

Delegate Ken Plum's *Virginia E-News*



***Delegate Plum with Gabrielle McDonald, legislative intern
and Virginia Commonwealth University student***

March 5, 2008

Commentary

***Sine Die* Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum**

The 2008 session of the General Assembly is scheduled to adjourn *sine die*, until another day, on March 8. Going into the last week of the session it is difficult to predict if an extension of the session will be necessary. Two major outstanding issues that could force an extension is reconciliation of the House and Senate versions of the biennial budget and responding to the Supreme Court decision that invalidated the transportation plan passed last year. With revenue shortfalls from the slowdown of the economy, tough choices have to be made about spending priorities. Of most concern is the House proposal to dramatically alter the funding formula for public schools that as I addressed in this column last week would reduce the state's contribution to public education. Of course, the schools would still open and teach the children, but local property taxpayers would need to pick up more of the cost under the House proposal.

The Supreme Court's decision that taxing authority could not be delegated to an unelected

regional transportation authority was not a complete surprise. It may well take a special session in the spring for the General Assembly to come to grips with its responsibility to provide funding for transportation.

Specific outcomes of the session will be addressed in future columns as soon as the dust from the session settles. At this point it is clear that mental health laws, procedures and funding will have been strengthened as a result of the Virginia Tech tragedy. Disappointingly, the loophole that allows anyone to buy a gun at a gun show without a background check will not have been closed even with pleas from Virginia Tech parents. Other bills that increase opportunities for concealed weapons to be carried have gone to the Governor who may veto some of them.

The publicity surrounding dog fighting in the Commonwealth resulted in bills to make that activity a felony offense. News about the health risks of secondary smoke did not result in any bills passing to limit smoking in public.

Many of my bills passed outright or were combined with other similar bills that passed. My environmental bills to eliminate phosphates in dishwashing detergents because of its adverse impact on water quality, to eliminate television picture tubes from landfills because of the nearly eight pounds of lead they can contain, and my bill to require computer manufacturers to provide a program for recycling their products passed.

My consumer protection bills to protect against identity theft by requiring notification of breaches of confidential information and by permitting credit freezes passed as part of other bills. My bill to extend the HOV exemption for hybrid vehicles for another passed as part of other bills. Federal regulations limit these exemptions to one year. My bill to require public hearings earlier in the PPEA process may help to prevent problems such as those that arose with the housing proposal for Reston a couple of years ago.

If you want to know how particular bills fared, visit <http://legis.state.va.us>. *Sine die* also means that I get to come home! Just in time to see my crocus blooming!

**Around the Capitol
with Delegate Ken
Plum**



Delegate Bob Marshall has become notorious in his legislative career for an endless number of bills to restrict abortion and to expand access to guns. He brought the lawsuit that led to the invalidation of the transportation taxes imposed by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority. His win may have furthered his ambitions to be the Republican nominee for the U.S. Senate. He is relentless!

The General Assembly is finishing its work on regular bills in record-breaking time, although work on the budget and transportation funding could extend the session. The efficiency on other bills is brought about by the large number of bills heard in small subcommittees without a recorded vote. A new efficiency measure this year is that committee chairs simply refuse to call up certain bills. I will have a report on the disposition of bills later.

The transportation plan was thrown out by the supreme Court as an unconstitutional delegation of taxing authority to an unelected body. The House proposed Standards of Quality funding scheme if enacted could be likewise thrown out because of the General Assembly's abdication of its constitutional responsibility for funding education.

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

If you **paid taxes imposed by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, your money will be refunded.** Details of the procedure are being worked out. Check www.thenovaauthority.org for information.

For a copy of the **Virginia Supreme Court decision declaring unconstitutional the transportation plan passed by the 2007 General Assembly** session that allowed the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority to impose taxes, visit www.courts.state.va.us/opinions/opnscvwp/1071959.pdf.

Mrs. Virginia, Jenn Phillips of Pigeon Forge, who has **the disease fibromyalgia**, visited the General Assembly last week to make legislators aware of the disease and its control. For more information, visit www.fmaware.org.

Nominations are being accepted for Fairfax County's **Barbara Varon Volunteer Award, which recognizes a county resident whose dedication to improving the community through volunteer service** honors the memory of Barbara Varon, former chair of the Fairfax County Electoral Board. **Nominations must be received by June 13** and should describe in 200 words or less the nominee's qualifications, the unique nature of the volunteerism, how and what was accomplished, and the length of time served in each volunteer activity. For more information visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oep/varonaward.htm.

