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Media Experience

- *Public Relations Intern*
 - Virginia Chapter of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
 - A current occupation
- *VCU Capital News Service Correspondent*
 - Covered news and feature stories concerning the Virginia government and General Assembly for news organizations across the commonwealth
 - Featured in several publications at least once, including AltDaily, Clarke Daily News, The Virginia Gazette, Henrico Citizen, PotomacLocal.com, RVANews, Williamsburg Yorktown Daily and The Commonwealth Times, VCU's independent student press
- *Freelance Photographer*
 - Experience in events, portraits and weddings

Education

- Earned an "Advanced Diploma" from York High School in (2008)
- Two years Liberal Arts at Thomas Nelson Community College (2008-2010)
- Currently pursuing Bachelor's degree in mass communications/print journalism at Virginia Commonwealth University (Expected graduation: December 2012)

Expertise

- Significant familiarity with interviewing, writing, photography, reporting and AP style
- Proficient with Microsoft Office, Photoshop, Adobe Acrobat, Audition, Premiere, Audacity, Soundslides, practiced in InDesign
- Talented in capturing compelling video
- Creative, timely, organized, detail-oriented, passionate for the field of communications, able to multi-task and adapt – writing, actions and thought-processes – swiftly

Other Work Experience

- *Innkeeper's Assistant*
 - Maury Place at Monument, Richmond, VA
 - A current occupation
- *Shift Lead, Farmer's Market Manager, Head of Advertising*
 - Ben & Jerry's/Green Mountain Coffee, Yorktown, VA

Other Activities

- Historian of the VCU Society of Professional Journalists
- Teacher's Assistant at York High School, among other extracurricular endeavors, including athletic activities and producing the yearbook
- Completed nine years of community service
- Creator of a Yorktown Middle School independent student newspaper, *The Shooting Star*

potomaclocal.com

Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Stardust

JAN. 21, 2012



The Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport at the NASA Wallops Flight Facility on the Eastern Shore.
(Photo courtesy of MARS)



The Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport at the NASA Wallops Flight Facility on the Eastern Shore.

(Photo courtesy of MARS)

By Alex Wiggins

Capital News Service

Richmond, Va. — For the average person, the sky is no longer the limit, but you just might have to be dead first.

Delegate Terry Kilgore (R-Gate City) is proposing legislation to provide tax breaks to Virginia residents who send their cremated remains into outer space.

Under House Bill 19, Virginians would get an income tax deduction if they entered a prepaid contract with a commercial space flight entity “to place the taxpayer’s human cremated remains into earth or lunar orbit from a spaceport facility operated by the Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority.”

The tax break would be in effect from 2013 through 2020. Eligible taxpayers could deduct from their taxable income up to \$2,500 in any one year and up to \$8,000 total.

While the measure may seem a bit out of this world, it has a down-to-earth purpose: economic development.

The Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority operates the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport, or MARS, on Wallops Island on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Proponents say incentives like tax breaks for “space burials” will help launch the fledgling industry.

It’s an idea both Republicans and Democrats can agree on.

The chief patron of HB 19 is Kilgore, who represents House District 1, which includes Lee and Scott counties, the city of Norton and part of Wise County in southwest Virginia.

The bill’s co-sponsor is Delegate Lynwood Lewis, a Democrat who represents House District 100, which includes the Eastern Shore and parts of Norfolk and Virginia Beach.

HB 19 is awaiting action by a subcommittee of the House Finance Committee.

Kilgore and Lewis hope the measure will boost interest in space exploration since NASA’s space shuttle program ended in July. They also hope it will fuel business at the spaceport on Wallops Island.

The spaceport is gearing up for that business.

“What I can tell you is, we’re very busy on our end getting our new launch pad complete. I am aware of the market for space burial, and I certainly think it’s a good idea,” said Rick Baldwin, spaceport manager at MARS.

Some companies also think space burials are a good idea.

Celestis Inc., based in Houston, began offering “memorial spaceflights” to the public in 1997. For \$995, the company will launch a canister of remains into space and have it return to Earth. For \$2,995, the remains can orbit Earth. Moon orbit is available for \$9,995.

In 2014, Celestis will begin sending remains into “deep space.” The price: \$12,500.

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altdaily.com

Latest from Richmond: Senate Votes to Repeal Gun Purchase Limit

AltDaily : Creating and celebrating local culture in Norfolk and all of Hampton Roads.

RICHMOND – Virginians soon may be able to purchase more guns than they can carry, all in one buy – for the first time in almost two decades.

