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# Falls Church News-Press

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*'Democracy Thrives In Sunshine'*

*THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH'S INDEPENDENT, LOCALLY-OWNED NEWSPAPER OF RECORD, SERVING N. VIRGINIA*

## F.C.'s Still Strong Economic Numbers

*Compared to Region, But  
Budget Worries Remain*

BY NICHOLAS F. BENTON  
FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

An update on its fiscal performance during the last two months of 2025 finds the City of Falls Church ahead in most revenue categories despite the turbulence in the regional economy, Falls Church City Manager Wyatt Shields reported to the F.C. Council Monday night.

The Falls Church numbers are, relatively speaking, markedly better than those for its two much larger neighbors, Fairfax and Arlington counties, as well, he pointed out.

But declines in investment income and added costs the City will be asked to bear from its regional contracts, including with WMATA, the regional transit authority, could devour that relative advance and leave the City short going into the next fiscal year.

At a meeting of the F.C. Council's budget and finance committee meeting last Friday, where this new data was first presented, the spectre of a very small tax rate increase was raised by one City Council member, although that prospect was not mentioned at the Council's Monday regular business meeting.

Shields will present a recommended Fiscal Year 2027 budget to the Council in a month and the

*Continued on Page 3*

## CHORAL MUSIC MAKERS



MERIDIAN HIGH AND HENDERSON Middle School students were chosen for the District X Chorus and on Feb. 12-14 participated at West Potomac High School for rehearsals and a culminating concert. Over 700 students auditioned last November and 325 were selected. Chosen from Henderson were Elise Davis, Eli Gahnberg, and Sutton Snyder, and from Meridian were Will Albaugh, Margaret Ashbrook, Aila Balsano, Hannah Boesen, Caroline Flajser, Anisa Frey, Gavin Jones, Aarya Kamboh, Maeve Korves, Andrew Lindsay, Aubrey Marrow, Asha Nath, Eliana Pizzirusso, Charlotte Platt, Kris Pokryfka, Delaney Quinn, Meera Sharma, Megan Tombul, JP Tysse, and Marshall Vogel Rogers. (Photo: FCCPS)

## Falls Church's 'America 250' Year of Events Underway

BY NICHOLAS F. BENTON  
FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

In recognition of the United States' 250th anniversary and as part of the City of Falls Church's yearlong City of Falls Church 250 commemorative series, the City and local art partners hosted a special Presidents' Day event entitled "Freedom of Artistic Expression: Is it At Risk?" The forum took place last week at Creative Cauldron stage, where community members gathered to explore the vital role of

artistic freedom in a democracy.

Presented in collaboration with Falls Church Arts, this Presidents' Day Soap Box Conversation encouraged open civic dialogue on the theme of artistic expression at a pivotal moment in American history. As the nation marks 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence—the formal founding of the United States—Falls Church's event invited residents to reflect on how art contributes to

community values, free speech, and democratic engagement.

Moderated by Jim Coyle, chair of the City's 250th Anniversary Committee, the event offered an inclusive platform for participants to voice their perspectives. Attendees were given the opportunity to speak directly from the "soap box," sharing thoughts and insights on how artistic expression intersects with civic life and public discourse in the 21st century. Joe Wetzel of Falls Church Arts, Laura

Hull of the Creative Cauldron, Maureen Budetti and Keith Thurston of Falls Church Arts, Callie Hawkins, director of the Lincoln Cottage Museum, Falls Church Councilman David Snyder, and Nicholas Benton of the *Falls Church News-Press* were among the speakers.

This conversation was part of the City of Falls Church 250 initiative, a series of events throughout 2026 designed to honor local history, celebrate

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# FALLS CHURCH NEWS BRIEFS

## F.C.'s Citizens for a Better City Launches Application Process

Falls Church's venerable civic association, the Citizens for a Better City (CBC) announced this week that it is continuing for another year its Youth Representatives Initiative, which it started in 2014 in an effort to involve the City's youth in local government, support the City's volunteer boards and commissions and promote civic leadership development.

Student applications will be available next week, beginning Monday, March 2 on-line at the CBC website, or they can be picked up at the Meridian High School Guidance Department. Any high school aged student interested in serving on a City board or commission or on a participating civic group board may apply. The deadline for application submissions is April 10. Interviews with CBC representatives are scheduled for the week of April 16-21.

Falls Church City high school students are currently serving in these capacities: the Architectural Advisory Board, the Arts and Humanities Council, the Advisory Committee for Recreation and Parks, Bike Falls Church, the Electoral Board, the Falls Church Chamber of Commerce, the Historical Commission, the Housing Commission, the Human Services Advisory Committee, the Library Board of Trustees, the League of Women Voters, the Urban Forestry Commission, the Citizens Advisory Council on Transportation, the Environmental Sustainability Council, the Economic Development Authority, the Falls Church Education Foundation, the Village Preservation and Improvement Society, Creative Cauldron, Meridian PTSA, the Friends of Cherry Hill Foundation, the Social Justice Committee of Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation, and Welcoming Falls Church.

## Dehghanti-Tafti Updates Efforts Of Fight Vs. Federal Overreach

Speaking to a meeting of Democratic Party leaders in the City of Falls Church last week, Arlington-Falls Church Commonwealth Attorney Parisa Dehghani-Tafti said the first meeting of nine state and regional prosecutors, of which she is one, from across the U.S. under the auspices of "the Fight Against Federal Overreach" met together in Washington D.C. last week to begin to coordinate a national response to the kinds of things federal ICE agents have done in Minneapolis and other places.

"We've prepared to counter ICE efforts to remove cases from local jurisdictions, we've prepared evidence portals for citizens to use, and in terms of ICE efforts to interfere in elections this year, we're reaching out to electoral boards with fact sheets and other means to defend the sanctity of our elections," she said.

"Upholding the rule of law is my job," stressed. She said she also intends to follow up with the Falls Church Police Department which "has never been a problem for us," she added.

"Overall," she added, "it is hard to see what is happening to the rule of law in the country right now, to see an entire sex trafficking ring excluded from the rule of law and pardons being issued to leaders of massive drug trafficking operations."

She said that data is showing the success of her prosecutorial approach to Arlington and Falls Church of reverting to diversion programs for non-violent first offenders. The data is being compiled, she said, to show that compared to earlier efforts, hers has led to a major decline in recidivism, or repeat offenders, by 22 percent over the last five years, while her office is now winning "by a lot" a higher majority of trial cases that focus on more serious crimes as the resources of her office can be put to that end. She said an event is being set for May when this data will be made fully public.

## Reception for Latest F.C. Art Exhibit This Saturday

A, exhibition at the Falls Church Arts of a new show of "fabulous works that bring joy" begins with an opening public reception this Saturday, Feb. 28, at the F.C. Arts Gallery, 700 W. Broad, at 7 p.m. and will run through April 12. Jennifer Kahn Barlow is the show's juror.

## F.C.s Virginia Dream Announces New Partnership

Falls Church's Virginia Dream soccer club announced a strategic partnership with B&L Consulting LLC for the coming 2026 season. As Virginia Dream continues advancing its competitive and cultural vision, B&L Consulting will collaborate with the club to enhance partnership development, community engagement, and long-term growth initiatives, it was announced.

## 5 Helen Hayes Nominations For Creative Cauldron

Falls Church's Creative Cauldron theater troupe has been nominated for five D.C.-area wide

Helen Hayes Award nominations. Director Matt Conner received an Outstanding Director nomination for his direction, Susan Derry for Outstanding Lead Performer and Lynn Joslin for Outstanding Lighting Design in "The Turn of the Screw." Derry will become the Cauldron's "Cabaret Artist in Residence," with an upcoming cabaret on March 15 and 29.

Nadia Palacios received a Helen Hayes outstanding supporting performer nomination for her role in the Cauldron's "Women on Fire," and Julian Kelly was nominated for projection design work on the same show.

## Beyer, Regional Leaders Call For Water Repair, Upgrades

Virginia's U.S. Rep. Don Beyer, who represents Falls Church, joined U.S. Reps. Jamie Raskin (D-MD), and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC) this week to lead 11 National Capital Region representatives to demand the full authorization and funding of federal programs to repair and modernize critical water infrastructure nationwide, including urgent repairs to the Potomac Interceptor. The request follows a failure in the Potomac Interceptor pipeline which resulted in nearly 250 million gallons of sewage spilling into the Potomac River earlier this month.

In a letter addressed to leaders of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, members requested specific funding to rehabilitate and modernize the Potomac Interceptor, in addition to the reauthorization of and increased funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund which helps states and localities repair and modernize wastewater infrastructure. Members also urged the prioritization of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) comprehensive study to identify a backup water supply for the Washington region, which currently lacks a secondary water source.

The letter is signed by U.S. Representatives Don Beyer (D-VA) and Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), and Representatives Steny Hoyer (D-MD), Bobby Scott (D-VA), Kweisi Mfume (D-MD), Glenn Ivey (D-MD), Jennifer McClellan (D-VA), Sarah Elfreth (D-MD), April McClain Delaney (D-MD), Johnny Olszewski (D-MD), Suhas Subramanyam (D-VA), Eugene Vindman (D-VA), and James Walkinshaw (D-VA).

## Business Licenses Renewals Due By March 2

All 2026 Business License Renewal forms should have been delivered in the mail by now, according to F.C. Commissioner of the Revenue Tom Clinton. The 2026 Business License Renewal Form (the counter version without your business's data) is always available on the City's website or the actual renewal form can be sent by mail.

