the Chesapeake Bay by stopping the use of dishwasher detergents

that contain phosphates. Go to www.reducephosphates.com for a list of alternative products.

Governor Kaine announced this week that **Virginia has entered into a contract** with EnergyConnect that will **help improve the reliability of Virginia's electricity grid and will provide incentive payments for reducing the load on the grid.** The program will **benefit all citizens of the Commonwealth** by reducing the need for electrical utilities to build additional generating plants, transmission, and distribution lines. Demand will be reduced on the grid during times of peak electrical load or in an emergency. EnergyConnect will assist state agencies, educational facilities, and other public bodies in curtailing their use of electricity during periods of peak use. Payments for this electrical demand curtailment will be made directly to the participating organization and **has the potential of exceeding \$10 million per year in payments to state agencies, providing an additional funding source for agencies in these challenging financial times.**

Visit the new **Local Aid Database** available on the House Appropriations Committee's web site at <http://hac.state.va.us/database/index.htm> to get information about **the level of state aid the Commonwealth provides to localities.** The database contains two reports. The first, which is searched by House district number, **shows selected general fund local aid payments** to each locality. The second, searched by the Delegate's name, summarizes the **local aid data** across the locality. Using the drop-down menu at the web site, select "36" for my district or "Plum, Kenneth R." for information. Reports include support for K-12 education, payments to Constitutional officers, spending for public safety functions, support for human services activities, local library aid, and many other distributions.

Calendar of Events

This year's **Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting will be held on Sunday, December 9, at 7:00 p.m. around the Globe.** Held annually the second Sunday in December, the candle lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour **to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause.** As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries.

The **Historical Society of Fairfax County will meet on Sunday, December 16 at 2:00 p.m. at the Vale Schoolhouse,** 3124 Fox Mill Road, Oakton. Trish Strat will talk about the history of the Vale community and the origins of their historic schoolhouse. The Vale Schoolhouse, now used as a community center, is typical of the **one-room schoolhouses** that dotted the county prior to the school consolidation movement in the 1930s. **In 1937, neighborhood women purchased the surplus schoolhouse and developed the property as a community center.** Women in the Vale community have used and maintained their schoolhouse for over 70 years.

The **Fairfax Symphony Orchestra Holiday Pops** concert will be held on **Sunday, December 16, 3:00 p.m.** at George Mason University's Center for the Arts. For tickets go to www.fairfaxsymphony.org or call 888-945-2468.

Authorized and Paid for by Kenneth R. Plum

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