With the exception of law enforcement officials and some concealed-weapon permit holders, a 1993 state law has prohibited the purchase of more than one gun every 30 days. On Monday, the Senate passed a bill to revoke this law; the House had approved a similar measure last week.

Sen. Bill Carrico, the chief patron of Senate Bill 323 and a long-time advocate for the right to bear arms, called the existing law “unnecessary and outdated.” He said Monday’s 21-19 vote was a victory for the Second Amendment.



Handguns. (Pic | Joshua Shearn)

Carrico, a Republican from Galax in the southwestern tip of Virginia, said that technology negates the need for the state’s limit on gun purchases and that law-abiding citizens will benefit from such a change.

“Advanced technologies like instant background checks have made gun restrictions like this counter-productive,” said Carrico, a retired state trooper. “Over the years, it has become obvious that ‘one gun a month’ only affected responsible gun owners and didn’t deter criminals from obtaining handguns.”

Critics of lifting the limit on buying guns in Virginia said the change would create problems not only in the commonwealth but in other states as well.

A 2010 report by Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a group founded by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, ranked Virginia among the top suppliers of guns linked to crimes in New York.

“We’ve learned in the past that making it real easy to purchase guns has led Virginia guns to be used inordinately in crimes in New York City,” said Sen. Adam Ebbin, D-Alexandria. He added that he hopes “the ability to purchase more than 12 guns per year,” if passed, does not affect crime rates in

or out of state.

Former Virginia Gov. L. Douglas Wilder signed the one-gun-a-month limit into law in 1993.

“I am very disappointed in the General Assembly’s actions toward repeal of one of Gov. Doug Wilder’s signature achievements,” said Tim Kaine, another previous governor. Kaine is now the Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate.

“I was also disappointed to see that at least two of the individuals in this U.S. Senate race, George Allen and Bob Marshall, have already voiced support for repeal of this legislation,” Kaine said.

He called on the current governor, Republican Bob McDonnell, to reject bills to repeal the one-gun-a-month rule.



Mayor Bloomberg. (Pic | realityviews.blogspot.com)

“I strongly urge Gov. McDonnell to veto this legislation and urge all of Virginia’s leaders in Richmond to renew their commitment to a focus on jobs and the economy,” Kaine said.

McDonnell has indicated that he would sign the repeal measure.

The 40 senators are evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans. Nineteen Republicans and two Democrats – Sens. Creigh Deeds of Bath County and John Edwards of Roanoke – voted in favor of SB 323.

The remaining 18 Democrats were joined by one Republican, Sen. Thomas Norment of Williamsburg, in voting against the bill. Carrico’s bill was co-sponsored by Republican Sens. Richard Black of Sterling, Thomas Garrett of Bumpass and Bryce Reeves of Fredericksburg.

Deeds said he voted for the bill on constitutional grounds.

“I don’t see the reason why someone would need to own a gun a month. I don’t think there’s any reason for a person to have to buy a gun a year, but the fact is the Second Amendment guarantees people have a right to own and possess firearms unless they’re disqualified somehow,” Deeds said.

“I think the limit by the government is arbitrary. I voted against it in ’93. Since 1993, since it

became a law in Virginia, so many holes have been poked in it, so many exceptions have been made, that it doesn't apply really to anybody except the people that are going to obey the law anyway. I think that people that intend on violating the law are going to find ways around it to get weapons. Nobody should be surprised at my vote on that issue. Anybody that has studied my voting record or studied what I've said about the issue knew exactly how I was going to vote."

SB 323 now goes to the House for consideration.

The House has already passed its own measure to repeal the one-gun-a-month limit – House Bill 940, sponsored by Republican Delegates Scott Lingamfelter of Woodbridge, Todd Gilbert of Woodstock and Bob Marshall of Manassas. On Feb. 1, delegates voted 66-32 in favor of the bill – with Republicans overwhelmingly for it and Democrats overwhelmingly against it.

HB 940 is now before the Senate Courts of Justice Committee.

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<http://www.altdaily.com/blogs/news-blogs/politics-blogs/latest-from-richmond-senate-votes-to-repeal-gun-purchase-limit.html>

[vagazette.com](http://www.vagazette.com)

McDonnell signs law lifting limit on buying guns

FEB. 29, 2012

RICHMOND – With the stroke of his pen Tuesday, Gov. Bob McDonnell removed the limit on how many handguns Virginians can buy each month.

McDonnell, a Republican, signed legislation repealing the 19-year-old law prohibiting the purchase of more than one handgun per month. The repeal takes effect July 1.