The deadline to renew all business licenses is by March 2 or postmarked by that date, to avoid a 10 percent late payment penalty. All paid 2025 business license holders are in good standing until March 1, due to the annual two month grace period for January and February.



**A FALLS CHURCH City Council proclamation declaring March 2026 Women's History Month was received by a contingent of prominent Falls Church women this Monday: (l. to r. in foreground) Julie Krachman, Cindy Garner, Danielle Hauptmann, Marianne Meade, Marty Behr, Sally Ekfelt, Sharon Schoeller, Marty Meserve, Cindy Mester, and Beth Hahn. F.C. Council members are behind them. (Photo: News-Press)**

# Falls Church Revenue #'s Still Strong, Defying Wider Trends

Continued from Page 1

Council will have until May to adopt the new budget going into that fiscal year that begins on July 1.

A lot has to be added to the mix between now and a month from now, including the annual assessments of real estate in the City and the actual size of all the bills the City will be getting from its necessary regional entanglements, expected, minus WMATA, to be in the range of \$1.3 million.

In a normal year, the annual real estate assessments would be done by mid-February, but this year there is a delay due to the fact that the City's assessor, Erwing Bailey, left his job last fall to return to an earlier post he'd held in Arlington, leaving the Little City having to contract out on a one-time basis for its annual assessing. There was simply not enough time to arrange for a new assessor to be hired in time for this year, a process that is now delayed until after this budget season.

Still, assessments are expected to be in the range of a 3 to 3.3 percent overall increase, based on what Arlington and Fairfax are reporting to be theirs.

According to the report of F.C.'s director of finance David So, Falls Church's general fund performance the last six months showed a 2.9 percent increase over budget, or \$1.5 million, for the first half of the last fiscal year, such that, according to Shields, a \$1.7 million surplus can be expected by the end of this fiscal year in June.

However, he noted that on the down side, an \$800 million down payment on a move to develop the second phase of the West End project from the Hoffman Company will not be forthcoming, as the company has said it is not now in a position to proceed with that project expected to yield another \$10 million to the City.

In addition, Shields said there is a \$400,000 charge coming from Fairfax County for homeless ser-

vices it had failed to bill the City for earlier, on top of \$300,000 in costs for the snow removal from mid-February's extraordinary storm.

Any surplus will also be subjected to the 50-50 revenue sharing agreement with the City schools, as well as the City's commitment to its street paving efforts and affordable housing fund commitments.

So, Shields told the Council, "This is going to be an intense budget cycle."

In other developments at Monday's meeting,

The Council went into a late-night closed session with Dana Jones, the City's Housing and Human Services Director, to discuss financial options for extending the list of affordable dwelling units (ADUs) in Falls Church. With 336 officially affordable dwelling units in the City now, including 130 that have been added with the last decade's booming commercial development with no time limit on

their designation, there are 63 older units whose affordable designation is due to expire between now and 2036.

In the closed session, it can be inferred that talk about the cost of changing the status of the soon-to-be-expired units to permanent, of "expiring ADU extension costs," was undoubtedly discussed, along with the prioritization, or not, of the City's acquisition of four-plex units at the so-called Virginia Village on S. Maple St.

Also, Monday's meeting opened with a proclamation declaring the month of March 2026 as Women's History Month. It cited the role of women in national and local leadership (it was noted the City's mayor and vice-mayor, and its School Board's chair and vice chair are all women) and announced the annual Women's History Walk will take place May 9, honoring the contributions of City's residents Marty Behr, Sharon Schoeller, Sandy Taerpinian and Melissa Teates.



THE FULL F.C. CITY COUNCIL WAS PRESENT FOR THE MEETING OF ITS BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE LAST WEEK TO HEAR THE NEWS ABOUT HOW THE CITY PERFORMED REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE-WISE THE LAST TWO QUARTERS OF 2025. (Photo: City of FC)

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Work it Beauty comes from within  
Love the skin you're in  
Confidence you

LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN  
RESILIENT  
Gorgeous  
Don't hate me 'cause I'm beautiful  
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Empower yourself Celebrate yourself Grace

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# Little City's 'America 250' Anniversary Events Taking Shape

Continued from Page 1

cultural diversity, and engage citizens in meaningful reflection on the past, present, and future of the community and the nation. The City's calendar of Semiquincentennial activities includes educational programs, performances, lectures, and community gatherings that highlight the ideals of liberty, equality, and civic participation.

The event marked one of many planned highlights in the City's City of Falls Church 250 celebration, which reflects the spirit of the national Semiquincentennial and the City's commitment to historically honest, future-focused commemoration. In

creating a vibrant calendar of events, the City has emphasized the diversity of its community and the evolution of its civic life from colonial roots through the Civil Rights movement to the present day.

The Falls Church 250 initiative incorporates a wide array of programs including lectures, concerts, exhibitions, reading groups, and historical walks. Examples include educational talks at the Mary Riley Styles Public Library, musical performances exploring American identity through the centuries, and exhibits of artwork that reference 250 years of American life. These activities are designed to engage all ages and interests, fostering com-

munity reflection and unity around shared values of liberty, equality, and democratic participation.

Looking ahead to the summer, the City will host Civic Jam on Friday, July 3, from 6 to 10 p.m. at Cherry Hill Park. This free, family-friendly festival will emphasize local civic involvement and community spirit through live music, food, opportunities to connect with civic organizations and nonprofits, and celebration of Falls Church's dynamic local culture. While fireworks will not be part of this event, Civic Jam is crafted as a spirited prelude to the Fourth of July weekend and a joyful expression of communal bonds.

Central to the City's Semiquincentennial efforts is the Falls Church 250 Committee, a locally convened body composed of representatives from the City

Council, school board, historical commission, economic development authority, arts and humanities council, and community groups. The committee works collaboratively with the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission (VA250) to plan commemorative programs and ensure that Falls Church's celebration reflects both national significance and local relevance.

The mission of the City's 250th anniversary effort is not only to honor the historic founding of the United States but also to celebrate the vibrant diversity and civic contributions of Falls Church itself. Through monthly programming such as Reflections at 250, which features local voices discussing the City's identity and evolving story, Falls Church seeks to inspire deeper appreciation for the past while encouraging thoughtful reflection on the

community's future.

While the Memorial Day Parade and Festival and Civic Jam serve as marquee milestones, Falls Church's Semiquincentennial celebration will continue with events and discussions scheduled through the remainder of 2026. These include talks on constitutional history, explorations of military and civil rights narratives, artistic exhibitions, and civic engagement opportunities aimed at bringing people together in shared remembrance and forward-looking community building.

As the nation reflects on 250 years since its founding, the City of Falls Church stands at the forefront of thoughtful commemoration—bridging history with present-day civic life and creating inclusive moments that honor both legacy and potential for future generations.

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ON A SOAP BOX to affirm the values of artistic freedom and free speech was Joe Wetzel, head of the Falls Church Arts, with 250 Committee chair Jim Coyle on the far right. (Photo: News-Press)

# Spanberger's Inspired Rebuttal to Trump

NICHOLAS F.  
BENTON

FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

A duplicitous president and a room full of duplicitous sycophants sought to drive millions of Americans into despair at the State of the Union Tuesday night. But they were quickly revived by a powerful voice of truth, reason and compassion that followed.

It seemed almost otherworldly that a woman with long blond hair, not a retiring or shy damsel, but a fiercely strident, albeit perfectly measured, leader would lead us back from the brink of an awful depression that Trump's two-hour cascade of lies in front of cheering lower beasts of his same ilk was designed to foment.

"It's time we got out of here," I heard one TV viewer of Trump's obscene performance utter, meaning out of the U.S. Such a reaction is what Trump and his minions sought to elicit. That, and, of course, praise and yelps from his dying popular base, stripped of almost everyone but, as was noted, the jewelry-bespeckled uber wealthy in the omelet bar line at Mar-A-Lago.

But for millions too dumbfounded by what they heard at the SOTU to change the channel, soon enough after Trump finished, on came Virginia's newly-elected governor Abigail Spanberger, and she changed the mood almost instantly.

From a law enforcement family with her own active employment in the CIA to show, Spanberger's political fast track from upsetting a pro-Republican congressional district in central Virginia to leading a massive takeover of the Virginia government last November, puts her in the front of the line among leaders ready and capable of taking the nation back from Trump.

Here are just some of the things she said in her flawless rebuttal to Trump's lying ramble:

"The United States was founded on the idea that ordinary people could reject the unacceptable excesses of poor leadership, band together to demand better of their government, and create a nation

that would be an example for the world.

"And this year, as we celebrate 250 years since America declared our independence from tyranny, I can think of no better place to speak to you as we reflect on the current state of our union.

"Tonight, as we watched our nation's lawmakers gather for a joint session of Congress, we did not hear the truth from our President.

"So, let's speak plainly and honestly, and let me ask you three questions: Is the President working to make life more affordable for you and your family? Is the President working to keep Americans safe — both at home and abroad? Is the President working for YOU?"

"Here's the truth: over the last year, through DOGE, mass firings, and the appointment of deeply unserious people to our nation's most serious positions, our President has endangered the long and storied history of the United States of America being a force for good.

"I first ran for office in 2018 alongside dozens of other Democrats who did the seemingly impossible, flipping 41 seats in Congress. In my case, I was the first Democrat elected in 50 years, swinging our district 17 points.

