

Delegate Ken Plum's *Virginia E-News*



February 27, 2008

Commentary

Reneging on Educational Promise Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum

The House of Delegates approved budget for the next biennium represents the strongest assault on public education funding that I have seen in all my years in the legislature, and that is what I told my colleagues in the House last week. There was no question that k-12 education would take a budgetary reduction as all programs had to with the shortfall in revenue. But what the Republican majority budget writers came up with went beyond a budget reduction to a change in funding methodology that will cost public schools hundreds of millions of dollars in the future. Their new approach reflects a change of philosophy that will result in the state being less of a partner in public education funding in the future.

While it would take several columns to describe the technical changes in a complex formula that determines a local school division's share of funding, suffice it to say that the House of Delegates majority is proposing to understate the actual cost of education by using standards that do not reflect prevailing practices among the school divisions. For example, the State Standards of Quality (SOQs) are so minimal as to be exceeded by every school division. The SOQs have never been updated to take into account English as a second language, No Child Left Behind, Standards of Learning, and other needs. Yet the House proposes to use these outdated standards as a basis for funding. Further, the new formula understates the effects of inflation on local school costs and ignores the prevailing costs of teacher salaries. Rather than reflect the marketplace increases in teacher salaries, the new formula would use a state

established percentage increase that for the last three years has averaged 1.9 percent.

The net effect of these and other formula changes will be to shift greater costs to localities that are already paying more than their share. According to a Census Bureau report, in 2005 Virginia localities ranked 14th highest among the 50 states in their funding of public schools. State funding for that same year was 33rd lowest among the 50 states. There was bragging on the House floor for having passed a balanced budget without a tax increase. What was not mentioned was the tremendous cost of public education that was shifted to localities who will no doubt have to raise property taxes in the future.

Fortunately the Senate version of the budget does not include the change in the educational funding formula. The two versions of the budget are in a conference committee to resolve differences and finally must be passed in the same form by both houses and signed by the Governor. Hopefully the conference committee will not agree to the House proposal, and we will not renege on our promise, and indeed responsibility, for public education.

Around the Capitol with Delegate Ken Plum



Cockfighting in Virginia is not a crime. A bill making its way through the General Assembly would make cockfighting as well as dogfighting a felony. Persons who hold cock fights and call themselves “cockers” hired a lobbyist to argue their case that they take good care of their roosters and do not gamble or drink alcohol at their events. Legislators were not convinced. I voted for the bill that is expected to be signed by the Governor.

A young person wrote to me recently on his notebook paper with a “SAVE THE PLANET!” banner asking that I support environmental protection legislation. He asks, “Have you ever thought of the Polar Bears? They need your help too! I am worried every minute to think that a Polar Bear might be drowning right now because there is not any icebergs for them to swim to!” I will think of this youngster’s concerns as I serve on the Governor’s Climate Change Commission.

Anyone will be able to carry a concealed gun in a vehicle even without a permit if a bill

passed by the Senate and the House is not vetoed by the Governor. The bill was strongly opposed by law enforcement officials. I voted against it; the Governor is likely to veto it.

Likewise, persons with a concealed weapons permit will be able to carry their concealed weapons into restaurants if they do not consume alcohol according to a bill passed by the House and the Senate. I voted against the bill; I believe the Governor will veto it. Guns and alcohol do not mix even if there is a promise that the gunman will not drink!

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

A **Civil Rights Memorial** is being constructed on Capitol Square in Richmond to "honor Virginia's heroes of the civil rights movement." For information on the memorial, the history depicted on it, or to make a tax-deductible contribution towards its construction, visit www.vacivilrightsmemorial.org.

ADAPT, a state-certified 18-week, skills-based, **domestic abuse intervention program**, teaches emotional regulation skills that are useful for perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse. The program is appropriate for adults who have difficulty regulating their anger or have been physically, emotionally, or sexually abusive to a spouse, partner, child, parent, or other family member. Groups are offered at Chantilly, Reston, and Woodburn (Annandale). Please call the Program Information Line at 703.968.4052 for additional information.

The Reston Community Center Teen Department is collecting gently worn dresses, shoes, jewelry and other accessories for **Diva Central, the annual prom dress give-away**. The collected items will benefit teens in Fairfax County and other surrounding counties that are otherwise unable to afford such items. Donations may be dropped off at the Reston Community Center Monday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. until March 28. Items are tax deductible. If you are unable to drop off donations, reasonable arrangements may be made. Contact Nakish Jordan, Director of Teen Programs, at Nakish.Jordan@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703.476.4500.

Enrollment period for the **Virginia Prepaid Education Program** closes on February 29, 2008. For more information, visit www.Virginia529.com.

The Freshaire Choice, a brand of house paint that contains no volatile organic compounds in the paint or the colorants and has no odor is available at Home Depot. For more information visit www.thefreshairechoice.com.

Social entrepreneurship is the practice of responding to market gaps with transformative, financially sustainable innovations aimed at solving social problems. The **Phoenix Project** is an effort to position the Commonwealth at the forefront of this movement. Additional information can be found at www.phoenixproject.org/accelerating.

There are more than 2600 Virginians awaiting a life-saving organ. Every other day a citizen of the Commonwealth dies because a badly needed organ for transplant does not become available in time. Find out more from **Donate Life Virginia – Virginia Transplant Council** at www.save7lives.org or 1-800-832-0728.

Calendar of Events

Attend **Two Scenarios for Tysons: Have Your Say**. Based on public comments and extensive studies, consultants have come up with **two land use scenarios for a redesigned Tysons Corner**. They tested them with two different transportation networks. These prototypes have different future land uses and test the effectiveness of different transportation investments. **Your reaction is essential as the final vision is crafted**. The final plan will integrate the best pieces of the prototypes. Public Workshops are identical and will be held as follows: **TODAY, February 27**, 7:00 p.m. at Marshall High School; **Thursday, February 28**, 1:00 p.m. at McLean Community Center; and **Thursday, February 28**, 7:00 p.m. at Westbriar Elementary School..

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.vsbm.org. For more information, contact Annette Osso, VSBM President, at osso@vsbn.org.

The Fairfax County History Commission will hold a **community meeting on the proposed countywide Heritage Resources Comprehensive Plan Amendment on Wednesday, March 26, 7:30 p.m. at Frying Pan Park Visitor Center**, 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon. For more information on the proposed plan amendment, contact the Department of Planning and Zoning at 703.324.1380, TTY 711. For more information on the Inventory of Historic Sites, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/historic/ihs/.

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.

Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce will hold a **Student Job Fair on Tuesday, April 1**, 2:30 to 6:00 p.m. at Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly, Virginia. To participate in the Fair as an employer, email marketing@dullesregionalchamber.org for information.

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.

Environment Virginia 2008: Commonwealth: Accelerating Solutions in a Rapidly Changing Virginia will be another groundbreaking event. Attend April 1-3 in Lexington, Virginia. Information is available at www.environmentva.org.

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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