



Delegate Plum with
Governor Timothy M. Kaine

Delegate Ken Plum's *Virginia E-News*

November 14, 2007

COMMENTARY

Perfecting the Union Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum

Two weeks ago I spent a day at the Mellon Auditorium on Constitution Avenue in the District of Columbia at the "National Constitutional Convention" sponsored by the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia (www.centerforpolitics.org). Political leaders, media representatives, and academics discussed the potential and pitfalls of holding another constitutional convention.

There was not much enthusiasm for the idea of a constitutional convention. Former Congresswoman and Vice Presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro expressed the concern of many when she said she would be "afraid of one." Certainly a convention might be a way to take out some of the irrelevant language such as that of compromise about slavery that made its way into the constitution, and it might find a way to replace the electoral college with a more direct and popular election of the president. No one could predict or control where the elected delegates to a constitutional convention would go from there. Depending upon who the delegates were, they may choose to write into the constitution the more popular social themes of the day to ban flag burning, outlaw abortion, limit immigration, and prevent gay marriages. Never mind that three-fourths of the states would be required to ratify their changes; they may amend that requirement as well just as the original framers did.

Are the fears overstated? History suggests not. Remember that the delegates assembled in Philadelphia in 1787 were supposed to amend the Articles of Confederation. Instead, they worked in secret writing a new constitution. The constitution they proposed contained a provision that it would not need to be ratified by all the states as required in the Articles of Confederation but by 9 of the 13 states. The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1902 simply declared its work to be the new state constitution ignoring previous requirements that constitutional changes have voter approval. It is unlikely that their work would have been approved by the electorate since its provisions disenfranchised about half the voters in the Commonwealth.

Much of the discussion about the potential changes a national constitutional convention might make centered around ideas in a new book by Professor Larry Sabato, *A More Perfect Union*. All his ideas are very thought-provoking. The constitutional requirement that presidential candidates be native born does not seem to make much sense in today's world, but should we change the constitution to limit the president to one, six-year term? And have term limits for Congress? An automatic retirement age for federal judges and Supreme Court justices? An independent reapportionment commission is being debated in many states including my bill in Virginia, but such a provision could be put in the constitution. The president's power to wage war could be limited; the president's power over the budget could be expanded with a line-item veto. All these ideas are great fodder for discussion.

Thomas Jefferson who favored periodic changes in the law once said that "no society can make a perpetual constitution, or even a perpetual law." That is why we have the amendment process. As slow and as cumbersome as it may be, the amendment process is still better than facing the fear of a potential runaway convention and what it may propose.

Constituent Survey – 2008 General Assembly Session

Please take a moment to complete my annual Constituent Survey. Your responses to questions about current issues will help me as I prepare for the 2008 General Assembly Session. Take the survey by clicking on the following link. Thank you in advance for sharing your views.

[Click here for Survey](#)

Pre-Session Town Meeting in January



Join Senator Janet Howell and me for our annual Town Meeting prior to the upcoming General Assembly session on **Thursday, January 3, 2008, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Community Room of the Reston Community Center at Hunters Woods.** Let us hear from you about issues affecting our neighborhoods and our region.

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, November 14 at 10:30 p.m. – Senator Janet D. Howell – "Election Analysis: Impact on the 2008 General Assembly Session"

Tuesday, November 20 at 7:30 p.m. and Wednesday, November 21 at 10:30 p.m. – Penny Pompei, Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce – "Our Community's Business Voice Sponsors the Black & White Ball"

Announcements

The holidays are quickly approaching. **Reston Interfaith** will be providing more families than ever with **Thanksgiving baskets and Holiday gifts**. Please visit www.restoninterfaith.org for information about the different ways you can **support Reston Interfaith families** throughout the holiday season.

Most **big-screen and digital televisions** are boosting home energy consumption today. Compare the **estimated annual energy costs of 54 television makes and models** at http://reviews.cnet.com/4520-6475_7-6400401-3.html?tag=arw.