"Those who are stepping up now to run will win in November because Americans know you can demand more, and that we are working to lower costs, we are working to keep our communities and country safe, and we are working for you!"

"In his Farewell Address, George Washington warned us about the possibility of 'cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men' rising to power.

"But he also encouraged us — all Americans — to unite in 'a common cause' to move this nation forward.

"That is our charge once more. And that is what we are seeing across the country.

"It is deeply American and patriotic to do so, and it is how we ensure that the State of our Union remains strong, not just this year but for the next 250 years as well."

"Because 'We the people' have the power to make change, the power to stand up for what is right, and the power to demand more of our nation."



## A Penny for Your Thoughts

By Penny Gross

Former Fairfax County Supervisor

In last week's column, I discussed the chaos orchestrated by the White House, the Trump Administration's threats to our Constitution and democracy, and our responsibility to dissent, as outlined by Oregon Senator Wayne Morse in 1967 — respect the truth, obtain facts, and stay within the bounds of law and order. Morse's moral compass demanded that he use dissent to point out the follies of government, and work to put things back on the right track.

Less than a decade later, my second Capitol Hill boss, Senator Frank Church of Idaho, began the investigation into American intelligence agency abuses that later became known as the Church Committee. Church and his committee were accused of attempting to weaken the United States, to reveal things that weren't meant to be revealed, but the investigation actually was undertaken to strengthen the nation by insisting that power must be held accountable, and that security cannot be purchased by abandoning constitutional principles. The CIA, FBI, the Mafia, and other national and international agencies were found to have collaborated on surveillance, covert programs, civil liberties violations, and more. Those patterns have been replicated in various governments and politics to create fear and division. The more fear rises among the populace, the easier it is for a government to

expand the definition of "threat" and abrogate the rights outlined and protected in the Constitution.

As the Church Committee investigation pointed out, government can be wrong. Government can be confident that it has the backing of its voters and be dangerous to those same voters. Democracy can remain strong only when ordinary citizens, as well as legislators, judges and journalists (especially journalists today) keep insisting on transparency, oversight and limits. The tools that the Church Committee had did not include technology. This was the mid-1970s — no cell phones, no email messages, no easy keys to press and sort millions of bytes in minutes. Evidence and exhibits were on paper, and lots of dogged "shoe leather" was needed to track down and interview witnesses, write up reports (on electric typewriters, not computer keyboards), and then cross-check to see if there was any "there" there. Today's technology can aid investigations in ways that the Church Committee never envisioned, but the violations of law it uncovered really haven't changed. They've simply expanded in recent years.

In tense political times (and when are times not tense these days?), it is easy for a government to rationalize that security needs to be expanded, that policing needs to be expanded (case in point: Trump's

rush to hire thousands more ICE, CBP, and other federal law enforcement agents), and that secrecy must be expanded — all in the name of safety. Senator Church warned that, when institutions build tools that can be used against the public, immigrant or native-born, no one should be surprised when they are activated. Today's technologies can track every movement, every text, every email, nearly every financial transaction, where you buy groceries and gas, and what you look up on-line. Despite regulations prohibiting exchange of our private Social Security and Internal Revenue Service information to other government agencies, we now know that Elon Musk's DOGE agents violated those rules almost from the beginning of Trump's second term. Like Senator Morse, Senator Church reminded us to demand evidence, to demand process, to demand oversight, and to keep insisting that even a democracy must explain itself to the people it governs. When that works well, all sides can have a role. Too often, those with opposite points of view are demonized, considered evil or stupid, which makes compromise and understanding impossible.

In the end, democracy still is our great experiment. We didn't inherit it fully formed, and neither did our parents and grandparents. Democracy is something you do. Something you practice. And it requires character — the kind that Frank Church and Wayne Morse tried to model — duty, courage, restraint, and a willingness to tell the truth even when it costs you something (both Morse and Church were defeated running for their 5th Senate terms), or even everything.

## CITY OF FALLS CHURCH CRIME REPORT

Week of  
Feb 16 - 22, 2026

Destruction of Property, W Broad St, Feb 16, 11:03 a.m., a report for graffiti was taken.

Larceny from Vehicle, W Broad St, Feb 16, between 8:26 p.m., an unknown suspect stole the rear license plate from the victim's vehicle.

Theft of Motor Vehicle, West Falls Station Blvd, between 11:30 p.m. on February 15 and 12:09 a.m. on February 17, an unknown suspect stole the victim's 2025 gray and blue Kawasaki ZX6R motorcycle.

Larceny from Building, N Washington

St, Feb 17, 11:22 a.m., an unknown suspect stole medical equipment.

Destruction of Property, W Broad St, Feb 17, 1:46 p.m., a report for graffiti was taken.

Trespassing, Wilson Blvd, Feb 18, 12:57 p.m., a male, 55, of no fixed address, was arrested for Trespassing.

Failure to Appear/Obstruction of Justice, N Washington St, Feb 21, 1:36 p.m., a female, 48, of Arlington, was arrested on three counts of Failure to Appear and Obstruction of Justice.

Fraud — False Pretenses, W Broad St, Feb 21, 2:05 p.m., victim reported sending money to an unknown suspect claiming to be a law enforcement officer

with active warrants for the victim's arrest.

2026 Issues Coming

Soon:

3/5: Spring & Summer Camp Issue  
3/12: Spring Arts & Entertainment Preview  
3/26: Spring Home & Real Estate Edition

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# EDITORIAL

## Virginians Must Vote 'Yes' Soon

Every resident of the Commonwealth of Virginia can take pride in the role we're playing to save American democracy from the present slide toward authoritarian tyranny.

The latest manifestation of this was the brilliant rebuttal speech given by Virginia's new and first ever woman governor, Abigail Spanberger. With her remarks, she set the tone and the programmatic content for the Democratic Party nationally leading into the November midterm elections and beyond. She was brilliant.

Then there is the cutting-edge role Virginia will play in countering the egregious effort by the Trump administration and its allies to gerrymander congressional districts across the U.S., starting in Texas, in their efforts to steal the critical midterm November elections later this year.

Thanks to decisive victories for Democrats in Virginia's elections last November, a majority now exists here to counter those Trump moves with a temporary redistricting effort here that will require passage of a statewide referendum in voting that will conclude April 21. It is absolutely vital for the future of democracy in the U.S. that Virginians come out en masse to vote "Yes" on this single referendum issue coming up.

Doing so will enable Virginians to counter Trump in a decisive way, to conceivably elect as many as 10 Democratic members of the U.S. Congress in November, out of 11 total seats.

So, in addition to protests and other forms of resistance to Trump and his efforts to undermine democracy, Virginians have the opportunity for concrete work to do, following on their remarkable electoral victories of 2025.

In and around Falls Church, the process will include the election of a new U.S. Congressman, as the temporary redistricting that's being called for shifts the boundaries of the 8th Congressional District to the east of the Little City, such that our long-standing favorite son and especially talented lawmaker, U.S. Rep. Don Beyer, will not be representing us.

That leaves Falls Church in a new 7th District that will have no incumbent Congressman. The U.S. representative who serves the current 7th District, Eugene Vindman, will be the incumbent within the boundaries of a newly drawn district in which he lives, and where he'll run this November.

A couple of citizens have announced their intentions to run in the new 7th District, one from Arlington and another from further south in the lobster-shaped district. There will undoubtedly be more, perhaps many more who will vie in a Democratic primary, the date for which has been set back from mid-June to August 4. No doubt the Republicans will also have a primary to choose their candidate, as the new district is pro-Democratic in its voting history, but not, of course, a shoe-in.

No one from Falls Church has yet announced an intent to run. We hope there will be. But the real focus for now is on passage of the April 21 special election referendum. Vote yes!

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# Movie Review: Crime 101

BY LISA SINROD

This film, rated R, opened nationally and at Falls Church's own Paragon Founders Row on February 13. The tempo of this twisty crime heist drama caught my interest immediately and maintained it for the full 2.25-hour ride. The film is based on the 2020 novella of the same name by the well-known crime writer, Don Winslow, and was filmed entirely on location in Los Angeles. The vibe of the film is a refreshing throwback to the well-executed crime thrillers of the 80s and 90s. It's a stylish, performance-driven caper that recalls the sleek cool of the classic films and TV series, like "Miami Vice", that Michael Mann directed or produced during that era. The film is visually striking, with a subtle noir undertone that avoids the genre's usual excesses.

The film stars Australian actor Chris Hemsworth as a skillfully meticulous jewel thief, alongside Mark Ruffalo as a detective trying to track him down and Halle

Berry as an insurance executive who works with high-net-worth individuals. Hemsworth brings out the brooding, conflicted personality of Mike Davis, who survived an impoverished and difficult childhood and has turned to a life of sophisticated crime. His goal is to amass a set sum of money, ensuring he is never financially vulnerable again, and to then retire to a peaceful life. The film seeks to humanize Davis, and is generally successful in doing so. Hemsworth's acting is a bit formulaic, and yet he is so right for the role that it doesn't seem to matter. The excellent acting chops of Mark Ruffalo and Halle Berry more than carry the film, as well as the quality performances by the supporting actors. Monica Barbaro (who played Joan Baez in "A Complete Unknown") gives a warm portrayal as the girlfriend of the thief, who doesn't know about his criminal activity.

