



## **Delegate Ken Plum's *Virginia E-News***

March 19, 2008

Commentary

### **So What Was the Hang-Up? Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum**

The Virginia General Assembly failed to meet its Constitution-prescribed deadline for adjournment of its annual legislative sessions for four of the last five years. This year the Saturday deadline date spilled over to the next Thursday, not bad considering that it ran over by nearly six months a few years ago. As usual, the hang-up was reaching agreement on the state budget. This year there was good reason for contention. A projected shortfall of about \$1.4 billion in revenue added strain to an already difficult process of establishing priorities to meet areas of greatest need.

I did not vote for the House version of the budget as I explained in a recent column; it contained the strongest assault on public education funding I had seen in all my years in the legislature. Astonishingly, one delegate explained that a structural imbalance in the budget meant that revenues in the future would be less than needed to meet expenses and that we would need to reduce funding for education as a result. There would not be any fewer students, no reduction in standards, no less expenses. He was simply proposing to reduce state support for schools and to leave it to local property taxpayers to make up the difference. Intense lobbying of the twelve conferees assigned to reconcile differences between the House and Senate budgets by local governments, school divisions, parents and teachers along with a vow by the Senate conferees that they would never accept the House plan to reduce public school funding led to an early agreement to stick with the current formula although reduced because of the shortfall in tax revenue.

The Governor's proposal to expand preschool education met strong opposition. It was treated as a new initiative although it simply expanded an existing program, and new programs were not to be funded. Never mind that each dollar spent on preschool programs was found to return nearly ten dollars in future savings on remedial education, corrections, and welfare costs. The Governor's already modest proposal was slashed in half in the conference report on the budget. Money was saved in the budget, and a Democratic governor was thwarted in his major initiative. Some viewed that as a double victory; others saw it as a real loss for children.

Virginia has one of the highest rates of incarceration in the country, yet Senate proposals to seek diversion of non-violent offenders and drug users to alternative programs and treatment were met with hostile opposition from the law and order conferees from the House. There is a stronger willingness to spend money on prisons than on prevention and alternative programs. It is estimated that Virginia will need to build six more prisons over the next six years.

So what hangs up the budget writing process? Some not so little items like different values, significantly different priorities, and clashing ideologies mixed in with some partisanship. Little wonder that there are problems in reaching agreement on the budget. Most amazing is that a budget is finally balanced after all!

## 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 the nurses at Reston Hospital Center** for recently achieving **Magnet Recognition from the American Nurses Credentialing Center**. Only four percent of hospitals nationwide receive this high distinction.

**March is National Colon Cancer Awareness Month.** Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer death in the United States, but it is highly preventable. **Get your examination this year.** More information is at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

**Historic Garden Week in Virginia**, sponsored by The Garden Club of Virginia will be held **April 19-27**. More than 200 homes and gardens are open for visitation throughout the state. Visit [www.VAGardenweek.org](http://www.VAGardenweek.org) for more information or call 804.644.7776.

Fairfax County is accepting nominations for the ninth annual **Environmental Excellence Awards through May 31**. The Environmental Excellence Awards Program recognizes individuals, organizations and businesses that **unselfishly dedicate time, energy and expertise to improve the environment** in support of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors' environmental

goals. The submission requirements, award criteria, nomination form and a list of previous recipients are available at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/eqac/awards.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/eqac/awards.htm).

The **Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD)** seeks candidates from across Virginia to serve as **delegates to its 2008 Youth Leadership Forum**. The 2008 Forum will be at Christopher Newport University in Newport News from July 4-18, 2008. **Twenty-five Virginia high school students with disabilities will be selected to receive full scholarships** to participate in this exceptional leadership development program. Applications and additional information are at [www.vaboard.org/yf.htm](http://www.vaboard.org/yf.htm).

The **Tahirih Justice Center** provides **free legal services to immigrant women and girls across Virginia who have survived** domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and other violent crimes. Go to [www.fahirih.org](http://www.fahirih.org) or call 703.575.0070 for more information.

## Calendar of Events

**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](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/budget).

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments **Recycling Committee** will host a meeting on the **Impact of the Digital Television Change in 2009 on Thursday, March 20, 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.** Register online by going to [www.mwcog.org/calendar](http://www.mwcog.org/calendar) and clicking on the meeting date. Call 202.962.3359 with questions.

The **Virginia Festival of the Book** sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities will be **held in Charlottesville March 25-30**. For more information, visit [www.vabook.org](http://www.vabook.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/](http://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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](http://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](mailto:mzkordes@comcast.net) or phone 703.860.2749.

Attend the **20th Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup on Saturday, April 5, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon**. Coordinate with Reston Association for a clean-up site near you by contacting Ha Brock at [habrock@reston.org](mailto:habrock@reston.org) or call 703.435.7986.

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](http://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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