

Delegate Ken Plum's *Virginia E-News*



This week Delegate Ken Plum visited "Margaret's Garden," five beautiful acres of irises, poppies, peonies, and daylilies lovingly cultivated by Margaret Thomas since 1963. Margaret's Garden has been a popular and legendary destination for families, school groups, photographers, painters, and all who enjoy the beauty of spring and a colorful respite from the hustle and bustle of all that has grown up around it. Delegate Plum presented Margaret Thomas with a General Assembly Resolution expressing admiration and gratitude for the many years she has shared her garden with the community. This week we also express our thanks to Margaret Thomas by sharing photos of her exquisite garden here in the "E-News" and extending an invitation to visit Margaret's Garden on Lawyers Road south of Reston. Tune in to Delegate Plum's "Virginia Report" on Reston Comcast Channel 28 tonight at 10:30 to see more of Margaret's Garden and to learn about this extraordinary woman's legacy.



Click on thumbnail to view larger image in a new window

Margaret Thomas' garden is legendary for the hundreds of varieties of irises she has grown through the years. Many varieties are at peak this week, making for a spectacularly colorful sight. You will find irises of every variety and color at Margaret's Garden and poppies and peonies of all colors border the vast plantings of irises. Visit Margaret's Garden in person or go to www.herndonirisgarden.com to find out more about the garden and community efforts to make it a non-profit organization.

Photographs by Barbara Shearer

May 21, 2008

Commentary

Another Fork in the Road Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum

I grew up on Crooked Run that connects River Road and Comertown Road near the Town of Shenandoah in Page County, Virginia. I am not sure if Crooked Run was the name of the road or the creek it ran beside, but with the heavy rains of spring they became as one as the creek got up into the road. Sometime after the water subsided a road scraper would come by and scrape the sand and rocks into something that resembled a road. A few years after I left the area the road bed was raised and asphalt was laid on it. Those were my first experiences with the then Virginia Department of Highways that operated under the Byrd Machine's "pay as you go" system of financing.

Virginia is at a fork in the road in its financing of a transportation system that can serve the prosperous state the Commonwealth has become. The General Assembly that was in a state of denial of the problem for many years and that has been bobbing and weaving in its refusal to respond to it in recent times has been called back into special session on June 23 by Governor Kaine to deal with the problem.

The issue of course is how to pay for transportation improvements. But consideration needs to be given to the cost of doing nothing. Based on a Texas Transportation Institute study in 2007, 81 percent of all peak-period travelers in Northern Virginia are trapped in congestion sitting nearly 127,400,000 hours per year in delay wasting 91,000,000 gallons of gasoline. The cost of congestion in Northern Virginia is estimated by the Institute to be \$2,331,000,000 each year.

The unwillingness of the General Assembly to act in a responsible way to deal with transportation needs has resulted in the already inadequate primary, secondary and urban funds being reduced by 44 percent and the Six-Year Improvement Program being reduced by \$1.1 billion.

At the same time, Virginia as the twelfth most populated state is the ninth wealthiest. The national state average gasoline tax is 47 cents per gallon including the 18.4 cent federal tax. Virginia's combined federal-state gas tax at 38 cents is 11th lowest in the nation and was last raised in 1987. The average state retail sales and use tax is 6.02 cents on the dollar. Virginia's rate at 5 cents is tied for fifth lowest in the nation. The average state motor vehicles sales tax

rate at 5 cents is tied for fifth lowest in the nation. The average state motor vehicles sales tax is 4.58 percent. In Virginia the tax is 3 percent, tied for third lowest in the country.

As the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance observed recently, "maintaining a reputation as a low tax state is important. Maintaining a reputation as a state lacking the political will to invest in building and maintaining fundamental transportation infrastructure is a prescription for economic disaster."

Virginia's political leaders are at an important fork in the road. The Governor has a plan that has the potential of solving the problem. The House Republicans say no way. The Senate wants to rewrite it. I am committed to working for a plan that we can get passed. You can be sure that this leader is not going to go back to Crooked Run. I want to help solve the problem.

Send your suggestions for the special transportation legislative session to me at kenplum@aol.com.

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>.