The plot centers around a string of jewel heists which occur

along the Pacific Coast Highway. As Mark Ruffalo's character (Lou Lubesnick) investigates the crimes, he becomes convinced that they are conducted by a highly skilled individual rather than a drug-based syndicate. Ruffalo presents the quirky detective as a scruffy yet observant professional who is highly invested in his job. A clever bit of casting is Nick Nolte, who convincingly portrays an elderly crime boss and longtime mentor to Mike Davis (Hemsworth's character) in his high-stakes solo ventures. Nolte's weathered face and chillingly understated voice lend texture and quiet menace to his performance. When Davis tries to forge things his own way in his next planned heist, a subplot is developed which continues throughout the movie between Davis and Nolte's character (who goes by the nickname of Money). They play well off of each other.

The cat-and-mouse tension deepens as other characters enter the fray, among them Sharon (the

insurance executive played by Halle Berry), who is drawn into the investigation of the theft of high-valued jewels insured by her company. She has a prior friendship with Detective Lou, which is renewed as they both become involved in the case. The dialogue is intelligent, and the darker aspects of some of the characters are suggested rath-

er than overtly displayed. There is actually an uplifting nature to the film's trajectory as we get to know the key players and what motivates them, and what their vulnerabilities are. Violence is not the central theme of the film, however there are several intense armed robberies and chase scenes. "Crime 101" is a good movie and quite entertaining.

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# 19-And-Skyline: Meridian Girls' Basketball Season Ends

BY RYAN McCAFFERTY

After falling behind by 14 points, the Meridian High School girls' basketball team held possession for nearly the entire final minute on Tuesday night with a chance to tie the game against the Skyline Hawks. But they came up empty, resulting in a 52-47 defeat to knock them out of the Region 3B Tournament.

It was only the third loss of the season for the girls, whose 2025-26 campaign ends shy of the State playoffs. All three of them came to Skyline.

The Mustangs won 19 games

and were the top seed in their region. They swept top Northwestern District rival Brentsville and earned some high-quality non-District wins, most notably against James Madison in overtime back on December 13. And yet the reward for all of their hard work was a second-round matchup – a must-win to advance to States – against the only squad that had their number.

When Skyline was in town for the girls' regular-season finale 11 days ago, they gave up the game's first 15 points and spent the rest of the night playing catch-up in what

was ultimately an eight-point loss. The Mustangs got off to a better start this time, leading 12-11 early in the second quarter, but they surrendered a 10-0 run and trailed 18-30 at the half.

Then, after facing their largest deficit of the game, Chris Carrico's group put together a late push to claw within six after three quarters. They made it a one-possession game on multiple occasions in the fourth, including at the very end, when a series of offensive rebounds gave them several three-point opportunities.

However, the Hawks stole the ball on an inbounds play with about 15 seconds remaining, and the ensuing pair of free throws iced it. It's a heartbreaking way to end Meridian's season, to say the least.

"Obviously, they're a tough matchup for us," Carrico said postgame. "It's tough to go 19-3 and lose to the same team all three times. But these girls never quit."

Carrico cited Meridian's turnovers and rebounding struggles as the primary catalysts for the loss, as well as an inability to string together enough defensive stops. Still, there's

no shortage of positives to take away from the Mustangs' season, and with only one starter set to graduate, next year should be even better.

Bridget Creed led Meridian in scoring with 14, while Rose Weatherly (12) and Charlotte Lieu (11) also entered double figures. The All-District teams are set to be announced later this week, and the Mustangs should be well-represented.

All in all, another proud season is in the books in Falls Church. Sometimes, you just run into a team that has you figured out.

# Meridian Boys Hold Off Warren County & Return To States

BY RYAN McCAFFERTY

Meridian Boys beat Warren County 51-46 in the region semis Tuesday night.

After losing four starters from their 27-1 dream season a year ago, it was hard to say what the expectations were for the Meridian High School boys' basketball team this winter. But anyone who was anticipating a serious regression isn't very familiar with this Mustang program.

Meridian still had Will Davis. It still had Mason Pye. It still had Marques Myles. And it still had head coach Jim Smith, he of more

than 550 wins throughout his illustrious career.

The three aforementioned players, who were all key rotation pieces last year, each received All-District honors this week. Davis was the runner-up for Player of the Year while Pye joined him on the first team, and Myles made the second team. Smith, surprisingly, did not win District Coach of the Year for the third year in a row, as it instead went to Mario Gill of Warren County – and it just so happened to be the Wildcats in town on Tuesday night, the only thing standing between Meridian and its third-straight State playoff appearance.

The Mustangs went 16-4 in the regular season to earn the top seed in the Region 3B Tournament, but Gill has had Warren County playing inspired basketball. After winning only six games a season ago, the Wildcats improved to 15-9, and their grit and grind was on full display in the Regional Semifinals as they nearly stunned Meridian.

The home team jumped out to a 22-12 lead after a close first quarter, and was ahead by 12 at the halftime break. The advantage reached 19 in the third period, but Warren County's tenacious defense sparked a 10-0 run to

climb back within single digits. They cut it to six in the final frame before the Mustangs began holding the ball to turn the game into a free-throw contest, and Meridian escaped with the five-point victory.

"We had some defensive lapses and missed some free throws that let them hang around," Smith said postgame. The Mustangs had previously beaten Warren County by 20 on the road back on January 20, and then by 39 on Senior Night at home two weeks ago – but in the playoffs, you'll win them any way you can take them.

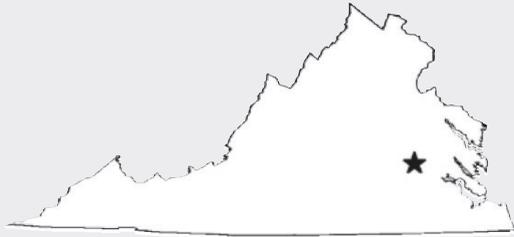
Davis led all scorers with 20, while Myles added 12. Meridian will now face off against Skyline in the Regional Finals on Thursday, who they beat 67-53 at home last month and fell to in overtime on the road.

"We know we're going to need to bring our best," Smith remarked.

By and large, the Mustangs have done exactly that all year. Now, they're one game away from back-to-back Regional crowns. They will defend their home court tonight at 7:00 in the region finals.



# Senator Saddam Salim Richmond Report



Two years ago, I came to the Senate with a simple conviction: the government should protect people's rights, tell the truth, and deliver results you can feel in your daily life. This year, the difference is that we are not just putting down markers for the future; we have a real chance to send these bills to a Democratic governor's desk and see them signed.

Some of my highest-profile bills this year, especially on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, have drawn intense controversy. I did not introduce them because they were easy or guaranteed to pass. I introduced them because I represent a community that has watched mass shootings become a regular headline and that is tired of being told nothing can be done. Now, with a Democratic governor and legislature, we have a genuine path to stronger gun-violence prevention measures that reflect the will of a new generation of Virginians who are demanding action, not excuses.

The same is true of my ICE and policing-accountability bills. They are ambitious, they face stiff resistance, and they will be shaped by negotiation. But leadership means putting tough issues on the table and forcing a conversation that many people would prefer to avoid. I introduced a package of bills to rein in ICE's abuses, limiting when and how local resources can be used to support

federal immigration enforcement. For mixed-status families, every traffic stop and every knock on the door can feel like a crisis. We have a real opportunity to align state policy with our values: keeping communities safe without weaponizing fear against our immigrant neighbors.

Of course, not every bill that matters to our community will lead the evening news. Some of the work I am proudest of is quieter but no less important, such as updating education rules so that students who complete rigorous International Baccalaureate programs can graduate on time.

As a member of regional transportation bodies, I see every day how transit, housing, and land use are intertwined. That is why I carried legislation to encourage affordable housing near major transit corridors: if we want a future where people can afford to live in Northern Virginia and get where they need to go, we have to align our housing and transportation decisions.

My bill to crack down on abusive plea and court-order provisions is about restoring some balance to a system that often feels stacked against ordinary people. In a Democratic-led Virginia, protecting due process is no longer a symbolic fight; it is part of a broader governing agenda to make our justice system fairer and more transparent.

# 'Something Rotten!' Is Fresh and Vibrant at Good Shepherd's

BY MARK DREISONSTOK

The title of the show is "Something Rotten!," but the musical and its current local production are instead fresh and vibrant. The venue, too, is unique: Church of the Good Shepherd on Braddock Road in Burke. This Virginia suburban location belies the show's tribute to Broadway musicals with a Shakespeare focus.

The story follows Renaissance-era show producer Nick Bottom (Andy Shaw is excellent in the role) and his playwright brother Nigel (a sensitive portrayal by Craig Goeringer) who struggle against the enormous popularity of William Shakespeare in Elizabethan London. They must come up with a hit play to pay their bills!

Nick encounters the prophet Nostradamus (played riotously by Chris Dockins), with less reliable predictions than his more famous uncle, to prophesy and channel Shakespeare's next hit so Nick and company can steal the idea and produce it themselves. The Nostradamus scion does so, but it misfires uproariously, as his prediction for Shakespeare's future play "Hamlet" gets mixed up with twentieth-century Broadway musicals. Hamlet's uncle is no longer Claudius but Scar, borrowed from the Hamlet-like plot in "The Lion King." "How do you solve a problem like Ophelia?" one of the troupe asks, a plot mélange of "The Sound of Music" and "Hamlet." A fiddler is even seen on a roof playing a violin during Nick's off-the-mark Hamlet-pastiche.

