

Delegate Ken Plum's *Virginia E-News*



***Governor Timothy M. Kaine, Kristen Skowronski,
Delegate Kenneth R. Plum, and Senator Mark R. Herring***

Governor Tim Kaine signed legislation on March 6 to help protect the Chesapeake Bay by removing phosphates from dishwashing detergent used in homes by July 1, 2010. The bill was based on a school paper researched and written by Kristen Skowronski, a student at Rachel Carson Middle School, and introduced in the House of Delegates by Delegate Kenneth R. Plum and others. Kristen is the daughter of Joe and Barbara Skowronski of Oak Hill and worked as a Senate Messenger during the 2008 General Assembly session.

March 12, 2008

Commentary

A Swing in Mental Health Reform Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum

As a youngster growing up near the town of Shenandoah in the Page Valley of Virginia, I heard regular references to persons being sent off to Staunton for misbehavior. It was almost a threat that if you did not act right you would get sent to Staunton, the location of what most people in my community referred to as the "insane asylum" and known by others as the state mental health hospital. It was an enormous institution filled with thousands of residents some of whom were truly mentally ill and others who were misfits and family castoffs. Admitting

someone was not difficult, and their protestations at being institutionalized were used as evidence of their need to be locked up.

Virginia was one of the leaders in providing institutionalization of the mentally ill. The first mental health hospital in the country opened in Williamsburg in 1773 as the Public Hospital for Persons of Insane and Disordered Minds. Treatment was limited, and the main purpose of the large hospitals was to separate persons with a broad range of behavior characteristics from society. Enlightenment about the nature of mental illness and the ineffectiveness of the large institutions resulted in a movement in the middle of the last century to move treatment into community based settings. Deinstitutionalization resulted in the closing of large hospitals and return of patients to the community. More rights were recognized for patients, and it became more difficult for families and others to shuttle someone off to Staunton or to the location of another mental health hospital. Concern for patient rights meant that more records were kept confidential.

Unfortunately the startup of community based treatment facilities did not occur as quickly as the closing of hospitals. Many residents who were truly mentally ill ended up homeless or in jail. Pete Earley, whose award-winning writings on the mental health system have been quoted in this column before, indicates that there were 560,000 Americans being treated in state hospitals in 1955 for mental problems. Today there are fewer than 55,000. As the events at Virginia Tech brought home to us very tragically, there are those among us needing serious treatment but not receiving it.

The major accomplishment of the 2008 session of the General Assembly may be mental health reform. The pendulum has been brought back more to the center to make it easier to commit someone to care who really needs it and as important to provide funding to ensure that treatment is available in our communities. Records will be made available to those needing them to provide care. Discussions will continue as to whether we have done enough to balance the need for institutional and community-based care and to balance patient rights and protection of society. The really healthy thing that has occurred has been heightened awareness of needs in the areas of mental health.

A new mental health hospital is being funded for Staunton to replace a very old facility. Modern treatment and care instead of warehousing will be offered for those needing it in a city that is a beautiful place to visit. More mental health workers will be available in local communities. The swing back in mental health reform is past due.

Around the Capitol with Delegate Ken Plum



The General Assembly missed its scheduled adjournment date of March 8 and is in recess as budget conferees continue to work on the biennial budget and solutions are sought to replace the transportation funding package found invalid by the Supreme Court. Legislators will be called back to the Capitol when there are specific proposals to be acted on.

This session 1917 bills were introduced, with 1062 of them being defeated. Of those defeated, 611 were “left in committee” without action. Most of these were bills that were referred to a subcommittee where they were defeated without a record of that action. A rules change I introduced on the first day of the session would have required that votes in subcommittees be recorded for the public to know how members voted on bills.

Virginia has once again received the top score in the Government Performance Project’s “Grading the States 2008” report, the nation’s only comprehensive, independent analysis of how well each state performs in serving the public. Virginia achieved an overall grade of A- for performance. Two other states – Utah and Washington – received an A- grade, and the national average was B-. Virginia also received an A- ranking in the most recent “Grading the States” assessment in 2005.

In an obvious Freudian slip, a constituent wrote to me recently that he knew “there are many bills to consider during this secession.” Many have suggested over the years that a separate state of Northern Virginia might be a good idea.

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

Congratulations to Phil Lilienthal and Global Camps Africa on reaching the impressive milestone of 26 camp sessions with nearly 3,200 campers whose lives have been affected by HIV/AIDS. For information on the camps and ways you can contribute, visit www.globalcampsafrika.org.

The Blue Hen Chick flies again! This time on the Internet at www.bluehenchick.com, a website for **the book based on the Ralph Minker family correspondence, *An American Family in World War II***.

VDOT, DMV, and the Virginia State Police have joined forces to improve traffic safety in Virginia through a partnership to **put the brakes on highway fatalities**. The ***Highway Safety Challenge*** has since drawn new partners, including AAA Mid-Atlantic and the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control. For more details go to www.safevahighways.org.

Reston Association Board elections are underway. Residents should have received ballots that can be returned by mail or via the Internet. **Deadline for voting is April 4**. Meet the candidates **tonight, March 12**, 7:00 p.m. at Reston Association **or on March 19**, 7:00 p.m. at Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road. For more information go to www.reston.org.

The **Jeanie Schmidt Free Clinic in Herndon** is **expanding its services for children**. Children who have **no health insurance, live in Herndon, Reston, Chantilly or Centreville** and in a family with an **income 200% or less of the poverty level may be eligible** for health services through the free clinic. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 703.481.8160 or visit www.jsfreeclinic.org.

Calendar of Events

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.

Community Meetings have been scheduled on the **Fairfax County FY 2009 Advertised Budget**. Meetings in our area are on **Wednesday, March 19, 7:00 p.m. at the Vienna Community Center**, 120 Cherry Street SE, Vienna, and on **Wednesday, March 26, 7:00 p.m. at Fox Mill Elementary School**, 2601 Viking Drive, Herndon. For complete budget information, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/budget.

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.

The Literacy Council will host its second annual **Reading: A Family Affair, 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the James Lee Community Center, 2855 Annandale Road, Falls Church**. This is a **free event for families**, showcasing books and reading through four entertaining venues **featuring some of Northern Virginia's most popular performers**. Musicians Rocknoceros and Bill Wellington, magician Joe Romano, storytellers Hazeline Harris, Diane Macklin, and Candace Wolf, and the Kaydee Puppets all will perform. Space is limited at the James Lee Community Center, so please leave baby strollers at home or in the car.

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.

Reston's giving *Circle of HOPE* is hosting an **Empty Bowls fundraiser** for the benefit of hunger relief on **Friday, April 4, 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. at St. John Neumann Parish**. Local artists are donating 500 **bowls that are individually designed and created just for the Empty Bowls fundraisers**. All proceeds will be donated to Food for Others, the largest distributor of free food which is given directly to people in need in Northern Virginia. For a donation of \$20.00, each guest chooses a bowl to use that evening for the meal of soup and bread and gets to take the bowl home as a reminder that there are always **Empty Bowls** in the world. For tickets or more information please contact Marie Kordes at mzkordes@comcast.net or phone 703.860.2749.

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.

The Annual Benefit Concert of the **Reston Community Orchestra will be "A Family Evening at the Pops"** on Sunday, **April 27, 5:30 p.m.** in the newly renovated Sunset Hills Montessori School, corner of South Lakes Drive and Ridge Heights Road. **RSVP for tickets and table reservations to 703.860.1328 by Thursday, April 24.**

Authorized and Paid for by Kenneth R. Plum

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