Tonight – Wednesday, May 21 at 10:30 p.m. – Margaret Thomas, famous Fairfax County gardener and iris expert – **"A Visit to Margaret's Garden"**

Tuesday, May 28 at 7:30 p.m. and Wednesday, May 29 at 10:30 p.m. – Walter Alcorn, Alcorn Consulting – **"A New Age in Recycling"**

Climate Change Citizen Action

What to do with that old TV? Recycle! To do your research online, check the Consumer Electronics Association's (CEA) website at www.mygreenelectronics.org, or go to www.earth911.org. Type in your Zip code, and a list of area recycling centers pops up with addresses and phone numbers. Or contact the U.S. Environmental Recycling Hotline at 1-800-253-2687.

Walk, bike, use public transportation or carpool or van pool to save money and reduce CO2 and other emissions from your car. If you must drive, **keep your car serviced** according to manufacturer specifications and **keep adequate pressure in your tires**. You can see the effect of tire pressure on CO2 emissions by going to the Clean Air Champions website and clicking on information for the general public at www.cleancommuteva.org/homepage.html. Also, check out the EPA Green Vehicle Guide at www.epa.gov/greenvehicles.

Change 5 lights. Replace the conventional bulbs in your 5 most frequently used light fixtures

with bulbs that have the ENERGY STAR seal and you will help the environment while saving money on energy bills. If every household in the U.S. took this one simple action we would prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions from nearly 10 million cars!

*Please **send your suggestions on cleaning up our environment** to kenplum@aol.com along with any **websites that you find useful** on understanding and stopping climate change. Your suggestions will be printed here for others to consider.*

2008 Virginia School Census



Have you responded to the 2008 Virginia School Census? During the week of May 12, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) sent another mailing of census forms to those households that have not yet responded to the 2008 Virginia School Census. Thousands of households in Fairfax County have responded, but many still have not. **For every child that is counted, FCPS will receive approximately \$3000 over the**

next three years in state sales tax dollars back from the Commonwealth. It is important to our schools and communities that every household respond to the census. Help bring our tax dollars home!

There are **four ways to respond** to the 2008 Virginia School Census:

- Online at www.fcps.edu/census.
- Fax the completed form to 703.329.0791.
- Mail the completed form using the envelope provided.
- Use an interactive voice response system at 703.752.0950.

Don't delay. Respond today!

Announcements

May 25 through May 31 Virginia will hold its first Hurricane Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday.

During the weeklong event, certain purchases will be **exempt from the 5 percent state and local retail sales tax**. Sales tax will not be charged on **generators costing \$1000 or less, or on 22 other products selling for \$60 or less each**. Information on the hurricane-preparedness holiday for both consumers and retailers is available on the Department of Taxation's website at tax.virginia.gov.

Citizens may **submit comments through June 15 on modifications to traffic impact analysis regulations that improve the coordination between transportation and land-use planning** throughout the Commonwealth. The proposed amended regulations, summary of the proposed changes and reasons for them, and ways to submit comments are available at www.vdot.virginia.gov/projects/chapter527.

The State Corporation Commission (SCC) has scheduled a **public hearing for June 24, 2008, to receive comments on a request by Dominion Virginia Power (DVP) to increase the company's fuel rate on July 1. Written comments on the proposals must be submitted by June 19, 2008.** All correspondence should be sent to the Clerk of the State Corporation Commission, Document Control Center, P.O. Box 2118, Richmond, VA 23218-2118, and refer to case number PUE-2008-00039. Interested persons desiring to submit comments electronically may do so at the SCC's website: www.scc.virginia.gov/case. Click on the PUBLIC COMMENTS/NOTICES link and then the SUBMIT COMMENTS button for case number PUE-2008-00039.

Calendar of Events

The **Virginia Commission on Immigration will hold a public hearing on Thursday, May 22, 1:00 p.m.** in the Johnson Center Cinema on the **campus of George Mason University.** The public is encouraged to focus their input on **immigration issues affecting Northern Virginia.** Written **comments can also be submitted in advance** for Commission review prior to the meeting via email at immigration.commission@governor.virginia.gov. The Virginia Commission on Immigration is charged with studying, reporting and making recommendations to address the costs and benefits of immigration on the Commonwealth related to education, health care, law enforcement, local demands for services, the economy, and the effects of federal immigration and funding policies.

Attend the **Hunter Mill District Pedestrian & Bicycling Summit on Wednesday, May 28,** 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the North County Governmental Center, 12000 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. The Summit is an opportunity to **hear progress reports on major bicycling and walking improvements** along with presentations about **walking and bicycling in Reston.** You can also **provide your feedback** and meet those who are working for a more walkable and bicycle-friendly Hunter Mill District. More information call 703.435.6530.