The limit had been enacted in 1993 by then-Gov. L. Douglas Wilder, a Democrat. Legislators were responding to reports that guns purchased in Virginia were used in crimes in other states.

Democrats criticized the efforts to repeal the limits.

“Despite what supporters of this bill say, this bill will make it easier for gunrunners to export violence from Virginia,” said Sen. Barbara Favola, D-Arlington.

She had voted against both of the measures McDonnell signed: House Bill 940, sponsored by Republican Delegate L. Scott Lingamfelter of Woodbridge, and Senate Bill 323, sponsored by Republican Sen. Charles Carrico of Galax.

Carrico, Lingamfelter and other supporters of the legislation argued that the one-gun-a-month limit has been ineffective and that it merely hinders law-abiding citizens, not criminals. They also said instant background checks on gun buyers have eliminated the need for the limit.

Families of the victims of the April 2007 Virginia Tech shootings asked McDonnell to veto the legislation eliminating the gun-purchase limit. McDonnell spoke with victims' families during a telephone conference call.

During the call, the governor said he felt he had a duty to support the Second Amendment.

Some Democrats felt the same way and also voted to repeal the limit on buying handguns.

“I don't see the reason why someone would need to own a gun a month. I don't think there's any reason for a person to have to buy a gun a year. But the fact is the Second Amendment guarantees people have a right to own and possess firearms unless they're disqualified somehow,” said Sen. Creigh Deeds, D-Charlottesville.

wydaily.com

House OK's Stricter Voter ID Laws as Hundreds Protest

By Alex Wiggins and Amir Vera, Capital News Service Thursday, February 02, 2012

RICHMOND - Several hundred citizens joined Democratic officials and civil rights leaders at the Capitol on Tuesday to rally against bills they say would suppress the voting rights of minorities, elderly people and low-income Virginians.

The bills would require Virginia residents to present identification, such as a birth certificate or driver's license, before voting. Some Democrats charge that Republicans are pushing for the changes to target Virginians who likely would vote Democratic.

"We know that these voter suppression activities are designed with a strategic purpose in mind," said Richmond Mayor Dwight C. Jones. "This is a systemic approach to suppressing the voting power of those who turned Virginia blue in 2008," when the state supported Barack Obama for president.

The rally involved several political organizations, including the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus and the Democratic caucuses of the House and Senate. They were joined by groups such as the AFL-CIO, the NAACP, the Virginia Poverty Law Center, the Sierra Club and the AARP, the major advocacy group for older Americans.

Also at the protest were U.S. Rep. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott of Newport News and civil rights leader Benjamin Chavis, who was an assistant to the Rev. Martin Luther King and served as head of the NAACP.

Chavis said the proposals evoke Jim Crow days, when whites used poll taxes and other intimidation to prevent blacks from voting.

"This is the New South," he told the crowd. "Some people over there in the [General Assembly] building – that's the Old South."

Demonstrators surrounded the Bell Tower at the southwest corner of Capitol Square at 10 a.m. They wore stickers that read "Protect Our Vote! We Can't Afford To Go Backwards" and hoisted signs. Prayer and song preceded and followed several speakers.

“Since 1965, we have made every effort to expand the right to vote, to make it easier to vote. But now we’re seeing people turn back the clock,” said Sen. John S. Edwards, D-Roanoke. “They say there’s widespread voter fraud. Where is the evidence? It does not exist.”

Republicans say that the proposals would guard against voter fraud. Under current law, someone without a voter registration card or other identification can vote by signing an affidavit that “he is the named registered voter who he claims to be.”

The rally did not sway the House of Delegates. On Wednesday, delegates voted 69-30 in favor of House Bill 9, which says that voters who can’t show identification must cast a “provisional ballot”; the provisional ballot would be counted after the election if officials verify the voter’s identity.

Local delegates Mike Watson, Gordon Helsel and Brenda Pogge voted in favor of the bill.

“The legislation debated today will cause confusion at the polls, deter lawful voters from voting, and create chaos for our already stressed election officials,” said Delegate Mark Sickles of Franconia, who chairs the House Democratic Caucus. “A clear and convincing reason why these bills are needed has yet to be articulated in committee or on the floor.”

However, Delegate David Albo, R-Fairfax, said critics of HB 9 are making false claims about the bill.

“Most people who are against it are saying it denies people the right to vote. They need to read the bill – it does not deny anyone the right to vote,” Albo said. “If they don’t have an ID, they vote a provisional ballot. All provisional ballots are counted as long as it is not determined that the vote is fraudulent. So, everyone’s vote still gets counted.”