Along the way in "Something Rotten!," we meet characters and names borrowed from famous Shakespeare plays: to name a few, Portia and Shylock from "The Merchant of Venice" and Falstaff from the "Henry IV" history plays and "The Merry Wives of Windsor." Bea (Maura Lacy), disguised as a lawyer and thus taking on the role of Portia from "Merchant," has a pleasingly voiced solo towards the end of the play in "Right Hand

Man," just before she helps the Bottom brothers sing their way out of trouble as defendants in a court of law.

While Nostradamus is wildly inaccurate about the nature and tragic import of "Hamlet," he is prophetically on the mark about the future rise and popularity of the genre of the musical in the New World. Upbeat songs, orchestral fanfares in major key, and tap dancing permeate "Something Rotten," which celebrates and good-naturedly satirizes Broadway musicals. "Gypsy," Jesus Christ Superstar," and "Annie" (among others) are sampled in orchestral cues, whereas "The King and I," "The Sound of Music," and "My Fair Lady" (among others) are referenced in dialogue. Quotes from Shakespeare abound: "Now is the winter of our discontent" ("Richard III"), "All the world's a stage" ("As You Like It"), and "The rest is silence" ("Hamlet") are all heard throughout the proceedings. Indeed, the show's title "Something's Rotten!"—as in the state of Denmark—is borrowed from "Hamlet."

The set design by J.R. Shasteen in traditional English Tudor style fits in perfectly with the style of the Good Shepherd's performance hall itself. The ornate Elizabethan period costumes are colorful and wonderfully detailed, thanks to the efforts of designer Donna Sisson. Conductor Colin Taylor directs an excellent ten-piece orchestra in a score which segues between Baroque brass and electric guitars. Director Nancy Lavalley gives the production spirit and cohesion. Readers of Falls Church News-Press will note with interest among the production team and cast the presence of Falls Church resident Katie Pisocky (assistant director) and Megan Fisher (Portia), the latter of whom sings in the choir at The Falls Church.

The show runs between February 27 and March 8. For more specifics, please visit: <https://events.ticketleap.com/tickets/gsmusic/something-rotten>



SOMETHING ROTTEN being performed at Good Shepherd's. (Photo: Mark Dreisonstok)

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breaking news!

## FALLS CHURCH BUSINESS NEWS & NOTES

### America's 250: Trivia Night at Casual Pint

The Falls Church Chamber is setting the stage for its Stars & Stripes Ball by partnering with Darren McClure and Casual Pint for a special American Trivia Night. Join in for the fun, food, competition, and prizes on Wednesday, March 4, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. at 6410 Arlington Blvd.

### SPDC: Steps to Start a Business

The SBDC hosts this webinar on the legal and administrative steps essential to opening a business. Learn about required legal forms, tax registration and filing, finance and accounting, employees, vs contractors and foundations for the business plan.

The link to the webinar on Wednesday, March 4, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. will be shared upon registration at

<https://clients.virginiasbdc.org/workshop.aspx?ekey=110460008>

### Powers Health and Wellness: Raising Adventurous Eaters

Powers Health and Wellness will offer two sessions of this interactive workshop, Taster Tots, for kids and parents. It's designed to turn mealtime meltdowns into positive food exploration. Learn practical tips to manage picky eating. This will be held at KiPS Family Gymnastics on Saturday, February 28, 9:30-10:15 a.m. and 10:30 – 11:15 a.m. You may register via the link.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/taster-tots-raising-adventurous-eaters-tickets-1977294456948?aff=oddtcreator>

### In-Home Online Auction

Quinn's Auction Galleries presents an in-home auction on Friday, February 27, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Items in numerous categories are available, including sterling silver, coins, postcards, books, furniture, photographs, dolls, lace, clothing, and tools. Each category represents years of careful collecting, resulting in a comprehensive and authentic reflection of past eras.

### Meridian Job Fair

Meridian High School will host a job fair for local businesses who have summer, seasonal or part-time positions for high school students. The event will be held on Thursday, March 12 from 11:45 a.m. - 1:45 p.m. Please complete the form below if you would like to participate:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeLeevVzPrvT8wDOPNaAyKUW-Br0uj1v68Mzbf1sgI-G\\_MG10g/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeLeevVzPrvT8wDOPNaAyKUW-Br0uj1v68Mzbf1sgI-G_MG10g/viewform)

### United Bank Ranking

United Bank is consistently ranked by Newsweek as one of the top 5 Most Trustworthy Banks in America. It was ranked the No. 1 bank in South Carolina on Forbes' list of Best-in-State banks for three years in a row, 2023-2025, and United Brokerage Services, Inc. was recognized as one of the Top Financial Advisory Firms by Newsweek for 2026. United has been in business for 185.

► *Business News & Notes is compiled by Elise Neil Bengtson, Executive Director of the Greater Falls Church Chamber of Commerce. She may be emailed at [elise@fallschurchchamber.org](mailto:elise@fallschurchchamber.org).*

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## Our Man In Arlington

### BILL FOGARTY

For my monthly "Front-Page History" column, instead of choosing one date from the past, I am selecting stories over a period of time, from the archives of a Black-owned newspaper, the Washington Afro-American. In 1892, John Murphy Sr., a formerly enslaved Black man who fought for the Union in the Civil War, established a Baltimore newspaper, the Afro-American. The newspaper became a central voice for Blacks in Baltimore, and subsequently, the Washington Afro-American was established as an important source of news for the regional Black community. Its archives are also a significant resource for historians. Their articles on civil rights struggles include details one will not find in the archives of other newspapers. Let me touch upon three examples of their coverage of Arlington stories.

In 1947 the NAACP filed a lawsuit in the name of a Black student, Constance Carter. Their strategy was to require Arlington to provide equal educational facilities in its segregated schools. At the trial in 1949 it was clear that the facilities of all-Black Hoffman-Boston High School were far inferior to the facilities at the all-White Washington-Lee High School. In a baffling decision that ignored the evidence of inequality, the trial court ruled in favor of the school board (though that decision was overturned on appeal). Other newspapers in the region provided minimal coverage. The Washington Afro-American had a reporter present at the trial, which enabled the paper to provide significant details that would otherwise have been lost to history. One example relates to the testimony of expert witnesses on educational and psychological matters. One witness described paintings in the art room at Washington-Lee High School that depicted five different nationalities; the painting of the Black race had two men "shooting craps." One quote from this witness stands out: "This can do something to every white boy that attends that school."

The second example takes us to September of 1957, when the NAACP devised a lawsuit strategy to desegre-

gate Arlington's schools. To file the lawsuit, it was necessary to send students to the White schools and specifically be denied the right to enroll. On September 5, 1957, several Black students, accompanied by parents, and other volunteer adults, went into the administrative offices of five schools, asked for an enrollment form, and were turned away. Basic elements of this story were captured in various newspapers, but the article in the September 7, 1957 edition of the Washington Afro-American had extensive coverage, including interviews with the students and their parents beforehand. Those articles supplied a glimpse into the anxieties felt by the students, and by their parents. The threat of violence was so real that the three students who went to apply at Stratford Junior High were accompanied by a White woman, Geraldine Davis, the treasurer of the Arlington NAACP. Her response to the "why are you doing this?" question sticks with me to this day: "I had heard blood would be shed, and if any blood was going to be shed, it should be mine."

The third example of the unique voice of the Washington Afro-American takes us to July 23, 1960, and the trial of two Howard University students arrested for trespass at the Howard Johnson Restaurant in Arlington. Earlier that year there had been sit-ins at various drug stores, intended to break the practice of private businesses who would refuse service to Blacks. In response to those sit-ins, the Virginia General Assembly passed a new trespass law that allowed a business owner to order any person off his property for any reason. Again, the Washington Afro-American had a reporter at the trial, whose article captured the back-and-forth statements of the lawyers and the magistrate. The desperate prosecuting attorney, trying to argue that the new law was not racially motivated, asserted it was a broad law, such that an owner could keep people away for any reason, even if "...they have white hair or green ties."

So many stories, and so little time to give you all the details! But be assured, the Washington Afro-American was valuable to the Black community at the time it was published, and it remains valuable as a historical resource.

**FOR BREAKING NEWS FOLLOW**

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# This Week Around Falls Church

## Thursday, February 26

**Meridian Boys Basketball — Regional Playoff Game**  
 Time: 7:00 p.m.  
 Address: Meridian High School

**Trivia Night**  
 Time: 7 - 9 p.m.  
 Address: Clare & Don's Beach Shack

## Friday, February 27

**Groovejet**  
 Time: 6:00 p.m.  
 Address: Clare & Don's Beach Shack

## Saturday, February 28

**Falls Church Farmers Market**  
 Time: 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.  
 Address: City Hall Parking Lot  
 Details: Shop the award-winning market every Saturday, year-round!

**Falls Church Arts — "Joy!" Reception (Free)**  
 Time: 7:00–9:00 p.m.  
 Address: Falls Church Arts gallery  
 Details: Meet participating artists and hear the announcement of the Juror's Choice Award winner. "Joy!" will be on display through April 12.