Hunter Mill Supervisor Catherine Hudgins and Reston Interfaith are partnering to provide **winter coats to needy children and adults in our community** between now and March 15, 2008. Donate new and gently used winter coats, hats, gloves, and scarves, child and adult sizes. Clothing can be delivered to the Community Room in Supervisor Hudgins' Office, 12000 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston, on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to noon, Thursdays from 5 to 8 pm, and on Saturdays from 10 am to 1 pm. Contact Mandy Guernsey, Volunteer Coordinator, for more information at Mandy.Guernsey@restoninterfaith.org or call 571.323.9565.

Dominion Power has applied to the Virginia State Corporation Commission for **approval of energy conservaton and efficiency pilot projects**. Review the proposal at www.scc.virginia.gov/caseinfo.htm. Public comments may be posted at the same site.

Calendar of Events

The **Fairfax League of Women Voters' Reston evening unit** will meet at the Reston Museum at Lake Anne on Wednesday, **November 14, at 7:30 p.m.** Guests are welcome. Study materials for the meetings can be found at www.LWV-fairfax.org. Call 703.319.4114 for more information.

Attend the **"Development and Urban Forest: Discovering Common Ground" conference on Friday, November 16**, 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Algonkian Conference Center at **Algonkian Regional Park**, 47001 Fairway Driver, Sterling, VA. For registration information, contact Becky Woodson at becky.woodson@dot.virginia.gov.

The **Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV)** will hold an **advocacy training workshop on November 17**, 2007, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon to provide tips on how to advocate for conservation. The workshop will be held at the Hidden Oaks Nature Center, 4022 Hummer Road, Annandale (just inside the Beltway at the Annandale/Little River Turnpike east exit). There is no charge. **Reply to Virginia at info@asnv.org or call 703.256.6895 by October 26.**

A **Race for the Kids with American mile record holder Alan Webb**, former Reston resident, will be held on Friday, **November 23, at 7:30 a.m.** prior to the Reston Holiday Parade with proceeds benefiting Neediest Kids. Visit www.neediestkids.org for sponsorship and registration information. There is no entry fee.

Enjoy the **17th Annual Reston Holiday Parade on Friday, November 23 at 11:00 a.m. at the Reston Town Center**. This year's parade theme is "'Virginia's 400th Anniversary, Tales of Adventure!" featuring the Jamestown-Yorktown Honor Guard. The parade will make its way around the Town Center amid huge balloons, musical groups, dancers, antique cars, entertainment, and Santa and Mrs. Claus. The history and adventure of this year's theme offers a variety of fun and creative ways to involve everyone.

Attend the community summit **"Building on the Strengths of African American Families" on Saturday, November 17**, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Fairfax County Government Center. Sponsors include the African American Family and Child Center, Inc., the Northern Virginia Community Foundation, Cox Communications, Inc., and the Harris Teeter and Frito Lay companies. Register online at www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB22747NXRGM3.

Visits with Santa follow the Parade activities on **November 23 from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.** Watch as Santa and Mrs. Claus magically **light up Reston Town Center and the holiday tree**, then **sing along with the Reston Chorale and brass quintet, 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.** **Horse Drawn Carriage Rides will be available from 6:30 to 10:00 p.m.** at \$5 per person with riders 5 and under free. All proceeds benefit Volunteer Fairfax.

The Dulles Corridor Rail Association will hold its **Annual Meeting and Reception along with a Dulles Metrorail Project Update on Monday, November 26, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.** at the Gannett Corporation, Inc., 7950 Jones Branch Road, Tysons Corner. RSVP to dcra@dullescorridorrail.com or 703.855.5068. Sponsorship opportunities are also available.

Come to the **area's largest Alternative Gift Market on December 1, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**, sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Church, 1625 Wiehle Avenue, Reston. **Alternative gifts are donations to local and international charitable organizations that help those most in need.** For more information or directions, visit www.uureston.org.

Authorized and Paid for by Kenneth R. Plum

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

Delegate Kenneth R. Plum | 2073 Cobblestone Lane | Reston | VA | 20191