

## Shelby Mertens

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- Education**     **Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications**, expected Fall 2013  
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA  
Major in Journalism    Minor in History
- Journalistic Experience**     **Writer and Photographer**, Ink Magazine, Richmond, VA, 09/2011-2013  
Wrote a story about bathroom art in the restaurants and bars of Richmond  
Has written reviews on music and literature  
Took photos for a DIY Apocalypse Survival Guide  
Wrote an editorial piece on campus stereotypes
- Reporter**, Capital News Service, Richmond, VA, 01/13-present  
Covered the Virginia General Assembly on behalf of over 70 news organizations  
Published in newspapers and online publications from across the state  
Followed bills on transportation, parental rights, moped requirements, governor term limits and the official recognition of the Virginia Shakespeare Festival
- Reporter**, iPadJournos, Richmond, VA, 01/13-present  
Uses an iPad to report the news  
Breaks new on social media  
Stories are published for WTVR-CBS 6  
Published story on possible assault weapons ban and how citizens have reacted
- Journalistic Skills**     Writing on deadline, finding interesting story ideas, determining newsworthiness, AP style, photography, video, multimedia editing, graphic design, web content and breaking news on social media
- Computer Skills**     **Software:** Adobe Photoshop; Adobe Audition, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Premier Pro, Audacity, SoundSlides, Microsoft Office Suite  
**Operating Systems:** Mac OS X, Windows 7
- Social Media**     LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/shelby-mertens/63/916/b6>  
Blog: <http://shelbymertens.tumblr.com/>
- Awards/Honors**     **Dean's List**  
**GroundReport.com Recognition Award**  
**Kappa Tau Alpha Honor Society**

# Panel rejects consecutive terms for governor

by RVANEWS STAFF | FEB. 14, 2013



by RVANews staff

Update #1 — February 14, 2013; 6:00 AM

By *Shelby Mertens* | *Capital News Service*

A House subcommittee has rejected the Senate's proposed constitutional amendment that would allow Virginia

governors to serve two consecutive terms starting in 2017.

Virginia is the only state that does not allow governors to serve consecutive terms. Fourteen states have no gubernatorial term limits; 27 have a two-consecutive-term limit; and four limit governors to two consecutive or nonconsecutive terms.

Sen. Thomas Garrett, R-Lynchburg, introduced [Senate Joint Resolution 276](#). The amendment passed in the Senate with a 25-15 vote on January 28th.

SJ276 had bipartisan support in the Senate: 16 Democrats and nine Republicans voted for it, while 11 Republicans and four Democrats opposed it. When the Senate resolution “crossed over” to the House, it ran into trouble.

The proposed amendment was assigned to the House Committee on Privileges and Elections. On Monday, that panel's Constitutional Amendments Subcommittee recommended tabling the bill, killing it for this session.

Two identical House proposals met a similar fate in the same subcommittee. The subcommittee merged [House Joint Resolutions 549](#) into [HJ679](#), but never acted on the final measure. So it died at “crossover” on February 5th, the deadline for legislation to clear the House or Senate.

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Original — February 01, 2013

*By Shelby Mertens | Capital News Service*

Starting in 2017, Virginia voters could have the opportunity to re-elect the governor to a second consecutive term if the House joins the Senate in seeking to amend the state's Constitution.

The Senate this week approved a proposed constitutional amendment to allow governors to serve two terms in a row. The vote was 25-15.

Sen. Thomas Garrett, R-Lynchburg, introduced [Senate Joint Resolution 276](#). "I got the idea back from eighth grade, learning about Virginia government. I thought it was odd governors only had one term," he said.

Garrett said an extra four years in office would make it easier for the governor to tackle long-term problems such as transportation.

Sen. John Miller, D-Newport News, voted in favor of the bill.

"We ought to give the voters the opportunity to decide whether a governor should keep his job and be re-elected," Miller said.

Miller said he also believes allowing governors to serve a second term would allow them to accomplish more.

"It is important to give the governor sufficient time to really complete an agenda. Under a one-term limitation, the governor comes in and spends his first couple of years working on the previous governor's budget," Miller said.

SJ276 was co-sponsored by Sen. Adam Ebbin, D-Alexandria, and Delegates Scott Surovell, D-Mount Vernon, and David Ramadan, R-South Riding. The resolution now moves to the House of Delegates, where its fate is uncertain.