**Wolves at the Lodge (Justice High School PTSA Marquee Fundraiser)**  
 Time: 7:00–11:00 p.m.  
 Details: Enjoy a night out with neighbors: casino games, fabulous prizes, raffles, and silent auction items (including themed baskets), plus great food, dancing, music, and cocktails. Proceeds support Justice High School PTSA programming and events. Questions: watjusticeptsa@gmail.com

**Sunday, March 1**  
**Board Game Sunday for**

**Adults (Ages 18+)**  
 Time: 1:00–4:00 p.m.  
 Address: Mary Riley Styles Public Library  
 Details: Adults (Ages 18+). Games & Puzzles.

**Arlington Philharmonic — Elgar Cello Concerto (Free Concert)**  
 Time: Instrument Petting Zoo: 3:30 p.m. • Concert: 4:00 p.m.  
 Address: Washington-Liberty Auditorium, 1301 N. Stafford St., Arlington  
 Details: Amit Peled performs Elgar's Cello Concerto as part of "March Magic: Great Romantics," featuring Glinka's Overture to Ruslan and Ludmilla and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6. Free; donations appreciated. Reception before the concert hosted by Encore Learning.

**Monday, March 2**  
**School Board Town Hall — AI Policy**  
 Time: 6:30 p.m.  
 Address: Learning Stairs at Meridian  
 Details: Open forum for public input on the role of AI in schools and the community—share experiences, ask questions, and help shape the conversation.

**City Council Joint Work Session with EDA, CACT, and Planning Commission**  
 Time: 7:30–11:00 p.m.  
 Address: Dogwood Room A and B  
 Details: Work sessions are held the first and third Monday of the month (except August and December when only one meeting is held). Open to the public; the public is not generally invited to speak. Watch at www.fallschurchva.gov/CouncilMeetings or on FCCTV (Cox 11, RCN 2, Verizon 35). Video available after the meeting online and on FCCTV.

**Tuesday, March 3**  
**Home Ownership: Navigating the Process**

Time: 6:30–7:30 p.m.  
 Address: Mary Riley Styles Public Library  
 Details: Adults (Ages 18+).  
 Finance: Registration open.

**Wednesday, March 4**  
**Teen Craft Club — Clay Magnets**  
 Time: 6:30–7:30 p.m.  
 Address: Mary Riley Styles Public Library  
 Details: Teens (Grades 6–12, ages 12–18). Arts & Crafts. Registration open.

**American Trivia Night (Falls Church Chamber + The Casual Pint)**  
 Time: 7:00–9:00 p.m.  
 Address: The Casual Pint  
 Details: Support Chamber member The Casual Pint and get everyone excited about the upcoming Chamber Business Awards Gala on Thursday, March 19, 6:30–10:00 p.m., at The State Theatre.

**Planning Commission Meeting**  
 Time: 7:30–10:30 p.m.  
 Address: Council Chambers/ Court Room  
**Ongoing (Feb. 4–28)**  
**McLean Art Society 'From the Heart' Exhibition and February Members Show**  
 Wednesday–Sunday, 12–6 p.m.  
 McLean Art Gallery, 6224B Old Dominion Drive, McLean (Chesterbrook Shopping Center)  
 170 new works from more than 40 local artists. Free and open to the public.

Have an event you want to see in the News-Press?  
 Send us an email to calendar@fcnp.com

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**COMING SOON**

- FEB 27 LIVE SALSA NIGHT**
- FEB 28 THE LEGWARMERS 80S RETRO PARTY**
- MAR 06 NIGHTRAIN GUNS N ROSES TRIBUTE**
- MAR 14 SAVED BY THE 90S 90S DANCE PARTY**
- MAR 20 FOLSOM 4 JOHNNY CASH TRIBUTE**
- MAR 21 THE STRANGER BILLY JOEL TRIBUTE**
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**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
CITY OF FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA**

A Planning Commission public hearing and possible recommendation for City Council action on the following is scheduled for Wednesday, March 4, 2026 at 7:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard.

(TO25-22) ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH CHAPTER 48, "ZONING," SECTION 48-2, "DEFINITIONS," SECTION 48-3, "GENERAL REGULATIONS" AND SECTION 48-1101, "GENERAL REQUIREMENTS," TO INCREASE MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR TREE CANOPY COVERAGE WITHIN NONRESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS

The proposed amendments to the Zoning Code would update minimum standards for tree canopy coverage within non-residential zoning districts, including B-1 Limited Business, B-2 Central Business, B-3 General Business, T-1 Transitional, T-2 Transitional, O-D Official Design, and M-1 Light Industry districts.

All public hearings will be held in the Council Chambers, 300 Park Avenue, Falls Church, Virginia. All persons desiring to present their views on the items will be heard. Comments may also be sent to [jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov). Remote participation information at [www.fallschurchva.gov/pc](http://www.fallschurchva.gov/pc). For copies of legislation and other information, contact Jack Trainor [jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov). The City of Falls Church is committed to the letter and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act. To request a reasonable accommodation for any type of disability, call 571-421-7943 or e-mail [jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov).

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA**

The following was given first reading at the September 8, 2025, City Council meeting. Public hearing, second reading, and possible City Council action is scheduled for Monday, March 9, 2026 at 7:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard.

(TR24-28) RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO UPDATE CHAPTER 8, "COMMUNITY BUILDING BLOCKS: COMMUNITY FACILITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE, UTILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES"

The following was given first reading at the February 9, 2026, City Council meeting. Public hearing, second reading, and possible City Council action is scheduled for Monday, March 9, 2026 at 7:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard.

(TO25-22) ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH CHAPTER 48, "ZONING," SECTION 48-2, "DEFINITIONS," SECTION 48-3, "GENERAL REGULATIONS," SECTION 48-1101, "GENERAL REQUIREMENTS," SECTION 48-1106, "TREE CANOPY REQUIREMENTS IN NON-RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS," AND SECTION 48-1135, "PRELIMINARY SURVEY DOCUMENTS," TO INCREASE MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR TREE CANOPY COVERAGE WITHIN NON-RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS

All public hearings will be held in the Council Chambers, 300 Park Avenue, Falls Church, Virginia. All persons desiring to present their views on the items will be heard. Comments may also be sent to [cityclerk@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:cityclerk@fallschurchva.gov). Remote participation information at [www.fallschurchva.gov/publiccomment](http://www.fallschurchva.gov/publiccomment). For copies of legislation and other information, contact the City Clerk's office at 703-248-5014 or [cityclerk@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:cityclerk@fallschurchva.gov) or visit [www.fallschurchva.gov/councilmeetings](http://www.fallschurchva.gov/councilmeetings). The City of Falls Church is committed to the letter and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act. To request a reasonable accommodation for any type of disability, call 703-248-5014 (TTY 711) or e-mail [cityclerk@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:cityclerk@fallschurchva.gov).

CELESTE HEATH, CITY CLERK

**PUBLIC NOTICE  
CITY OF FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
PUBLIC HEARING**

A Planning Commission public hearing and possible recommendation to City Council is scheduled for Wednesday, March 4, 2026 at 7:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard, on the following:

The Proposed Fiscal Year 2027-2032 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) identifies capital needs of the community and indicates how these needs will be funded over the next six-year period. The CIP is updated annually and is subject to change with each update. Following the public hearing on March 4, the Planning Commission will submit its recommendations to the City Council, for consideration and subsequent adoption of the Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget and Fiscal Year 2027-2032 Capital Improvements Program. The proposed plan and more information may be found at [www.fallschurchva.gov/CIP](http://www.fallschurchva.gov/CIP).

The materials for the above item will be available on the city's webpage prior to the public hearing: <http://www.fallschurchva.gov/PC>. All persons desiring to present their views on the items will be heard. For copies of materials and other information, contact Jack Trainor [jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov).

All public hearings will be held in the Council Chambers, 300 Park Avenue, Falls Church, Virginia. All persons desiring to present their views on the items will be heard. Comments may also be sent to [jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov). Remote participation information at [www.fallschurchva.gov/pc](http://www.fallschurchva.gov/pc). For copies of legislation and other information, contact Jack Trainor [jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov). The City of Falls Church is committed to the letter and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act. To request a reasonable accommodation for any type of disability, call 571-421-7943 or e-mail [jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:jtrainor@fallschurchva.gov).

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) of the City of Falls Church, Virginia will hold a public hearing on March 12, 2026, at 7:30 PM in the Council Chambers, located at 300 Park Avenue, for consideration of the following item:

-Variance application V1676-26 by Stephen and Toby Hedger, (Applicants and Owners), for a variance to Sec. 48-238(3)(a) to allow a front yard setback of 24 feet instead of the 30 feet minimum allowed along Hillier Street to construct a sunroom and foundation at 116 South Oak Street, RPC#52-206-048 of the Falls Church Real Property Records, zoned R-1A, Low Density Residential District.

- Variance application V1677-26 by Andrew and Virginia Wright, (Applicants and Owners) for a variance to Sec. 48-263(3)(a) to allow a side yard setback of 9 feet instead of the 10 feet minimum allowed to construct a rear covered porch at 928 North Quesada Street, RPC#53-218-034 of the Falls Church Real Property Records, zoned R-1B, Medium Density Residential.

- Variance application V1678-26 by Michael and Molly Novotny, (Applicants and Owners) for a variance to Sec. 48-238(3)(a) to allow a side yard setback of 3.1 feet instead of the 10 feet minimum allowed to reconstruct an addition at 319 N Maple Avenue, RPC#51-108-039 of the Falls Church Real Property Records, zoned R-1A, Low Density Residential.