Democrats also criticized Senate Bill 1, which would eliminate the voter registration card from the list of acceptable forms of identification that Virginians can show to prove they are registered voters.

Under SB 1, a voter would have to show a Social Security card, a driver’s license, a government identification card or an employee ID card with a photo – or else cast a provisional ballot.

Opponents say SB 1 would discourage many people from voting. They said, for example, that elderly Virginians may not have a birth certificate or driver’s license.

“It undermines the very foundation of our democracy, the right to vote,” said Brian Moran, chairman of the Democratic Party of Virginia.

“The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy. We should be encouraging and expanding the opportunities to engage in our democracy through the vote – not suppressing, not limiting, not

being a country of exclusion, but rather of inclusion.”

However, Sen. Steve Martin, R-Chesterfield, who is sponsoring SB 1, said the rally speakers were “nowhere close to correct.”

“You might want to make sure you look at the actual bill and see the expansions of opportunities. You do not need a photo ID. That’s not a requirement. It’s nothing at all like what has been represented, and it’s probably going to fair very well on the floor of the Senate,” Martin said.

Many Republicans say the bills are intended to prevent voter fraud, but Democrats say voter fraud hasn’t been a problem in Virginia.

By supporting such bills as HB 9 and SB 1, legislators are sending a message to the people, said Tram Nguyen, associate director of Virginia New Majority, which advocates for minorities, women and “progressive people” in general.

“That message is that while we don’t have enough money in our state budget to fund programs that we so desperately need – like education, our health safety and public safety – they’re willing to spend millions of our taxpayer dollars to fix a program that doesn’t exist,” Nguyen said.

One attendee at the rally – Chuck Hawkins of Manquin, a town in King William County – said Republicans want to suppress voter turnout because a higher turnout favors Democrats. “It’s a way to keep people from coming to the polls that would otherwise exercise their right.”

Mayor Jones vowed that Democrats would not let that happen.

“We’re not going to stand by quietly and allow these things to happen without bringing public attention to them,” he said.

“It’s my right to vote. I will not have to give my birth certificate. I will not have to show my driver’s license. All I ought to do is show up.”

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1,500 attend governor's Easter egg hunt

By Alex Wiggins, Capital News Service 04/05/12



Annabelle and Elise Nee romp over the grounds of Richmond's Capitol Square Wednesday at the first "Governor's Easter Egg Hunt." (Photo by Alex Wiggins of Capital News Service)

The lawn around the state Capitol was hopping with about 1,500 egg-collecting children Wednesday as Gov. Bob McDonnell and first lady Maureen McDonnell held Virginia's first "Governor's Easter Egg Hunt."

Just as the U.S. president traditionally opens the White House grounds for an Easter egg roll, the McDonnells invited children to participate in their free event at Capitol Square.

The McDonnells formally greeted their guests after exiting the Executive Mansion accompanied by the Easter Bunny, Smokey Bear, Virginia Commonwealth University's Rodney the Ram, the Richmond Flying Squirrels mascot Nutsy and several other costumed characters.

"I want to especially thank the first lady and her staff – all of the people from the First Lady's

Initiatives Team Effort – for their great planning,” Gov. McDonnell said.

He singled out “Sarah Scarbrough, the mansion director, who’s been putting Easter eggs together for about three months, I think.”

After the event, Scarbrough called the egg hunt a success. “We’d love to see it become another Virginia tradition,” she said.

Eight thousand plastic eggs had been placed all over the lawn of Capitol Square, designated for children of different ages – with some eggs apparently containing more impressive treasures than others.

The eggs for the event had been donated by the Science Museum of Virginia, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Bow-Tie Cinemas and other organizations, according to a press release issued by Mrs. McDonnell.

Students from The Steward School, a college preparatory school in Henrico County, painted the faces of egg-hunters for free. Music and mild weather accompanied the late-afternoon and early-evening festivities as the governor and the first lady mingled with a long line of guests and friends. They included VCU President Michael Rao, his wife Monica and their two children.

Some attendees were displeased, however, with the first-time jamboree.

“It was unorganized,” said Delethia Agyeibi, a mother of two. “When the governor said, ‘Go!’ or whoever said, ‘Go!’ everybody went – and they didn’t acknowledge the times and the ages for each set area.”

Agyeibi’s children expressed disappointment at not having won any special “prize eggs.” But they smiled at the eggs they did manage to gather.