"I'm not real optimistic about its chances, but I think it's the right thing to do," Miller said.

Two identical proposals had been filed in the House: [House Joint Resolution 549](#), introduced by Delegate Bob Purkey, R-Virginia Beach; and [HJ679](#), by Delegate Bob Brink, D-Arlington.

A subcommittee of the House Committee on Privileges and Elections folded Brink's resolution into Purkey's and then tabled HJ549 on a voice vote.

Virginia is the only state that does not allow governors to serve consecutive terms. Fourteen states have no gubernatorial term limits; 27 have a two-consecutive-term limit; and four limit governors to two consecutive or nonconsecutive terms.

In Montana, the governor is limited to eight years within a 16-year period, while the Wyoming governor is limited to two four-year terms within a 16-year period. In Utah, the governor is limited to 12 consecutive years. The limit in Florida is eight years but with no lifetime limit.

Geoffrey Skelley, a political analyst at the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, said Virginia is unique in limiting its governor to a single term. He doesn't believe this will change soon.

“This will probably not get anywhere in the House of Delegates because such a change in Virginia politics would be an extremely significant shift in the institutional politics of Virginia,” Skelley said.

In the Senate, there was bipartisan support for SJ276: 16 Democrats and nine Republicans voted for it, while 11 Republicans and four Democrats opposed it.

Skelley noted that the issue drew more support from Democrats than from Republicans.

“I think the Republicans are more focused on small government. And House Republicans, who are generally more conservative, will view this as a road to more governmental power to the executive,” Skelley said.

However, Skelley said it’s possible that, over time, Virginia might ease its term limit on the governor.

“The fact that it passed in the Senate is proof that there is some desire out there for it,” Skelley said. “It’s an indication that there is some portion of the political establishment that supports it.”

If the resolution passes in the House, it still has a ways to go. Because it calls for a constitutional amendment, the resolution would require approval again from the General Assembly in 2014. Then it would appear on the November 2014 ballot for a statewide vote. If the majority of voters approve, the constitutional amendment would take effect.

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<http://rvanews.com/news/senate-oks-letting-governor-serve-two-terms/82742>

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# Norment Carries W&M; Shakespeare Support Request to Legislature

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JAN. 22, 2013

[WYDaily.com is your source for free news and information in Williamsburg, James City & York Counties.](#)



Actors performing in last summer's production of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona." (photo courtesy Virginia Shakespeare Festival Theatre)

**RICHMOND** — A bill introduced by Sen. Thomas Norment, R-Williamsburg, would designate the Virginia

Shakespeare Festival in Williamsburg as the official Shakespeare Festival of Virginia, in hopes of increasing tourism to the area.

The bill comes as the festival prepares to mark its 35th anniversary this summer. Over the years, more than 300,000 people have attended the performances. The legislation notes that Shakespeare's work was first performed in the New World at Williamsburg in 1753. So it seems fitting that the commonwealth's official festival would be located there.

The idea was brought to Norment in October by Robert Ruffin, the interim producing director for the Virginia Shakespeare Festival, which is presented by the College of William and Mary.

"I think it will boost tourism to reach out beyond our local reach," Ruffin said.

With an economy that relies heavily on tourism revenue, the Historic Triangle suffered greatly when the 2008 recession hit.

According to the Williamsburg Hotel Association's tourism statistics, the number of occupied hotel rooms has dropped every year since the recession began, but the decline is starting to level off.

Room reservations dropped 16 percent in 2008 and almost 11 percent in 2009. But in 2011, the number dropped only about 3 percent. As the economy heals, tourism may pick up – and it could get an even bigger boost if the Williamsburg event is designated as Virginia's official Shakespeare Festival.

“It would add credibility being an official event,” said Bob Harris, senior vice president of tourism at the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance. “It adds depth to what we offer here.”

Harris said boosting local tourism can attract businesses to the area, which means more jobs and a healthier economy.

Williamsburg has the second-highest unemployment rate in the state – more than 12 percent, according to the Virginia Employment Commission. That's more than double the statewide average.

The Virginia Shakespeare Festival typically consists of three productions performed in Phi Beta Kappa Hall on the William and Mary campus.