Public comment and questions may be submitted to [zoning@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:zoning@fallschurchva.gov) until 4:30 pm on March 12, 2026. Agenda and application materials will be available the week prior to the scheduled hearing at: <http://www.fallschurchva.gov/BZA>

Information on the above application is also available for review upon request to staff at [zoning@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:zoning@fallschurchva.gov).

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**LEGAL NOTICE**

**NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC OF THE APPLICATION OF VIRGINIA ELECTRIC AND POWER COMPANY,  
FOR APPROVAL OF ITS LARGE-LOAD CONNECTION QUEUE PROCESS STANDARDS  
CASE NO. PUR-2026-00011**

On February 2, 2026, Virginia Electric and Power Company (“Dominion” or “Company”) filed an application (“Application”) with the State Corporation Commission (“Commission”) pursuant to the Commission’s Final Order dated November 25, 2025 in Case No. PUR-2025-00058 for approval of its large-load connection queue process standards. According to the Company, the purpose of the standards is to outline Dominion’s electric transmission planning process to evaluate and plan for delivery point requests (“DP Requests”) from electric distribution companies (“EDCs”) to serve data centers. An EDC is a utility company, cooperative, or municipality responsible for distributing electricity to retail customers within a specific geographic area. The standards are proposed to be applicable to DP Requests associated with large loads of approximately 100 megawatts (“MW”) or more, serving data center customers within the Dominion Zone, and individual DP Requests are proposed to be limited to a maximum of 300 MW each. The Company asserts that this framework would organize the DP Requests in batches, with each batch consisting of approximately 10 DP Requests representing between 2 and 3 gigawatts of aggregate load.

The Company asserts this process is needed due to the unprecedented volume of DP Requests representing approximately 70,000 MW of load advancing through the Company’s queue. The Company states it is currently processing DP Requests of approximately 25,000 MW of load, and these have already been assigned connection dates between now and 2031. For reference, the Dominion Zone’s current all-time peak load is 24,678 MW. The Company asserts that it continues to receive roughly 10 DP Requests each month, representing between 2,000 and 3,000 MW of requested load.

The Company proposes to manage DP Requests in four stages: (i) Project Initiation, (ii) Project Feasibility, (iii) Project Development, and (iv) Project Execution.

Interested persons are encouraged to review the Application and supporting documents for additional details.

In its Order for Notice and Hearing, the Commission scheduled public hearings on Dominion’s Application. On April 28, 2026, at 10 a.m., the Commission will hold a telephonic hearing for the purpose of receiving the testimony of public witnesses. On or before April 21, 2026, any person desiring to offer testimony as a public witness shall provide to the Commission: (a) your name, and (b) the telephone number that you wish the Commission to call during the hearing to receive your testimony. This information may be provided to the Commission: (i) by filling out a form on the Commission’s website at [scc.virginia.gov/case-information/webcasting](https://scc.virginia.gov/case-information/webcasting); or (ii) by calling (804) 371-9141. This public witness hearing will be webcast at [scc.virginia.gov/case-information/webcasting](https://scc.virginia.gov/case-information/webcasting).

Beginning at 10 a.m. on April 28, 2026, the Commission will telephone sequentially each person who has signed up to testify as provided above.

On April 28, 2026, at 10 a.m., or the conclusion of the public witness portion of the hearing, whichever is later, in the Commission’s second floor courtroom located in the Tyler Building, 1300 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219, the Commission will convene a hearing to receive testimony and evidence offered by the Company, respondents, and the Commission Staff on the Application.

To promote administrative efficiency and timely service of filings upon participants, the Commission has directed the electronic filing of testimony and pleadings, unless they contain confidential information, and required electronic service on parties to this proceeding.

An electronic copy of the Company’s Application may be obtained by submitting a written request to counsel for the Company: Vishwa B. Link, Esquire, McGuireWoods LLP, Gateway Plaza, 800 Canal Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219, or [vlink@mcguirewoods.com](mailto:vlink@mcguirewoods.com). Interested persons also may download unofficial copies of the Application and other documents filed in this case from the Commission’s website: [scc.virginia.gov/case-information](https://scc.virginia.gov/case-information).

On or before April 21, 2026, any interested person may submit comments on the Application by following the instructions on the Commission’s website: [scc.virginia.gov/case-information/submit-public-comments](https://scc.virginia.gov/case-information/submit-public-comments). Those unable, as a practical matter, to submit comments electronically may file such comments with the Clerk of the State Corporation Commission, c/o Document Control Center, P.O. Box 2118, Richmond, Virginia 23218-2118. All comments shall refer to Case No. PUR-2026-00011.

On or before April 15, 2026, any person or entity wishing to participate as a respondent in this proceeding may do so by filing a notice of participation with the Clerk of the Commission at [scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling](https://scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling). Those unable, as a practical matter, to file a notice of participation electronically may file such notice by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the Commission at the address above. Such notice of participation shall include the email addresses of such parties or their counsel. The respondent shall serve a copy of the notice of participation electronically on counsel for the Company, Commission Staff, and all other respondents. Pursuant to 5 VAC 5-20-80 B, *Participation as a respondent*, of the Commission’s Rules of Practice and Procedure, 5 VAC 5-20-10, *et seq.* (“Rules of Practice”), any notice of participation shall set forth: (i) a precise statement of the interest of the respondent; (ii) a statement of the specific action sought to the extent then known; and (iii) the factual and legal basis for the action. Any organization, corporation, or government body participating as a respondent must be represented by counsel as required by 5 VAC 5-20-30, *Counsel*, of the Rules of Practice. All filings shall refer to Case No. PUR-2026-00011.

On or before April 15, 2026, each respondent may file with the Clerk of the Commission at [scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling](https://scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling) any testimony and exhibits by which the respondent expects to establish its case. Any respondent unable, as a practical matter, to file testimony and exhibits electronically may file such by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the Commission at the address listed above. Each witness’s testimony shall include a summary not to exceed one page. All testimony and exhibits shall be sent electronically to the Commission Staff, the Company, and all other respondents. In all filings, respondents shall comply with the Commission’s Rules of Practice, as modified by the Commission’s Order for Notice and Hearing, including 5 VAC 5-20-140, *Filing and service*, and 5 VAC 5-20-240, *Prepared testimony and exhibits*. All filings shall refer to Case No. PUR-2026-00011.

Any documents filed in paper form with the Office of the Clerk of the Commission in this docket may use both sides of the paper. In all other respects, except as modified by the Commission’s Order for Notice and Hearing, all filings shall comply fully with the requirements of 5 VAC 5-20-150, *Copies and format*, of the Commission’s Rules of Practice.

The Company’s Application and other documents filed in this case, the Commission’s Rules of Practice, and the Commission’s Order for Notice and Hearing may be viewed on the Commission’s website at: [scc.virginia.gov/case-information](https://scc.virginia.gov/case-information).

## IN MEMORIAM: LORETTA ROSE (KOELLER) HOHNER

Loretta Rose (Koeller) Hohner, 86, passed away on February 9th, 2026 in Smithfield, Virginia where she resided the last few years. Born on May 12th, 1939 to Alvin and Dorothy (Rambo) Koeller in Shawano, Wisconsin where she was raised, she graduated from Shawano High School in 1957. Upon graduation she moved to Washington D.C. to work for the Navy Department. In 1958 she married Clarence Martin Hohner of Clintonville, Wisconsin. They made their home in Falls Church, Virginia, raising their two children, Tim and Kim, while working at Montgomery Wards. Later they moved to their retirement home, the log cabin, which they lovingly built in West Virginia.

Their marriage lasted 65 years, ending with the passing of her loving and devoted husband in 2023.

Loretta was a longtime member of the Lutheran Church; she will be remembered as a Den Mother, for square dancing, and duck pin bowling. She enjoyed music, reading, gardening, taking care of her dogwood and lilac trees and azalea and rose bushes, sewing, crocheting, embroidering, and antique-hunting for Currier and Ives' dishes. She enjoyed watching Jeopardy and old movies with her "Birdie", the challenge of crossword and jigsaw puzzles, trying new recipes, and visiting with family in Wisconsin.

Loretta is survived by her loving daughter and son-in-law, Kim and Mike Kraus of Las Cruces, NM; grandchildren Jamie and her husband Mike Oliver, Beckie Hohner, Katie

and her husband Riley Cates, and Tim and his wife Haley Kraus; and great grandchildren Ruby, Wyatt, and Waylon Oliver, Ethan and Genevieve (Hohner) Conroy, and Reagan Kraus. She will be missed by many nieces, nephews, and cousins. She is preceded in death by her parents Alvin and Dorothy Koeller, husband, Clarence Hohner, and son and daughter-in-law Tim and Cindy Hohner.

She will be missed by all.

Chauncy is once again with his Rose, and Lettie with her Birdie holding hands and sneaking "smooches", cheering on the Packers, and playing Sheepshead with Tim and Cindy, and all are watching from above.

The family will receive friends Monday, March 2, 2026 from 10:00 am to 11:00am at Jones Funeral Home in Winchester. A memorial service will follow at 11:00am with Pastor Dave Young officiating. Burial will follow at Mount Hebron Cemetery.

Online condolences may be left at [www.jonesfuneralhomes.com](http://www.jonesfuneralhomes.com)



## IN MEMORIAM: ROBERT L. "BOB" WEINBERG

Robert L. "Bob" Weinberg, 93, noted attorney, civic activist, and political candidate, died peacefully of natural causes on February 19 at his home in Arlington. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Patricia Wendy Weinberg; children Susan, David, and Jeremy; and grandchildren Alexi, Elena, Anna, and Jacob.

