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Play Away!

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Speed Kills Pedestrians. Time for Richmond To Slow It Down

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New Laws

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JANUARY 7-20, 2026

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Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets 2026 Legislative Push

Fighting to expand automated enforcement beyond school and work zones.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Advocates with Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets say at least 15 pedestrians have been killed in traffic-related crashes and roughly 100 more have been seriously injured in Fairfax County in 2025, underscoring an urgent need for state funding and automated enforcement on the county's most dangerous corridors. During a Dec. 30, 2025, inter-

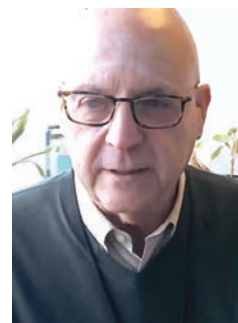
view with The Connection, Mike Doyle, founder and president of Northern Virginia for Safe Streets, emphasized the physics of the crisis, noting that vehicle velocity is the deciding factor between a near miss and a fatality.

"You might survive being hit at 20 mph, but by 40 it's roughly one in 10 [who survive], and at 50 or 60 it's essentially over — if you live at all — you're likely to be permanently, severely injured," Doyle said. "Speed kills; speed maims."

Doyle and Phil Abendhower, a volunteer data manager with the group, are calling for increased state funding as newly formed Democratic majorities take control in Richmond. Gov. Abigail Spanberger (D) is set to be inaugurated Jan. 17, three days after the General Assembly session convenes Jan. 14.

A deadly monthlong surge in December which saw five pedestrians killed coincides with efforts by Doyle and Abendhower to support

the Speed Safety Camera Expansion Act, HB 2041. Carried by Del. Holly Seibold (D-Fairfax), the legislation seeks to expand Virginia Code Section 46.2-882.1 to authorize localities to place "speed safety cameras" on state-managed high-crash network roads. The bill moves beyond current restrictions that limit cameras to school and work zones, allowing enforcement in "high-risk speed corridors" and high-risk intersection segments with heavy pedestrian activity where speed limits are 45 mph or less. Doyle noted the proposal would specifically target corridors such as Route 29, Route 50, Blake Lane, Columbia Pike, and Duke Street. The bill requires that revenue from fines first cover the camera system's operating costs. "Excess funds" are then directed toward traffic safety. While earlier versions mentioned the Virginia Highway Safety Improvement Program (VHSIP), Seibold also introduced amendments that allow localities to retain these funds in a



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION VIA ZOOM
Mike Doyle



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION VIA ZOOM
Phil Abendhower



SCREENSHOT
Del. Holly Seibold (D-Fairfax)

dedicated local fund for "planning, design, and construction projects for traffic safety, speed management, and bicycle/pedestrian safety."

Seibold introduced the bill in memory of three Fairfax teenagers struck by a student driver going 81 mph in a 35 mph zone in 2022. Two students, 15-year-old Leeyan Hanjia Yan and 14-year-old Ada Gabriela Martinez Nolasco, died from their injuries. The crash occurred on Blake Lane's sidewalk when they were walking home from Oakton High School.

"Most pedestrian fatalities occur outside school zones. Speed safety cameras, as outlined in HB 2041, save lives by reducing speeding

on high-crash corridors with persistent safety risks," said Seibold in a Jan. 5 email to The Connection.

Seibold's move follows the Gov. Glenn Youngkin's 2025 veto of similar legislation. Doyle calls the new proposal the "single most important, high-impact" safety bill of the year. He also supports a separate stop-sign camera bill to collect data on "close calls" involving pedestrians and cyclists.

"On the one hand, there is progress ... but we're far from being satisfied," Doyle said. "Part of the solution is to apply, on an equitable basis, the technology that exists today to encourage drivers to slow down and stop, because that will save lives."

The Human Cost

Five deaths in 22 days mark a deadly year-end surge.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The 2025 fatal pedestrian count began with Erica Tibbs, 33, who was struck by a vehicle Jan. 29, 2025 at Richmond Highway and Buckman Road.

Following a summer and autumn of scattered incidents, the toll surged in the final weeks of 2025, claiming five lives in just 22 days. This deadly streak began when Roger Brown, 67, was killed Dec. 7 at Richmond Highway and Backlick Road.

On Dec. 23, 50-year-old Jimmy Patterson was found in a low point of the Fairfax County Parkway median, where he had been invisible to traffic for hours. On Christmas Day, a 75-year-old and a 15-year-old were killed in an Interstate 495 crash investigated by Virginia State Police. The year's latest tragedy occurred Dec. 29, when a 53-year-old woman of no fixed address was struck twice at Route 29 and Hideaway Road; the second vehicle fled the scene.

"In a perfect world, I would love to see no fatalities at all, and automobiles have come a long way, but you still have these huge vehicles and you have small people," said Phil Abendhower, a data volunteer for Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets (NoVA FSS), during a Dec. 30 interview with The Connection.

While fatalities dropped from 20 last year to approximately 15 this year, NoVA FSS founder Mike Doyle cautioned that serious injuries, the life-altering crashes that often go unhighlighted, remain flat at about 100 per year.

Beyond Behavior

Why road design dictates pedestrian fatality rates.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

"Safety is a design problem, not a behavioral one," said Mike Doyle, founder of Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets (NoVA FSS), during a Dec. 30 interview with The Connection.