The Opening Ceremony for the **American Cancer Society's Relay for Life in Reston will be held on Saturday, May 31, 1:00 p.m.** at the **athletic field behind South Lakes High School.** The Relay will go all day, all evening, and through the night, ending the next morning. Come join the fun! **Delegate Ken Plum's "Top of the Town" team always welcomes new members or visitors.** This is a great way to make new friends while raising money for cancer research. **Come visit the "Top of the Town" tent to say hello on May 31.**

Reston Association (RA) will host a series of District Roundtables in June. Residents may participate in an **open comment forum on a wide range of topics facing the community** and to hear about the Association's activities and projects. Each meeting will be hosted by the District representative from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. with light refreshments served.

- **Tuesday, June 3 – Lake Anne/Tall Oaks District Roundtable** at Lake Anne Elementary School, 11510 North Shore Drive, hosted by RA President and Lake Anne/Tall Oaks Director, Robin Smyers
- **Wednesday, June 4 – North Point District Roundtable** at Buzz Aldrin Elementary School, 11375 Center Harbor Road, hosted by North Point District Director Frank Lynch

- **Thursday, June 5 – Hunters Woods/Dogwood District Roundtable** at Southgate Community Center, 12125 Pinecrest Road, hosted by Hunters Woods/Dogwood District Director Cheryl Beamer
- **Wednesday, June 11 – South Lakes District Roundtable** at Terraset Elementary School, 11411 Ridge Heights Road, hosted by South Lakes District Director Kathleen McKee.

Members are welcome to attend any or all of the Roundtables. For more information email karen@reston.org or call 703.435.6514.

The Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries will hold a **Conservation Landscaping Workshop & Charlette, "Techniques for Urban Design," on Thursday, June 5, 8:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at wetland Studies and Solutions, Gainesville, VA** (www.wetlandstudies.com). This workshop is primarily intended for Northern Virginia professionals working in the **Planning and Zoning, Community Development, Landscape Architecture and Landscape Design fields**. Others involved with land-use issues or landscaping practices may also participate, such as directors and specialists from Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Park Authorities. Learn up-to-date information about land conservation methods that protect, improve, or minimize adverse impacts to wildlife habitat and water quality. **Participants will be eligible for CEU's**. Each participant will receive a set of materials containing fact sheets, plant lists and in-depth background information as well as a "Low-Impact Development Tutorial" CD, a "Rain Gardens Technical Guide" CD and the "Reining in the Storm" DVD. Call 804.367.6989 or email Carol.Heiser@dgif.virginia.gov for details about registration.

Attend a panel discussion on "Virginia Tech: The Aftermath" on Tuesday, June 10, 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of St. John Neumann Catholic Church, 11900 Lawyers Road, Reston. The panel will discuss **helping victims of crime, particularly family members of homicide, support services, legislation and other efforts** to address the issues that contributed to the tragedy on April 16. Contact LuAnn Maciulla McNabb at contactus@angelfundva.org for more information.

Governor Timothy M. Kaine will hold a Transportation Town Hall Meeting on Wednesday, June 11, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Harper Parker Middle School Auditorium, 701 Potomac Station Drive NE, Leesburg, to discuss the **upcoming transportation special session** on June 23. Staff from the **Unclaimed Property Division of the Virginia Department of Treasury will also be in attendance to help citizens** check for money, stocks, bonds, dividends, utility deposits, insurance proceeds and tangible property being held by the state. The event is open to the public.

Attend the **Rotary Senior Senior Prom** on Saturday, **June 21, 2:00 to 4:30 p.m.** at St. Joseph's Church in Herndon. This dress-up event is for **anyone who has reached 50 or better - and their families** - and will feature **great food and music**. Call 703.437.5886 to RSVP.

Enjoy the **Roosevelt Island Walk on Saturday, June 28, 9:50 a.m.** Meet walk leader Squire Muse at the Reston East Wiehle Park & Ride to begin a **4-5 hour adventure** via bus, Metro and on foot for a walk from Rosslyn over the bridge to Roosevelt Island. **Advance registration required by Wednesday, June 25.** Call Reston Museum at 703.709.7700.

The **14th Annual Rucker Memorial Golf Tournament** will be held on **July 14** at **Hidden Creek Country Club**, Reston, VA. Proceeds **benefit the programs of Reston Interfaith, Inc.** For questions or to get involved, phone 571.323.9582 or email amy.mcdowell@restoninterfaith.org.

Authorized and Paid for by Kenneth R. Plum

Join Our Mailing List!

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