

## *Accessing State Services*

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This week voters of the 36th legislative district will receive a copy of the *Citizens Handbook for the Commonwealth of Virginia*. My wife, Jane, and I have been publishing the *Handbook* for the past fourteen years. This is the seventh edition.

In the early years of my being a member of the House of Delegates, constituent services were made difficult by the lack of any directory of state government programs and services. Over the course of many years I developed a file card system of agency names, addresses, phone numbers, and contact persons. My file cards were invaluable resources for research and referral.

It became obvious to me that the information I had collected was valuable to my constituents. If they had a problem or needed a service, they could make the call themselves if they knew who to call. Some people may not have wanted to bother me; others may not have had any idea to whom they should make their call.

Putting together the first edition was not an easy chore. It evolved over a couple of years of effort. The advent of the personal computer aided the process. There are no government funds to support publication of the *Handbook*. From the very beginning, it has been paid for by Friends of Delegate Ken Plum, my campaign committee. In order to publish the *Handbook* as inexpensively as possible I shop around for printers. In the beginning, the very best price available with no close competition was offered by a printer in Seattle, Washington. The first couple of editions were printed and mailed from Seattle. Since then the *Handbook* has been printed locally.

Every two years the content is carefully checked and re-checked for accuracy. Agency names change, and office and phone numbers change. The *Handbook* reflects the changes in government. Over the last three editions websites have been added. And the *Handbook* has been posted to my website, [www.kenplum.com](http://www.kenplum.com), for electronic access. Six other legislators publish *Handbooks*.

The *Handbook* also reflects the changing emphasis of government. The Seventh Edition contains entries for the first time on terrorism reporting and homeland security. The new Virginia Information Technology Agency is listed for the first time.

If you have not received a copy by the end of the week, please call my office at 703-758-9733 or email me at [kenplum@aol.com](mailto:kenplum@aol.com). If you need additional copies for your workplace or for colleagues or clients, please let me know.

I distribute the *Handbook* as a public service. It reflects the kind of service I like to provide to my constituents.