He noted that corridors such as Route 29 and the Fairfax County Parkway feature 12-foot lanes that subconsciously encourage highway speeds. Furthermore, a significant "visibility gap" exists: four out of five fatal pedestrian crashes in the county occur after dark, often in areas where streetlights are spaced for vehicles.

Doyle added that pedestrian collisions represent a "systemic failure" of road design rather than individual behavioral errors. While programs like the FCPD's "Road Shark" provided high-visibility enforcement in 2025, yielding nearly 50,000 citations, a 43% increase from the previous year, advocates like Doyle argue that police presence alone cannot be everywhere 24/7.

The 2026 legislative push is bol-



Sen. Danica Roem



Del. Kathy Tran

stered by other members of the Northern Virginia delegation moving toward engineering mandates. Sen. Danica Roem (D-Manassas), is proposing funding for lighting and pedestrian bridges on Route 28.

"My Route 28 STARS project for Manassas Park and Yorkshire includes innovative intersection designs, a raised median and 1.75 miles of contiguous sidewalk — including pedestrian refuges to make road crossings safer," said Roem in an email on Jan. 3.

At the same time, Del. Kathy Tran (D-Fairfax), is working to establish stricter engineering standards for the Springfield-Merrifield corridor through House Bill 42, often referred to in legislative previews as the "Safer Roads for Springfield-Merrifield Act." According to legislative filings for the 2026 session, Tran is seeking to mandate that the Virgin-

ia Department of Transportation (VDOT) prioritize safety-first design on high-traffic state roads. Her proposal includes lane narrowing (moving away from 12-foot highway-style lanes), reduced crossing distances through pedestrian refuge islands on stretches such as Old Keene Mill Road (Route 644) and Route 50, and the requirement of "Leading Pedestrian Intervals" (LPIs) to provide pedestrians with a three- to seven-second head start at intersections.

Doyle argues that until these systemic design flaws are addressed, the fatalities will continue regardless of police presence. Phil Abendhower, a NoVA FSS data volunteer, noted that the group uses community data to identify dangerous intersections before a fatality occurs. Residents can record a close call on the NoVA FSS Near Miss Dashboard at novasafeststreets.org/report-a-safety-issue.

Community Action and Police Information

Detectives from the FCPD Crash Reconstruction Unit are searching for the driver of the second unidentified vehicle involved in the Dec. 29 fatality at Route 29 and Hideaway Road.

❖ Call the Tip Line: 703-280-0543.

❖ Call Fairfax County Crime Solvers Anonymously: at 1-866-411-TIPS (8477).

Virginia's Hidden Wins: New Laws in Effect

From protecting primates to ending 'mystery' court bills to a bit of help for foster children.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

In 2025, the Virginia General Assembly and Gov. Glenn Youngkin passed and signed over 650 bills into law. While most legislation hits the books in July, several major laws went live on Jan. 1, 2026. From closing fatal diagnostic gaps in ERs and ensuring foster youth move with dignity, to providing a retirement pathway for primates previously euthanized after lab research, these hidden victories address the pocketbook and health issues that matter to Virginians. Here is a curated selection of the hidden victories as we move forward in 2026.

Malcolm's Law: Blind Spot in Virginia Hospitals Corrected

Virginia hospitals with emergency departments must now include fentanyl in all routine urine drug screenings to prevent diagnostic errors in overdose cases. Named in memory of a 17-year-old Fairfax resident whose synthetic opioid overdose was missed by standard hospital tests, Malcolm's Law (HB 2742) closes a potentially fatal diagnostic gap. Just a tiny amount of fentanyl, the small amount that fits on the tip of a pencil, is a potentially deadly dose, according to the DEA. During legislative testimony, it was revealed that adding a fentanyl reagent to a standard test costs less than \$1 per patient for a life-saving measure. The bill, introduced by Del. Irene Shin (D-Herndon), passed with unanimous 99-0 and 40-0 votes before being signed into law by Gov. Glenn Youngkin on March 21, 2025.

Failed Two Consecutive Years Before Passing: The Breast Cancer Screening Act

After clearing significant hurdles related to insurance mandates, the Breast Cancer Screening Act HB 1828 is eliminating the follow-up fee. State-regulated insurance plans are prohibited from charging copays for diagnostic breast exams and follow-up MRIs, ending a years-long push for cost-free detection. This legislation specifically targets the hidden costs that often hit patients after a suspicious finding on a standard mammogram. The bill, introduced by Del. Shelly Simonds (D-Newport News), passed with unanimous 99-0 and 40-0 votes before being signed into law by Gov. Youngkin on March 24, 2025.

Prostate Screening Equity: Aligning with Modern Medicine

HB 2097, introduced by lead patron Del. Bobby Orrrock, (R-Caroline), forces insurers to cover prostate cancer screenings without cost-sharing for high-risk individuals, mirroring protections recently established for other major cancers. Previously stalled due to insurance lobby concerns about premium costs, this law ensures PSA tests are treated with the same preventive priority as mammograms. The bill passed with 97-0 and 40-0 votes before being signed into law by Gov. Youngkin on March 21, 2025.



SCREENSHOT FCPDNEWS

Fentanyl pills seized by the Fairfax County Police Department in August 2024. Malcolm's Law, House Bill 2742, is now in effect, requiring all Virginia emergency rooms to test for fentanyl. The law followed the 2023 overdose death of a Fairfax teenager whose condition was missed by standard hospital screenings.

