

Delegate Ken Plum's *Virginia E-News*



Delegate Ken Plum speaking at the Chinese New Year Festival in Fairfax County, February 2008

February 20, 2008

Commentary

When the System Works Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum

The buck stops at the General Assembly when conflicting interests and issues clash in the state. But legislating is more complex than choosing winners and losers. Many times the public's good is best served by a compromise among competing interests. A showdown in the legislative halls can be averted when legislators require both sides or as is often the case, multiple interests, to meet together to iron out their differences. Legislators are spared the tedious task of working out details that can best be resolved by the people who are intimately involved with an issue.

In the 2007 legislative session a bill was introduced that would have replaced the air, waste, and water control boards in the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) with a single board and transferred all permitting responsibilities to the director of DEQ. The entire environmental community saw the bill as an attack on the environmental protection system in the state. Fears were intensified because the chief proponents of the bill had gotten unsatisfactory results from the Air Board related to permitting the Mirant Power Plant in Alexandria and another had disagreed with the rejection of a water permit for a reservoir to serve the needs of the City of Newport News. Their efforts were directed at changing the

system because they could not get a decision they wanted out of the system as it exists.

I voted against the bill last year but was able with others to get a reenactment clause put on the bill requiring it to be passed by a second session of the General Assembly before it could become law. The idea was that the year would give parties on the various sides of the issue time to work out their differences. While a compromise was not reached during the year, a threat on the part of me and others to defeat the bill altogether resulted in the multiple parties working together feverishly during this legislative session to come up with a compromise.

The result of the effort is a win-win for the competing interests and a big win for the environment. Businesses got the certainty they needed in the permitting process in order to make their investments, and environmentalists got retention of the separate boards and a strengthened role for the boards in issuing permits. The public got better protection of the environment.

For the system to work, legislators need to stay focused on the public's interest while recognizing legitimate interest of competing parties. Requiring mediation or structuring a process that leads to a workable compromise can lead to success for all parties. Unfortunately, examples of the system working are more exceptional than common.

The General Assembly is past "crossover," the period when each house must have acted on its own legislation and must start to work on the bills passed by the other house. To learn the status of a bill, visit <http://legis.state.va.us> or contact my office at 703.758.9733.

Around the Capitol with Delegate Ken Plum



Budget writing committees in the House and Senate have produced their versions of budget revisions for the current year and a new budget for the 2008-2010 biennium. The task was made difficult by a projected shortfall of a billion dollars in revenue for the current year and more than that amount for the next biennium. The budgets must be reconciled before the legislature can adjourn.

Last Friday morning at about 8:00 a.m. I read *The Washington Post's* impassioned editorial, "Virginia's Sham Democracy: The time is ripe to reform the way political maps are drawn" arguing for a nonpartisan reapportionment commission to draw legislative district lines. Unfortunately, a subcommittee of the House Privileges and Elections Committee had met at 7:00 a.m. that morning and after about a 20-minute discussion killed a bill on a straight party line vote that had already passed the Senate and would have established a bipartisan reapportionment advisory commission. That same subcommittee had killed a nearly identical bill I had introduced earlier in the session. Hopefully the Republican majority on the subcommittee will read the *Post's* admonition: "Lawmakers who pay lip service to good government will be exposed as bald-faced hypocrites if they do not seize the chance before them to turn elections back over to the electorate."

The 26th Annual Wild Game Dinner for legislators will be held next week. The buffet menu includes black bear, elk, rabbit, squirrel, and a footnote: "Hey, if it walks, crawls, swims, or flies... it may be there." The dinner is known affectionately as the "road-kill dinner." I have another obligation and will not be able to attend again this year. Shucks!

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>.

Tune in to Reston Comcast Channel 28 on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. and on Wednesdays at 10:30 p.m. for "Delegate Ken Plum's Richmond Report."

Announcements

The **Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce** made up of business leaders from the counties of Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico and Richmond city work through the **Success By 6** partnership to **promote the need for quality early childhood development**. They **share the vision of Success by 6**: All children, ages 0 to 6, will be **healthy, well-cared-for, and ready to succeed in school**. For more information go to www.grcc.com.

The "**Virginia Winery Guide 2008**" includes a **map with locations of the 130 wineries** in Virginia and the 2008 **statewide festivals and special events schedule**. Virginia is sixth nationally and second in the East in fine wine production. Request a copy at 804.344.8200 or information@virginiawine.org.