As part of the first lady’s Serving Our Service Member Families effort, the McDonnells encouraged guests to bring “baby shower gifts for expectant military moms.” Mansion staff and volunteers set up boxes for these items around the Capitol grounds, and most of them were full by the end of the two-hour-long event.

Children were able to write thank-you cards to members of the military at a booth provided by the United Service Organizations, as well as create bracelets with supplies provided by the Science Museum of Virginia.

“We all agree that trying to come together and do what’s best for Virginia, trying to solve problems, is the thing that makes Virginia really a great state,” Gov. McDonnell said.

“Enjoy this time with your family. Have a celebration for the great blessing that God has given us as Virginians and Americans and do the things that you want to do to have fun.”

Several state agencies helped with the event. They included the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, the Virginia State Police, the Virginia Tourism Corp. and the Virginia Egg Council.

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rvanews.com

Child care can cost more than college

by RVANEWS STAFF • APRIL 19, 2012



by RVANews staff

By Alex Wiggans / Capital News Service

Think tuition is high at VCU? The cost of putting a child in the university's day care center can be even higher. The VCU Child Development Center charges \$820 a month for children 3 and under, and \$700 a month for older children. In contrast, tuition and

mandatory fees for in-state undergraduate students total \$9,517 this year – which works out to about \$793 a month. And typical college students don't have to worry about the extra charge parents must pay if they're late picking up their child from the development center: It's \$5 for every minute after the facility closes at 5:45 p.m.

"It would cost less to send my child to VCU as a college student than to pay what I am now at the Childhood Development Center," said a faculty member who uses the facility. She asked that her name not be printed because she plans to keep her son enrolled at the center for the next few years. "It's shocking," the faculty member added.

But it's the reality because quality child care is expensive, and the VCU Childhood Development Center must reflect what other facilities charge, said Muriel Azria-Evans, the center's director. "If you make calls to other child care providers, we are very, very reasonable for a full-time, five-days-a-week, three-meals center," Azria-Evans said. "I'm sure \$820 a month is a lot to a student. I don't doubt that. Of course it's a challenge."

As other VCU units suffered budget cuts, the VCU School of Education, which oversees the center, raised the program's fees to market levels. This past year, the center increased the monthly fee for

youngsters 3 and under from \$760 to \$820; the fee for older children went from \$650 to \$700. Azria-Evans said the change was needed to help “cover basic operating costs” and was “related to looking at comparable centers in the area.” She said the price of quality child care is a “national issue.”

According to a report released last year by the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, the cost of day care in the U.S. is continuing to rise. The VCU center enrolls children age 16 months to 6 years old. It serves no more than 76 VCU-affiliated children at one time. The center is open only to children of VCU faculty, staff and students. “There is quite a long wait list,” said Azria-Evans. “We have some families that put their child’s name down when they’re pregnant.”

The VCU Child Development Center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children – a highly coveted distinction that recognizes staff training, staffing levels and other factors. Accredited centers often have waiting lists. Azria-Evans said the wait to enter the VCU program varies – depending, for example, on the child’s age. “We may have on paper a really long wait list, but a lot can change within a year,” said Azria-Evans. “What we offer – I think we are quite reasonable. I think we’re quite a catch.”

Original URL:

<http://rvanews.com/news/child-care-can-cost-more-than-college/59331>

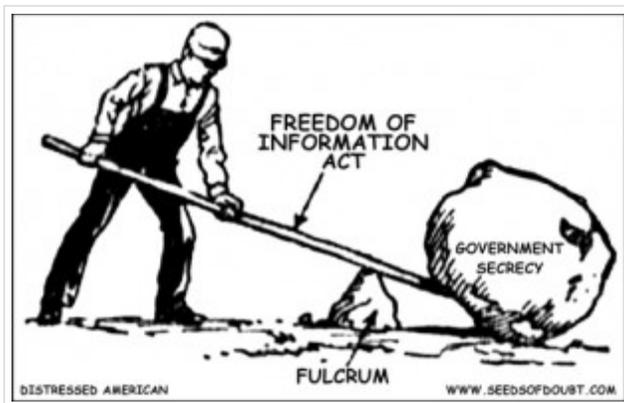
A Pretty Good Session for Open Government Advocates

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AltDaily : Creating and celebrating local culture in Norfolk and all of Hampton Roads.

RICHMOND – When they gathered this week, members of the Virginia Professional Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists joked that they should check the underside of their vehicles for wiretaps.