Medical Debt Protection Act: Capping Interest on Illness

HB 1725, introduced by Del. Karrie Delaney (D-Fairfax), passed with a 53-44 and 27-13 vote before being signed into law by Youngkin on May 2, 2025. New protections limit interest rates on medical debt to 3% annually and prohibit hospitals from taking aggressive collection actions, such as foreclosures. This bill faced several years of debate before a compromise was reached to shield patients from financial ruin due to healthcare costs.

Primate Retirement Law

The Primate Retirement Law, SB 907, states that state-funded research facilities in Virginia are now required to offer retired primates to certified sanctuaries rather than resorting to euthanasia, which was previously the standard protocol. This compassionate mandate ensures that monkeys and other primates used in state-funded studies have a pathway to a natural life once their research term ends. In consultation with a facility's attending veterinarian, research centers must now prioritize retirement over euthanasia. The bill, introduced by Sen. Bill Stanley (R-Franklin), passed unanimously in the Senate (39-0) and passed the House (75-21) before being signed into law on March 24, 2025.

The End of 'Mystery' Court Bills

HB 1665, introduced by lead patron Del. Michael Jones, (D-Richmond), ensures that Virginians convicted of traffic infractions or crimes can now request a transparent, line-item receipt for every fine, fee and court cost assessed. The bill ends the era of "mystery bills" by requiring court clerks to provide a detailed financial breakdown at the time of assessment or upon request. The bill passed



SCREENSHOT FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH

Dyke Marsh, located in the Alexandria section of Fairfax County and managed by the National Park Service, is impacted by Virginia's HB 2034. The new law mandates a coalition of scientists, nonprofits, and state and federal agencies to move beyond mere preservation and begin building new wetland acreage to defend against rising sea levels.



SCREENSHOT VPAP.ORG

Del. Karrie Delaney (D-Fairfax), is the chief patron of HB 1725, the Medical Debt Protection Act: Capping Interest on Illness.



SCREENSHOT VPAP.ORG

Del. Irene Shin (D-Herndon), is the chief patron of Malcolm's Law (HB 2742), which effectively closes a potentially fatal emergency diagnostic gap.

unanimously, with 99-0 and 40-0 votes, before being signed into law on March 24, 2025.

Extra \$52 Unemployment Boost

The maximum weekly unemployment benefit in Virginia has increased by \$52 for all new claims filed as of Jan. 1, 2026. Introduced as HB 1766 by Del. Marty Martinez (D-Loudoun), the increase was enacted as part of the 2025 budget compromise to help benefits keep pace with the rising cost of living in the Commonwealth.

Wetlands Protection Task Force: Fighting 'Marsh Loss'

Virginia has launched a Wetlands Policy Task Force to slow the rapid loss of state wetlands and develop a strategy for large-scale restoration. Wetlands act as nature's "kidneys," filtering pollutants from water before they reach the Chesapeake Bay and protecting Fairfax County neighborhoods from flash flooding. This new mandate (HB 2034) requires a state-federal coalition of scientists, nonprofits, and government agencies to move beyond merely preserving what remains. By coordinating with federal partners, the task force will expand wetland acreage to mitigate rising sea levels and ensure Virginia's restoration goals align with national environmental standards. Introduced by Del. Shelly Simonds (D-Newport News), the bill passed with bipartisan support (84-14 and 38-2) before being signed into law on March 21, 2025.

Step Toward Stability For Those Experiencing Homelessness

While this law officially went into effect mid-2025, its full funding and administrative rollout at DMV offices and the Department of Health — including those in Fairfax County — began in earnest on Jan. 1, 2026. HB 1617, the Homeless Identity Act, waives all state fees for birth certificates and government-issued identification cards for youth and adults experiencing homelessness. The new rule requires state agencies to provide these documents at no cost to individuals who can certify their homelessness through a shelter or social service agency. The bill, introduced by Del. Adele McClure (D-Arlington), passed 82-14 and 40-0 before being signed into law on March 21, 2025.

The Foster Care Luggage Law:

HB 1631, introduced by lead patron Del. Candi Mundon King (D-Prince William), requires the Department of Social Services to maintain a supply of new luggage so that children in foster care no longer have to move their belongings in trash bags. For decades, the "black trash bag" has been a heartbreaking symbol of the foster care experience, often damaging a child's sense of self-worth during an already traumatic move. This law requires that each local department maintain a supply of suitcases or duffel bags for every child in the system. The bill passed unanimously, with 99-0 and 40-0 votes, and was signed into law on March 21, 2025.

MLK Day of Service Monday Jan. 19.

VOLUNTEER FAIRFAX presents the MLK Day of Service event on Monday Jan. 19. The day of service is family friendly and will take place at the Northern Virginia Community College, Annandale Campus.

When: Monday, Jan. 19, 2026
Where: MLK Day of Service will be held at the Northern Virginia Community College – Ernst Community Gymnasium, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, VA 22003

What: In honor of Martin Luther King Jr. and the spirit of service he represented, Volunteer Fairfax presents MLK Day of Service 2026, an in-person day of service for families, businesses and youth. Service projects completed will benefit local nonprofits and community members in the Northern Virginia region. This experience allows children and teens to witness first-hand how impactful and valuable volunteering can be. This is

a free event and open to the public. Registration is required, find information here. <https://www.volunteerfairfax.org/events/mlk2026/>
Why: Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: ‘What are you doing for others?’” Through Volunteer Fairfax’s signature event, MLK Day of Service, we seek to answer this question and honor King’s legacy.