The **Virginia is for Lovers 2008 Travel Guide** is available. Order at www.virginia.org.

Free tax preparation assistance through CASH, the Fairfax Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program, is available at these North County sites:

- **SkillSource Center at Lake Anne**, 11484 Washington Plaza West, Suite 110, Reston, 703.787.4974; TTY 711; on Thursdays, 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. and on Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- **AARP Tax-Aide, Reston Community Center**, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston, 703.476.4500; on Tuesdays 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; Thursdays 1:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.;

and Saturdays 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

- **ONE DAY ONLY at Southgate Community Center**, 12125 Pinecrest Road, Reston, 703.860.0676 on Saturday, March 8, 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Childcare is available at this single event only.

Call for information about what to bring with you to have your taxes prepared. This service is available to low- and moderate-income people earning \$40,000 or less.

Volunteer Farm of Shenandoah near Woodstock, Virginia, grows **fresh produce to feed the region's hungry**. Information on contributing to the effort or volunteering to help is at www.volunteerfarm.org, or call 540.459.3478.

The **Commonwealth Special Education Endorsement Programs (CSEEP)** provides a readily accessible path to **endorsement for conditionally/provisionally licensed special education teachers** and other school personnel pursuing initial licensure across the commonwealth and, in doing so, ensures a **high quality education for Virginia's children with disabilities**. If you have any questions concerning the CSEEP programs, please contact the grand office at Old Dominion University at cseep@odu.edu, call 1-800-968-2638 ext. 5372 or visit www.odu.edu/cseep.

Calendar of Events

The **AARP Dulles Chapter** will meet on **Thursday, February 21, 7:00 p.m.** at the Lake Anne Professional Building, 11484 Washington Plaza West, Suite 140, for a **"Getting Ready for Income Taxes"** program. Guest speaker will be Charles N. Field, an AARP tax services consultant who will talk about **Virginia's AARP Tax-Aide program and answer general tax questions**. Visit www.aarpdulles.org for more information.

On **February 25, 2008** from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. **learn about the Trash Free Potomac Watershed Initiative and the Potomac River Watershed Cleanup** presented by the Alice Ferguson Foundation. The town hall meeting will be **held at the Fairfax County Government Center**, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Conference Center, Room 10, Fairfax. More information, go to www.trashfreepotomac.org.

Bid on treasures from the past at **Reston Museum's "Attic Auction" on Thursday, February 28**, 5:30 p.m. Live bidding begins at 6:30 p.m. Visit www.restonmuseum.org for more information about the Museum.

The Carbon Trading-Green Building Connection, a "Build Green Virginia" Event of Virginia Sustainable Building Network, will be held on **March 6** in Fairfax. The event is sponsored and hosted by Dewberry at its headquarters, 8401 Arlington Boulevard. Registration has begun on-line at www.vsbnet.org. For more information, contact Annette Osso, VSBNet President, at osso@vsbn.org.

The Virginia chapter of the **American Planning Association** will hold the opening session of its annual conference on Wednesday, **March 26**, at the Reston Town Center. Topic of the conference is **"Creating Healthy Communities."** Keynote speakers on the opening day will be Reston founder **Robert E. Simon** and **best-selling author Richard Louv**. For information and registration go to www.vaplanning.org.

A statewide strategic summit on Virginia's workforce development system, "Pathways to Workforce Readiness," to improve the readiness and competitiveness of Virginia's workforce at home and around the globe will be held on **Tuesday, April 1, Greater Richmond Convention**

Center, 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Visit www.shrmva.org/conferenceworkforcereadiness.htm for more information and registration.

Attend the **Best of Reston Awards Gala and Dinner on April 24**. The 2008 Best of Reston Honorees are John Coleman, The JBG Companies, the Volunteer Medical Providers of the Jeanie Schmidt Free Clinic, Ruth Overton, The Reston Garden Club, Tetra Partnerships, and VISTA Wealth Strategies & Judy Redpath. The Awards and Gala are **produced in partnership by the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce and Reston Interfaith**. Last year's Best of Reston event **raised more than \$300,000 for Reston Interfaith**. Watch here for details about this important event.

The topic of Fairfax Futures' **4th annual School Readiness Symposium**, to be held on **Saturday, April 26 in Fairfax** will be **"Resilient, Resourceful and Ready: the Importance of Social and Emotional Competence for Young Children."** Dr. Daniel Gartrell will be keynote speaker. For more information go to www.fairfax-futures.org.

Authorized and Paid for by Kenneth R. Plum

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