The **Republican House majority proposed budget would decrease per pupil spending for public education** by changing the funding methodology. To see the impact on local schools, go to:

<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&gl=us&ptab=2&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=117527060039671489920.000447250c1594185f0a7&ll=38.608286,-79.299316&spn=3.596706,10.283203&z=7&iwloc=000447266759bd13b3f75>

The **Library of Virginia** is continuing its tradition of **honoring Virginia Women in History**. An additional eight women were recently added to its list of honorees. For more information, visit www.lva.virginia.gov/vw2008.

The **Free File Alliance** (www.freefilealliance.com), a voluntary coalition of private sector tax software preparation companies that have a public-private partnership with the Internal Revenue Service, **will provide free tax preparation services to persons making up to \$54,000 in income.**

The **Victim Assistance Network** offers counseling for survivors of sexual assault at five locations throughout Fairfax County. **Limited individual counseling services for victims of domestic abuse** are offered in Annandale and Alexandria. Call the 24-hour Hotline at 703.360.7273, TTY 703.799.8253.

Find places to **recycle your electronics** by going to www.mygreenelectronics.org.

The **Virginia Performs** website (www.VaPerforms.virginia.gov) is an easy to use portal to information about the **quality of life in the Commonwealth and the performance of its state government**. **Discover** how Virginia is doing in terms of the economy, education, health and family, public safety, natural resources, transportation, and government administration. **Explore** data-driven analyses of Virginia's performance on over 50 indicators — from 3rd grade reading to obesity to traffic congestion. **Examine** data at the local, regional, or state level, and see comparisons with other states. **Learn** how Virginia government measures its own performance, plans improvements, and monitors progress.

For a **listing of physicians in the area**, visit the following link and type in the topic Physician and your ZIP code: www.seniornavigator.org.

Calendar of Events

Attend a **press event on Thursday, March 6, 10:00 a.m.** at the **Eastern Market Metro Station** to release new **data that boosts the importance of the Dulles Rail extension**, *A Better Way to Go: Meeting America's 21st Century Challenges with Modern Public Transit*. This data is a national US Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) report which analyzes the contribution that existing transit systems, including the DC Metro, make toward reducing oil demand, gas savings, global warming emissions, and congestion reduction.

Attend a Leadership Fairfax (LFI) information session to learn how you can become part of a **leadership development group** in Fairfax County. Sessions are available on **Thursday, March 6, 5:30 to 7:30** at the Tower Club, 8000 Towers Crescent Drive, Suite 1700, Vienna; and on **Wednesday, April 2, 7:30 to 9:00 a.m.** at Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce, 3901 Centerview Drive, Suite R, Chantilly.

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@vsbnet.org.

The **Fairfax League of Women Voters' Reston evening unit** will meet on **Wednesday, March 12, 7:30 p.m.** at the Reston Museum at Lake Anne. The program will be **"Bricks, Books, Buses & Fees – emphasizing community involvement in schools' issues."** Guests are welcome to attend and join the discussion. Call 703.471.6364 or visit the League's web site at www.LWV-fairfax.org for further information and the site of additional League meetings on the topic in our area.

On **Saturday, March 15, 2008, at 8:00 p.m.** the **Reston Chorale will present its Spring Concert** at the Reston Community Center. This year's performance has the special gift of the East Coast premiere of ***Magnificat for chorus and harp* by David Ott**. Visit www.restonchorale.org for a listing of the Reston Chorale's concert schedule.

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.

The Women's Center 2008 Annual Leadership Conference, "The Power to Make a Difference," will take place on **Saturday, March 29, 2008, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.** at the McLean Hilton located in Tysons Corner. Visit www.thewomenscenter.org for more information.

Public hearings on the FY2009 Advertised Budget Plan for Fairfax County will be held in the Board auditorium of the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax on **March 31, April 1, and April 2**. The public hearings will begin at **7:00 p.m.** To sign up as a speaker, the public should call the Clerk to the Board of Supervisors at 703.324.3151, TTY 703.324.3903. The Board Auditorium is accessible to persons with disabilities or access the budget on the Internet at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb>. Reference copies of the FY2009 Advertised Budget Plan are available at all County libraries.

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.

The **Northern Virginia Urban League's 18th Annual Community Service Scholarship**

Awards Dinner will be held on **Friday, April 4**, 6:30 p.m. at the Hilton McLean at Tysons Corner. Visit www.nvul.org for more information.

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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