Event Schedule
9 am: Check in opens for shift 1
9:30 am: Welcome ceremony
9:45 am – 10:45 am: Shift 1 service projects
10:30 am: Check in opens for shift 2
11 am – 12 am: Shift 2 service projects
❖ All ages are welcome and service projects are suitable for ages 5 and up.
Volunteers must choose one of the two shifts available.

Fatal Crash in Fair Oaks

Detectives from FCPD Crash Reconstruction Unit are investigating a single-vehicle crash that occurred on Dec. 31 in Fair Oaks.

On Dec. 31, 2025, at 8:25 p.m., officers responded to a single-vehicle crash at Post Forest Drive and Government Center Parkway in Fair Oaks. Officers determined that the driver of a 2010 Toyota Prius, Grant Faircloth, 24, of Aldie, was traveling eastbound on Post Forest Drive when his vehicle left the roadway and struck a tree.

Faircloth was transported to a local hospital with injuries initially believed to be non-life-threatening. Later that evening,

officers were notified that Faircloth’s status had changed to life-threatening. Faircloth was later pronounced deceased.

Detectives from our Crash Reconstruction Unit have assumed the investigation.

Preliminarily, alcohol does not appear to be a factor in the crash. Detectives continue to investigate whether speed was a factor.

Detectives would like to speak to anyone who may have information about this case. Those with information are asked to please call our Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone at 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)



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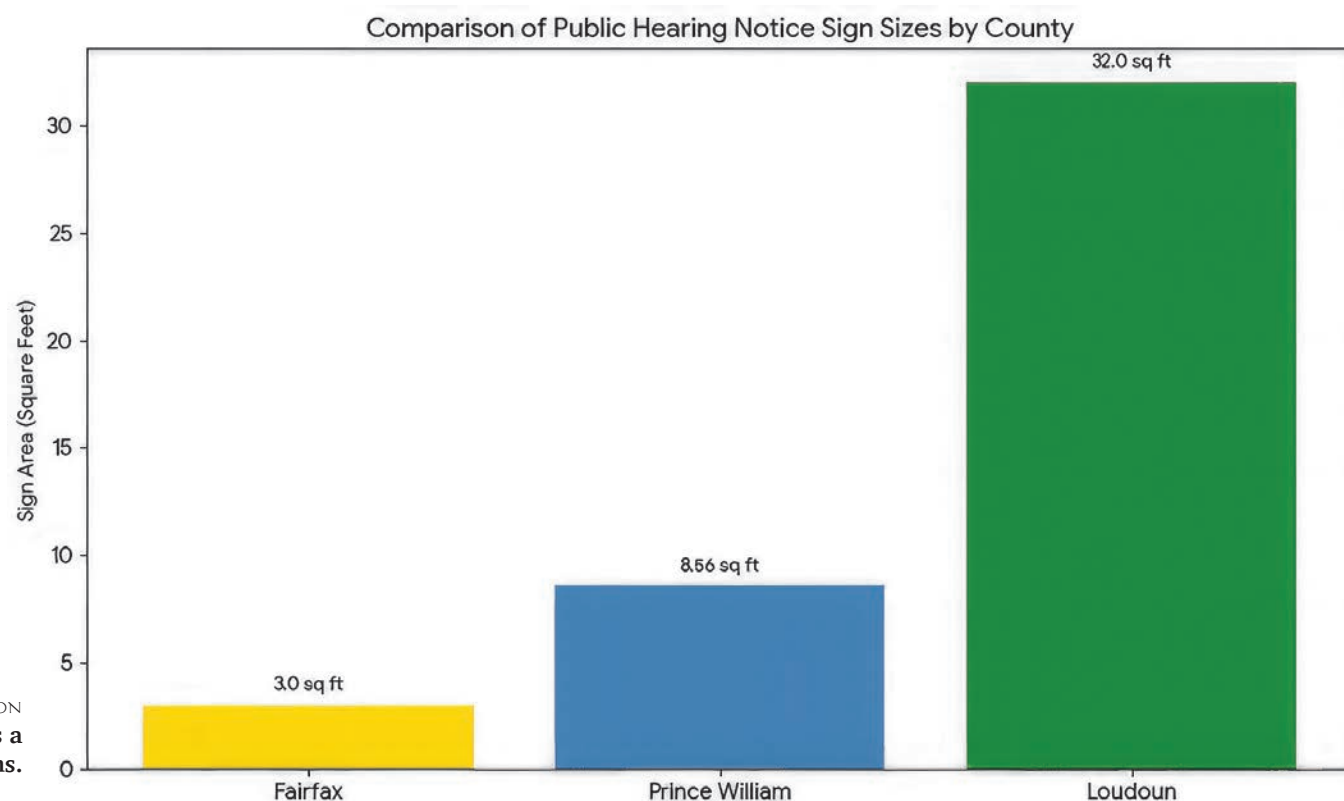
Jim Hart: “Nobody in their car, even if they came to a full stop, could get any meaningful information from a sign like this, other than something apparently is happening, at the government center, sometime.”



Lewis Grimm, vice president of the Sully District Council, says Fairfax County’s public notice signs are a topic of interest and concern to many residents.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

GRAPH BY THE CONNECTION
The bar graph displays a comparison of public notice signs.