They convened to discuss how the Freedom of Information Act and related issues fared during the General Assembly's recently concluded regular session. This was an opportune time to take stock: Last week was Sunshine Week – an effort to educate the public about open government.



art | seedofdoubt.com

FOIA gives citizens the right to obtain information from the government. Every legislative session, the General Assembly considers amending the law – often in ways that concern advocates of open government.

For journalists and citizens who support access to information, 2012 was a fairly good session, Megan Rhyne, executive director of the Virginia Coalition for Open Government, told the SPJ group Monday.

For instance, most bills that would have significantly chipped away at citizens' right to know failed. They included House Bill 25, which would have made concealed handgun permits confidential. That measure, proposed by Delegate Mark Cole, R-Fredericksburg, passed the House but died in a Senate committee.

A big concern this session involved public notices, such as legal ads, agendas for government meetings and other official information. Currently, local governments must publish such notices in a local newspaper. Several legislators want to remove that requirement and allow localities simply to publish the notices on their websites.

For example, Republican Delegate Steve Landes of Verona sponsored HB 773. Under that proposal, local governments could use their websites, voice or text alert systems, public access television channels or a bulletin board at the public library as alternatives to publishing public notices in a newspaper. (A locality would have to use two of the five methods to satisfy the notification

requirement.)

“He brings the same bill every year,” Rhyne said, referring to Landes.

HB 773 was one of a handful of bills to let local governments circumvent the newspaper publication law.

Rhyne noted that the Virginia Press Association, which represents the state’s newspapers, has been concerned about “whether or not public notices and legal notices should stay in the newspapers, or whether they should move online onto government websites.”

The VPA says more people will see public notices in their newspapers and the papers’ websites than on a local government’s site.

Moreover, the association says, it’s critical that notices be published by an independent party – not by the government.

Rhyne said support for keeping public notices in newspapers came from legislators from Southwest Virginia and from Delegate Keith Hodges, R-Urbanna. Those lawmakers are from rural districts where most residents don’t have high-speed Internet access, she said.



Rhyne.

“What saved it from becoming a ‘Democrat and Republican’ issue was the notion of ‘the rural versus the urban,’” Rhyne said.

The VPA worked with the State Board of Elections to make sure that public notices about changes to election districts would be published both online and in the printed press.

Rhyne said VCOG differs “slightly” from the VPA on the issue of moving public notices online.

That day may come eventually. But Rhyne said, “You can’t just go from having notices in the newspaper where the public has relied on them for decades, and then just say, ‘Now they’re going to be somewhere else.’”

Overall, Rhyne said, 2012 was “a pretty quiet year” for FOIA legislation – especially compared with the two previous sessions. In 2010 and 2011, she noted, the General Assembly considered (and

rejected) bills allowing the government to “sue a citizen for harassing them through FOIA.”

During this past session, Rhyne said, “What we ended up with were four bills that would amend FOIA”:

- HB 275, by Delegate Chris Peace, R-Mechanicsville, would exempt certain information at the Virginia Board of Accountancy from public disclosure if it’s being used for investigative purposes. Before the session, Peace met with VCOG, and the group’s “concerns were worked out there,” Rhyne said.
- Senate Bill 193, by Sen. John Miller, D-Newport News, would exempt cell phone numbers for EMS personnel and firefighters from FOIA.
- HB 141, by Cole, “exempts personal information in constituent correspondence.” At first blush, that “seems rather shocking,” Rhyne said. But she said the bill “really doesn’t do anything now.” Under the measure, the exemption would not apply if “the correspondence relates to the transaction of public business.”
- HB 480, sponsored by Delegate Dave Albo, R-Springfield, allows government officials who are holding a closed meeting to invite other officials to attend. “We didn’t oppose it because anybody that holds a closed meeting can invite whoever they want,” Rhyne said.

Over the summer, public officials and open government advocates will study a few FOIA-related bills that failed during the legislative session.

One is HB 397 by Delegate Patrick Hope, D-Arlington. This bill would have opened to the public “guidance documents” that help the Virginia Parole Board decide whether to grant, deny or revoke an inmate’s parole. The bill included a “delayed effective date to give the Freedom of Information Advisory Council an opportunity to review the legislation and report on its implementation.” The proposal died in a House subcommittee.

Paul Fletcher, president of the SPJ Virginia Pro Chapter, commended VCOG for monitoring and influencing FOIA-related legislation.

“I would just like to salute the press association and VCOG for the great work that you did,” Fletcher said. “We were very proud and happy to work with both groups in helping to defeat these measures, because these public notice bills are important for SPJ in that they’re public right to know.”

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