Norment, who serves as an adjunct professor for William and Mary's law school, agrees that making it the official Shakespeare festival of the commonwealth would boost local tourism.

“The Virginia Shakespeare Festival attracts visitors to the Historic Triangle every year, providing quality entertainment for our visitors and residents alike,” he said. “By designating it as Virginia's official Shakespeare Festival, this outstanding community asset will achieve the recognition it deserves and increase its ability to draw even more visitors to our region.”

The festival at William and Mary isn't the only event celebrating Shakespeare's work in Virginia. Richmond also holds its Richmond Shakespeare Festival each summer. In the past, Virginia Beach has held the Hampton Roads Shakespeare Festival.

Norment's proposal, Senate Bill 1123, is awaiting a vote in the Senate General Laws and Technology Committee.

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# New rules for mopeds down the road

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By **SHELBY MERTENS**

Capital News Service

**RICHMOND** – Moped operators in Virginia would have to wear helmets and eye protection, carry a government-issued photo ID, and title, register and put a license plate on their scooters under a bill waiting to be signed into law by Gov. Bob McDonnell.

Senate Bill 1038, passed by the General Assembly during its recent session, is based on recommendations from a yearlong study conducted by the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles.

In September 2011, the DMV was asked by the assembly's transportation committees to study the increasing consumer demand for vehicles that do not fit the current motor vehicle definitions in the Code of Virginia.

The Non-Conventional Vehicles Study group was made up of representatives from the DMV, law enforcement, the insurance industry, highway safety, motorcycle dealers and manufacturers, moped dealers and other state and local government agencies.

The study focused on low-speed vehicles like mopeds, all-terrain vehicles and three-wheeled motorcycles. The work group wanted to address concerns dealing with the safety and proper use of mopeds.

“The number of mopeds on Virginia roads has increased significantly as a result of the rising cost of gas, along with the affordability and availability of mopeds,” said Sunni Brown, a DMV spokeswoman.



“With the increased number of mopeds sharing our roads, there has been an increase in the number of concerns expressed from the public, law enforcement, General Assembly members and traffic safety advocates.”

The study also looked at moped-related crash and fatality statistics in Virginia, as well as laws governing non-conventional vehicle in other states.

“After reviewing those other state moped requirements, it became clear that Virginia is one of the few states imposing no requirement on moped operations in terms of licensing of the operator, titling, registration of the moped and liability insurance,” Brown said.

Chelsea Lahmers, owner and founder of Scoot Richmond, which sells and services scooters, was part of the work group for the study. Lahmers said that right now, mopeds are in a gray area between bicycles, which do not require titles or registration, and cars, which of course do.

Virginia and North Carolina are the only states in the country that do not require moped operators to carry official identification. Current Virginia law requires that the moped operator must be at least 16 years old, but no valid driver’s license is necessary.

As a result, Lahmers said, there have been many cases in which moped drivers have been in an accident and did not have a photo ID on them.

Under SB 1038, moped operators would have to carry a photo ID and wear a helmet and eye protection beginning July 1.

The requirements regarding titling, registering and getting a license plate for a moped would take effect the following year – starting July 1, 2014.

According to Lahmers, titling and registering a moped gives the owner protection against theft.

“We see mopeds get recovered by the police that never get back into the owner’s hands,” Lahmers said. “Without that title, it is almost impossible to get your vehicle back if it gets stolen.”

A \$10 fee would be charged for titling. Lahmers said the titling requirement would apply only to newly purchased mopeds. The DMV is unsure of what to do with mopeds already on the road, she said.

Lahmers supports the legislation but questions one provision: Under the bill, low-speed vehicle owners would be subject to a 5 percent motor vehicle sales and use tax, and exempt from the retail sales and use tax. In addition, localities may exempt mopeds from personal property taxation.

Lahmers notes that some organizations, such as the Virginia Motorcycle Dealers Association, want the motor vehicle sales and use tax lowered to 3 percent.

SB 1038 was sponsored by Republican Sens. Stephen Newman of Forest and Charles Carrico of Galax. It was approved unanimously by the Senate and on a vote of 60-39 in the House. According to Newman's office, McDonnell is expected to sign the bill soon.

Last year, Maryland passed a bill that made similar requirements for moped operators. The Maryland law requires owners to place a permanent decal on the rear of the moped and levies a 6 percent tax.

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