Fairfax Public Notice Signs Face Scrutiny

Community leaders say a 0.45-second reading window leaves residents in the dark.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

For decades, small yellow 18-by-24-inch public notice signs have been the primary signal of change in Fairfax County neighborhoods — standing as a paper bridge between a developer’s proposal and a resident’s right to know. But as traffic speeds have increased and neighboring jurisdictions have modernized, community leaders warn that Fairfax County’s signs have become “relics of the 20th century” that are physically difficult to read and impossible to understand, limiting knowledge.

Jim Hart, former member of the Fairfax County Board of Zoning Appeals, and Lewis G. Grimm, of the Sully District Council, say the county has failed to keep pace with modern safety standards. The “notice” provided by these signs is often only seconds long. “If notice is part of due process, does this count as notice?” asked Hart. “A lot of staff effort goes into these signs, I guess, but are any neighbors educated about what is happening, absent additional extracurricular effort?”

At 45 miles per hour, a vehicle covers 66 feet per second. Standard text on these signs is readable from only about 30 feet away. This leaves a driver with just 0.45 seconds to process the message, well below the three-second minimum recommended by safety experts for roadside legibility, according to the United States Sign Council.

A case study in confusion, as cited by Hart and Grimm, is the Hickox Winery Application (AF 2025-SU-00003). Hart noted that the information on these signs is physically impossible to read. “Nobody in their car, even if they came to a full stop, could get any meaningful information from a sign like this, other than something apparently is happening at the government center, sometime. There is no safe place for pedestrians there either,” he wrote in an email. He noted that at 45 mph, a motorist would need superhuman vision even to spot the notice, let alone read the fine print. “Are binoculars required? Zipping by at 45 or faster, it is difficult for motorists even to spot the sign.”

While Fairfax County maintains its 18-by-24-inch standard, nearby counties use larger, more readable formats. Fairfax uses plastic or paper signs totaling 3 square feet with no specified height. In contrast, Prince William County mandates 28-by-44-inch boards — 8.5 square feet — positioned between 3-and-6 feet high. Loudoun County permits notifications up to 32 square feet, with a minimum height of 2.5 feet, to ensure legibility.

The City of Atlanta’s Department of City Planning is recognized for its public notice signs. Bold letters — Z for rezoning, V for variance, U for Urban design and T for tree removal — tell drivers what is happening from 100 feet away. Outlets such as Dezeen, Fast Company, and Bloomberg CityLab have featured

the Atlanta signs as a blueprint for 21st-century communication.

In response to concerns, a Fairfax County spokesperson stated its signs are not intended to be a complete information source. “Posted signs are not required as part of the notice and advertising requirements for land use cases in Virginia. ... Fairfax County’s Zoning Ordinance does require signs, as a way to alert the community that a land-use action is under review and to point people to where they can find full details. These yellow signs are not designed to be read in full, from a moving vehicle. Instead, they are one part of a broader notification process that also includes mailed notices, newspaper ads, and online postings,” the spokesperson added.

The county views these signs as “alerts” directing residents to digital platforms, such as the Planning and Land Use System (PLUS). “Residents can access complete information through several channels beyond on-site signage. ... When someone searches for ‘yellow sign’ on the county website, they’re taken directly to a page ... where they can open the Planning and Development Explorer and find the case number, the staff coordinator and a link to PLUS for submission materials and hearing dates,” provided the spokesperson as background information.

Grimm notes this digital-first approach leaves many behind. “The lack of knowledge currently being provided ... limits the role of these impacted communities in deter-



PHOTO COURTESY OF JIM HART

A Fairfax County public notice sign stands on Bull Run Post Office Road during the summer of 2025.

mining which proposals should be supported and which should be opposed.” He added that the challenges of obtaining timely, detailed information have long concerned Sully District residents.

While Fairfax County staff posts this information, the format remains an ongoing issue. “The members of the Sully District Council of Citizens Associations (SDC) and the Joint Sully District Land Use and Transportation Committee (JSDLU&TC) have brought these concerns to both county staff and our local elected representatives for several years and are still awaiting any improvements,”

Grimm said. “There is an old adage to the effect that ‘knowledge is power.’ The lack of knowledge currently being provided to adjacent properties by the county’s development information system limits the role of these impacted communities in determining which proposals should be supported and which should be opposed,” Grimm wrote.

The Sully District Council maintains an independent “Land Use Matrix” to track cases where signs may be hard to read. Residents can also search the PLUS portal for full application details by entering the case number.

COMMUNITY NEWS AT A GLANCE

Capturing the people, places, and businesses of Fairfax County

Life in Fairfax County can be viewed through a steady rhythm of diverse stories that define its residents, businesses, organizations and government. Compiled and written by Mercia Hobson, staff reporter for The Connection Newspapers

Submit items for consideration to mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com and include up to two photos with captions identifying people from left, their community, a description of the event, and credit lines as appropriate.