Bob was born on May 23, 1931, in New York City, grew up in Greenwich Village, and graduated from Stuyvesant High School. He attended Yale University, where he was known for his debating skill, served as President of the Political Union, and earned a B.A. in 1953.

He received a Fulbright Scholarship to attend the London School of Economics, where he served as President of the Student Union, and earned a Ph.D. in 1960, writing his thesis on industrial democracy. It was there that he met his future wife, Wendy, and they were married in 1956.

They attended Yale Law School together, where Bob served as Note and Comment Editor for the Yale Law Journal. They both graduated in 1960, and moved to Arlington.

Bob worked with famed attorney Edward Bennett Williams, and was a founding partner of what became the

Williams & Connolly law firm, where he practiced civil and criminal litigation for 35 years, working primarily in federal trial, appellate, and administrative law. He also provided pro bono representation, including representing defendants in capital cases.

He also became involved in civic activities, including serving as President of Northern Virginia Fair Housing, Inc., and President of Arlington County Civic Federation. He was awarded the Washington Star Cup as Arlington Citizen of the Year in 1975.

Considered a "lawyer's lawyer," he was active in the American Bar Association House of Delegates for many years, and served at various times as Vice President of the Virginia State ACLU, President of the D.C. Bar, and President of the D.C. Bar Association.

Bob taught a bi-weekly seminar on criminal procedure at the University of Virginia School of Law for 50 years, and, upon his retirement from active practice, taught a course on grand jury procedure at George Washington University Law School.

For his contributions to the legal profession, he received the 1995 Servant of Justice Award from the D.C. Legal Aid

## CRITTER CORNER



**THIS IS MS. PEBBLES, a six-year-old female American Dingo (Carolina dog), resides just outside of Falls Church City (near Broad St). She loves fence running, being chased at the dog park, peanut butter, and any food she can access.**

*Just because you're not famous doesn't mean your pet can't be! Please send in your Critter Corner submissions to [crittercorner@fcnp.com](mailto:crittercorner@fcnp.com).*

Society, the 2000 Washington Lawyer of the Year Award from the D.C. Bar Association, and the 2009 Pursuit of Justice Award from the American Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists.

Bob was also active in Democratic politics. In 1988, he won the primary to become the Democratic nominee for Congress in the old 10th congressional district, which included Arlington County, the northern part of Fairfax County, Fairfax City, Falls Church, and Loudoun County. He ran an energetic campaign, but lost to Republican incumbent Frank Wolf in a year in which Republican presidential nominee George H.W. Bush won a 60.4% victory in Virginia.

Upon his retirement from Williams & Connolly in 1996, he and Wendy divided their time between Arlington and a second home in Rappahannock County, where Bob served on local government

boards and commissions, and coached the Rappahannock High School chess team.

A funeral service for Bob Weinberg will be held on Friday, February 27 at 10:30 a.m. at Temple Rodef Shalom in Falls Church. Burial at the King David Memorial Gardens will be private.



# Adam Ebbin Says Goodbye to Virginia State Senate

BY ADAM EBBIN

My last day in the Virginia Senate is today, February 17. Thanks to your support, I'm concluding a 22-year career in the General Assembly with great pride in all we have accomplished together. We leave a legacy of equality, fairness, and meaningful progress for Virginians. Later this month, I will join Governor Abigail Spanberger's administration as a Senior Advisor at the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority.

Serving in the General Assembly has been the greatest honor of my life. Representing Northern Virginia first in the House of Delegates and then in the Virginia Senate has been a responsibility I never took lightly. In the 39th Senate District, I was a voice for 216,000 Virginians who speak more than 127 native languages. I came to public service because I believed government could be a force for good. Not perfect, not always fast, and certainly not easy — but transformative. After all these years, I believe that more strongly than ever.

In 2004, as the first openly gay state lawmaker, I was aware that simply being here carried a responsibility larger than myself. Over the years, Virginia has changed. Today, there are LGBTQ Virginians serving openly, authentically, and unapologetically at every level of government. I see them every day around Capitol Square and call them colleagues, future leaders, even Mr. Secretary. That progress did not happen by accident, and I am deeply humbled to have played a role in helping move this Commonwealth closer to a place we can all be proud of.

We experienced many more firsts, including the first women of color to serve in leadership positions, first Muslim members, first transgender person elected, first female and Jewish

House speaker, first Black House speaker, the first Black Attorney General and the first Muslim Lieutenant Governor in the country. The General Assembly is a truly much more representative citizen legislature than Thomas Jefferson could have ever envisioned. This alone has led to the ability to craft more compassionate, thoughtful, and inclusive policies.

As Mr. Jefferson said, "I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and Constitutions. But laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times." I am pleased to say we have.

With your help, we enacted major policies that protect and advance civil rights, strengthen education, expand access to healthcare, safeguard our environment, and stand up for working people. I am grateful to many colleagues whose hard work, tenacity, and moral courage helped us create a better Virginia.

I am particularly proud of our work on modernizing state law to protect LGBTQ people from discrimination in their daily lives, including in employment, housing, and public accommodations. The Virginia Values Act of 2020 established new protections for all Virginians. The law, the first of its kind in the South, passed with strong bipartisan support. Former Delegate Mark Sickles, now Secretary of Finance, partnered with me on the legislation. Former Senator Jill Vogel, a Republican from Fauquier County, provided key support. I shared many fun moments in the Senate with her, Janet Howell, and Jennifer

Wexton.

This fall, Virginians will finally be able to vote on the Marriage Equality Amendment, which would cement protections for same-sex unions. It's time for the state Constitution to accurately reflect the law of the land and make sure loving Virginia couples are not mistreated or discriminated against, even if federal protections are stripped away. As a legislator, one of my great privileges has been the ability to officiate at weddings. While I no longer will do that, it gave me great joy to share a couple's special day.

When I first entered the General Assembly, I saw too many lives upended by a simple marijuana charge— jobs lost, futures delayed, families hurt. And for far too long, that harm was baked into our laws. That is no longer the case. The times have changed and so have our laws.

So many people pick up the torch on cannabis. In 2020, House Majority Leader Charniele Herring of Alexandria joined me to sponsor legislation decriminalizing marijuana. The next year, she and Senate President Pro Tempore Louise Lucas of Portsmouth worked closely with me to pass a new law legalizing possession of marijuana. I'm also indebted to Delegate Paul Krizek of Mount Vernon, a steadfast partner on many bills; J.M. Pedini; and David May.

With your help, Medicaid expansion became a reality. Immigrant moms now have access to prenatal care. We were able to provide support to victims of human trafficking. I'm proud of our efforts to ban firearms in state-owned buildings. I visited five prisons around the Commonwealth, including the supermax Red Onion Correctional Center, to improve conditions.

During my time as a legislator, there were some spe-

cial moments. When I first joined the House, looking up at the beautiful ceiling of Mr. Jefferson's Capitol was a daily reminder of the rich history of the General Assembly. In 2007, I attended the 400th anniversary of the signing of the charter for the Virginia Company beneath the vaulted stone ceilings of the Honorable Society of the Middle Temple in London, where the legal profession was born. And on January 17, I witnessed Governor Spanberger make history and shatter the glass ceiling.

There are so many people to thank. First, I must acknowledge my parents. If they hadn't campaigned for me in 2003, I never would have won by 43 votes in a five-way primary. They're my biggest supporters. I thank my family for their patience and understanding of a job that rarely respects evenings, weekends, or holidays.

I've been fortunate to know many great local officials who I've been able to turn to for advice and counsel, among them Alexandria Mayor Alyia Gaskins, former Mayor Justin Wilson, Delegate-elect Kirk McPike, and former Arlington Board Member Katie Cristol. Congressman Don Beyer is always accessible and has great ideas. Then-Governor and now Senator Mark Warner appointed me to be his Chief Deputy Commissioner of Labor and Industry. Senator Tim Kaine has been an inspiration as one of the most decent, genuine and honest public servants I've ever met. Delegate Patrick Hope of Arlington has been a great friend and ally, on our multi-year effort to stop the sale of vapes to children.

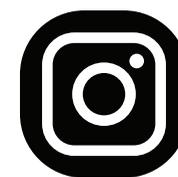
Senator Janet Howell used to say I was the best prepared senator. But the truth is, I only looked good because of some great legislative aides, including Benjamin Jones, Parker Treichel, Chris Leyen, and Henry Watkins. The Senate staff, Clerk's office,

and the Division of Legislative Services are extraordinary.

However, it's only with the support of my constituents that I have been able to be a force for progressive change. To the people of Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax: Thank you for trusting me to be your voice. I will never forget the people who sent me to Richmond. Senate District 39 will be in excellent hands with Elizabeth Bennett-Parker. She will be a strong advocate.

As I reflect on the past 22 years, the words of a Jesus Jones song come to mind: "Right here, right now, there's no place I'd rather be... watching the world wake up from the history." I've been witness to and part of history. Together, we've made a difference. The day I was sworn into the house, my late Aunt Janice gave me a note that I always kept behind my desk. It said, "Never forget the little guy." I hope I have lived up to her words. Thank you for the honor to serve.

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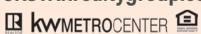
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