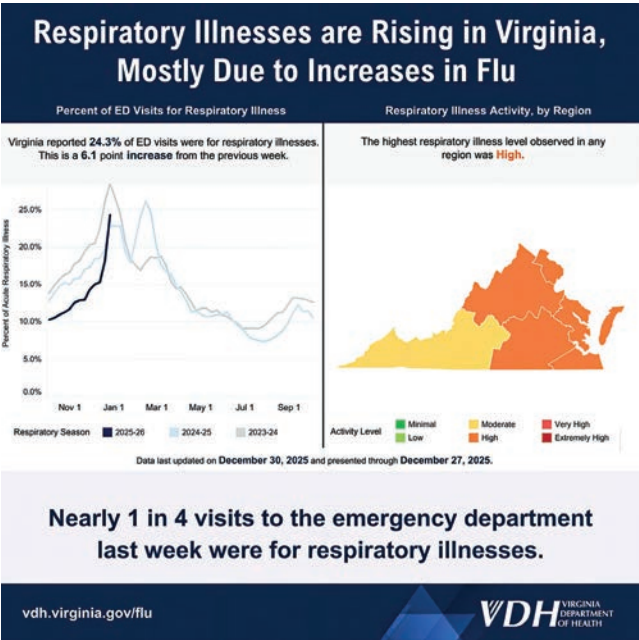
Vienna Town Council Sworn In:

Vienna's 2026 Town Council stands together after being sworn in by Hon. Steve Shannon, Councilmembers Doug Francis, Jessica Ramakis, Dann Nash, Howard Springsteen, Mayor Linda Colbert, Councilmembers Roy Baldwin, Chuck Anderson, Town Clerk Shelley Kozlowski, Town Attorney Steve Briglia and Town Manager Mercury Payton.



Goodbye Love Sign:

Dozens of local dignitaries and community members pose for a photo next to the temporary LOVE sign near the Vienna Town Green on Jan. 4, 2026, during a special ceremony to commemorate the nation's 250th anniversary year. Jan. 5 marked the final day in for visitors in Vienna to see the iconic LOVE sign at the Memorial Fountain before it travels to its next destination in Virginia



Respiratory Update:

The Fairfax Health District reports that respiratory illness activity has hit a new high and warns residents of a new "subclade K" variant of H3N2 influenza strain spreading in the region. The current 2025-2026 flu vaccine is a trivalent vaccine that protects against two Influenza A strains (H1N1 and H3N2) and one Influenza B strain. It's not too late to get your flu shot.

SCREENSHOT
[VDH.VIRGINIA.GOV/EPIDEMIOLOGY/RESPIRATORY-DISEASES](https://vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/respiratory-diseases)



SCREENSHOT

Goatz Sportz Cardz Officially Opens:

Bryan Janick, owner of Goatz Sportz Cardz at 208 Elden St., Ste. 102, in Herndon, helps a customer on the store's official opening day, Jan. 3. Janick launched the business to serve as a local hub for the growing community of trading card and memorabilia enthusiasts in Fairfax County. The shop offers a wide selection of trading cards, sealed boxes, memorabilia, and hobby supplies.



PHOTO COURTESY TOWN OF VIENNA

Vienna 250 Kickoff:

Vienna residents and elected officials, including Councilmember Chuck Anderson dressed as Colonial-era Vienna Resident Col. Charles Broadwater, attend a patriotic bell-ringing event near the Vienna Town Green to commemorate the nation's 250th anniversary year on Jan. 4, 2026. "We're delighted such an enthusiastic crowd turned out to literally ring in the new year during our commemorative ViennaVA250 bell-ringing event," said Vienna Town Councilmember and ViennaVA250 co-chair Chuck Anderson. "Our patriotic theme to commemorate our nation's 250th birth year included a singalong of the 'Star Spangled Banner,' 'My Country 'Tiz of Thee,' and 'Yankee Doodle,' and the event was only one of many commemorative activities we're planning in Vienna for the coming year." More information: www.historicviennainc.org/vienna250.



Fire in Great Falls:

Fairfax County firefighters battle a two-alarm blaze in the 11100 block of Rich Meadow Drive in Great Falls during the early morning hours of Jan. 1. Flames extended from the rear of the home into the attic. Two residents and one firefighter were evaluated for non-life-threatening injuries.

COURTESY OF
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ENTERTAINMENT

\$25,000 BUSINESS GRANTS

APPLICATION OPENS

The City of Fairfax Business Marketing Grant is now live! The submission window is open until February 13. This program awards \$25,000 to at least five Fairfax City owned businesses, providing access to professional marketing services tailored to each business's needs. By pairing businesses with industry experts, the grant helps to boost visibility, competitiveness, and long-term growth. To view more details and how to apply, visit the link: [https://gofairfaxcity.com/business.../incentives-grants\(7\) Facebook](https://gofairfaxcity.com/business.../incentives-grants(7) Facebook)

NOW THRU FEB. 24, 2026

Bernie Boston, A Retrospective Photography Exhibition. At Pleasant Grove Church and McLean Community Center. Presented by McLean Project for the Arts and The Friends of Pleasant Grove. Sponsored by The Friends of Historic Pleasant Grove, 8641 Lewinsville Road, McLean. Visit www.historicpleasantgrove.org.

THROUGH JAN. 25

“Into the Woods.” Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. This winter, the Workhouse Arts Center invites the region's media to step inside a theatrical world where fairy tales collide, destinies twist, and classic characters reveal their most unexpected truths. “Into the Woods” brings beloved storybook characters together on a shared quest for meaning, fulfillment, and the elusive “happily ever after.” In this fresh Workhouse interpretation, the Creative Team reimagines the production through a dynamic tabletop-game lens—transforming each character into a questing adventurer with individual missions, intertwining fates, and surprising consequences.

THROUGH FEB. 8

Winter Ice Skating. At National Building Museum 401 F Street, NW, Washington, D.C. This season, the National Building Museum is delighted to welcome back the Winter Skate Spectacular—returning for its second year in an even bigger, better, and brighter form. This one of a kind, indoor synthetic ice-skating experience transforms the Museum's Great Hall into a winter wonderland where visitors of all ages can skate beneath the soaring Corinthian columns. Events will include early hours for younger skaters, themed nights, festive snacks and drinks, and more.

Early Hours

Thursdays – Toddler Time, 11–11:30 am (following Storytime)

Saturdays – Museum Members-Only Skate, 10:30–11:30 am

Sundays – Museum Members-Only Skate, 10:30–11:30 am

Daytime Hours (45-minute skate)

Thursday through Monday, 12–5 pm, skate times are:

Noon–12:45 pm

1–1:45 pm

2–2:45 pm

3–3:45 pm

4–4:45 pm

After-Hours (2-hour skate)

Thursdays and Fridays, 6–8 pm

THURSDAY/JAN. 8

“Pelle the Conqueror” Movie. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. When his wife dies, Lasse (Max von Sydow) takes his 12-year-old son, Pelle, from their home in Sweden to Denmark in search of a better life in this epic 1987 film. PG-13.

JAN. 9 THRU FEB. 1

Passport Music Festival. At Creative Cauldron 127 East Broad Street, Falls Church. DMV's Premier Global Music Series Returns with Folk, Jazz, Soul, and World Fusion Curated by Wammie Award Winners Ken Avis and Lynn Veronneau. This year's series features an eclectic lineup of folk, Latin, jazz, soul, blues, and world music. Sponsored by Ken Trotter, JD Realtor TTR Sotheby's International Re-



Enjoy table tennis at Play Away! Open Games at OFC on Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026.



Curious George: The Golden Meatball can be seen on Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026 at GMU Center for the Arts in Fairfax.

alty, the festival provides an intimate setting for audiences to experience legendary “guitar heroes,” international touring acts, and rising stars from the DMV area and beyond.

Week 1: Guitar Heroes and Roots Legends

❖ Fri, Jan 09 (7:30 pm): Dave Chappell & Anthony Pirog – A tribute to the “Guitars of the Anacostia Delta” featuring the styles of Danny Gatton and Roy Buchanan.

❖ Sat, Jan 10 (7:30 pm): The Kennedys – The beloved folk-pop duo returns for their annual high-energy, harmony-filled performance.

❖ Sun, Jan 11 (2 pm): The Nighthawks – DC's legendary blues and roots masters, led by harpmaster Mark Wenner.

❖ Sun, Jan 11 (7:30 pm): The Rock-A-Sonics – A high-octane rock-a-billy celebration for Elvis Presley's birthday.

Week 2: Global Alchemy and Soulful Tributes

❖ Fri, Jan 16 (7:30 pm): VERONNEAU – Multilingual “alchemists of cool jazz” featuring vocalist Lynn Veronneau and music from their 2025 chart-topping album Blue Tapestry.

❖ Sat, Jan 17 (7:30 pm): Cecily – The Wammie-winning soul artist celebrates “The Queens of Disco” with a 70s-inspired dance party.

❖ Sun, Jan 18 (2 pm): Blues Alley Youth Orchestra – DC's premier youth jazz ensemble performs Big Band classics and small ensemble arrangements.

❖ Sun, Jan 18 (7:30 pm): Abbie Palmer – A mesmerizing exploration of the harp, spanning Celtic, African, New Age, and Hip-Hop styles.

Week 3: Blues Queens and Heritage Stories

❖ Fri, Jan 23 (7:30 pm): Carly Harvey – “DC's Queen of the Blues” and star of The Voice brings her award-winning stage presence to the Cauldron.

❖ Sat, Jan 24 (7:30 pm): Spyros Koliavasilis – A world music medley blending Greek traditional rebetiko with contemporary ethno-jazz.

❖ Sun, Jan 25 (2 pm): Generations of Vocal Jazz – A unique collaboration between Capital City Voices and the Ballou High School Vocal Ensemble, directed by Alison Crockett and Barry Moton.

❖ Sun, Jan 25 (7:30 pm): Grey Jacks – An exclusive album fan-release concert exploring Americana, roots, and intergenerational storytelling.

Week 4: The Quiet Storm and Mardi Gras Finale

❖ Sat, Jan 31 (7:30 pm): IO The Singer – A soulful tribute to the “Quiet Storm” era, featuring

hits by Sade, Anita Baker, and Marvin Gaye.

❖ Sun, Feb 1 (2 pm): Raymi – The haunting, traditional sounds of the Andes brought to life with Zampoñas and Quenas.

❖ Sun, Feb 1 (7:30 pm): Little Red and the Renegades – A high-energy Mardi Gras closing party featuring Zydeco, New Orleans R&B, and accordion-led grooves.

Tickets for the Passport Music Festival are on sale now at www.creativecauldron.org. Phone: 703-436-9948.

SATURDAY/JAN. 10

Public Hearing for 2026 General Assembly Session. 9 a.m.

At Fairfax County Government Center, Board Auditorium, 12000 Government Center Pkwy, Fairfax. The Fairfax County Delegation to the General Assembly will hold a public hearing for the upcoming 2026 General Assembly session. Fairfax County is assisting with the logistics of the delegation's event. Fairfax County residents and those representing organizations serving Fairfax County residents will have the opportunity to address the Fairfax County Delegation to the General Assembly. Fairfax County residents who want to sign up in advance to speak at the hearing should register online (2026 Fairfax County General Assembly Delegation Pre-session Public Hearing Speaker Registration) or contact the Department of Clerk Services at 703-324-3151, TTY 711, by noon on Thursday, Jan. 8. Residents will also have the opportunity to sign-up on the day of the event.

Saturday/Jan. 10

Play Away! Open Games at OFC. 9 a.m. to

1 p.m. Every Wednesday at 6:30-9 p.m. At The Old Firehouse Center, McLean. Every Wednesday, come enjoy table tennis, arcade games, video games, pool, bridge, mah-jongg, a sensory lab and more at the Old Firehouse! Children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

SUNDAY/JAN. 11

Happy Pop-Up. At Workhouse Arts Center,

www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

ENTERTAINMENT

Lorton. A joy-centered Sunday wellness experience designed for people who are tired of rushing, overcommitting, and ending the weekend more stressed than when it began. This isn't a retreat or a multi-week class. It's a 90-minute reset—intentional joy practices, gentle movement, and meaningful community connection—created for busy parents, couples, neighbors, and professionals who want something nourishing without pressure. The kickoff session is led by: Chianti Lomax, Chief Happiness Curator of The Happy Pop-Up® and author of *Evolving While Black*, and Michael Louis, Head Coach of The Everyday Athlete, brings accessible, grounding movement into the experience. For details, email: carlawelborn@workhousearts.org

THURSDAY/JAN. 13

No More Sugar-Coating: The Truth on Sugar. 6-7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Sugar is all around us. It is the ingredient of celebrations, milestones, love, heartbreak and everything in between. This seminar will provide you with the good, the bad and the truth about sugar to help you make the best decisions for your body.

FRIDAY/JAN. 16

Snowball Dance (5th & 6th graders). 7-9 p.m. At The Old Firehouse Center, McLean. Old Firehouse 5th-6th grader parties are themed and decorated accordingly. Free catered food and beverages will be distributed to participants. Parties feature a DJ, open dance floor and a variety of activities.

SATURDAY/JAN. 17

Dementia Man, An Existential Journey. 2-3:30 p.m. At Chantilly Regional Library, 4000 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly. Dementia Man, An Existential Journey is the fascinating and award-winning autobiographical story of a man who faces his diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease, written and performed by actor and playwright Samuel A. Simon. Register to receive a reminder and not required to attend. Seating is limited and is on a first come, first served basis. Call 703-502-3883 (option 4).

SUNDAY/JAN. 18

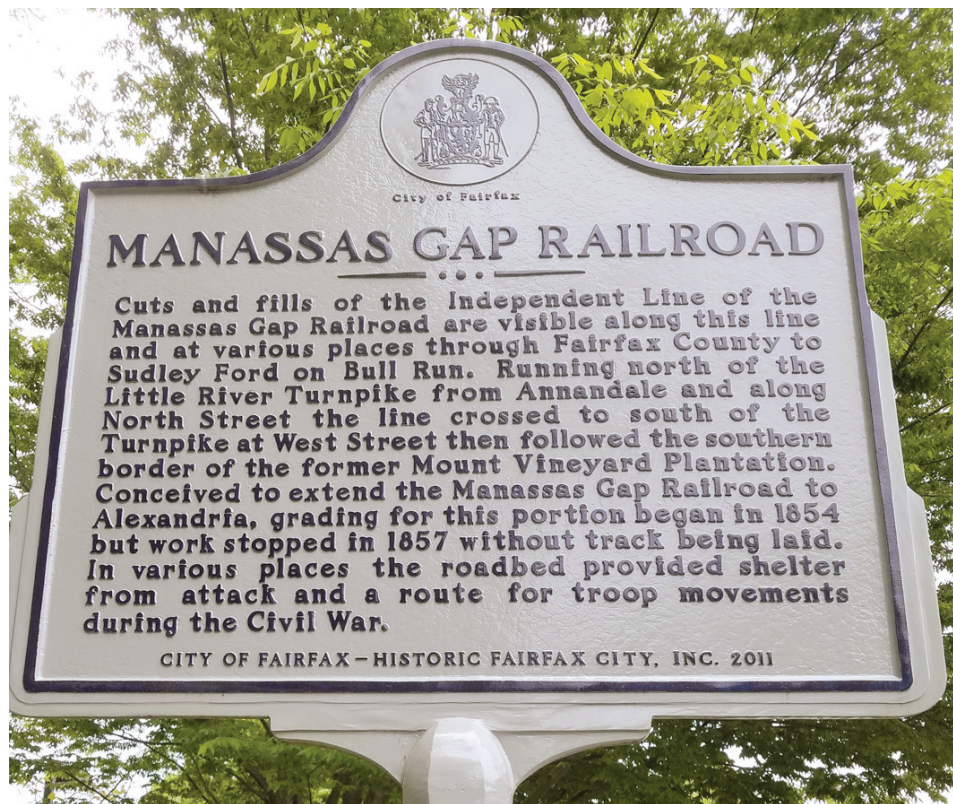
Barron Ryan Trio: "There Arises Light into the Darkness"— 2026 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration. 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Following his triumphant performance here last season, The Alden is proud to welcome back pianist and composer Barron Ryan for a special event featuring the expanded three-part movement of a work originally commissioned by Chamber Music Tulsa for the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre. Inspired by eyewitness accounts of the massacre, Ryan's gorgeous piano, violin and cello trio aim to bring hope to a dark time in history.

MONDAY/JAN. 19

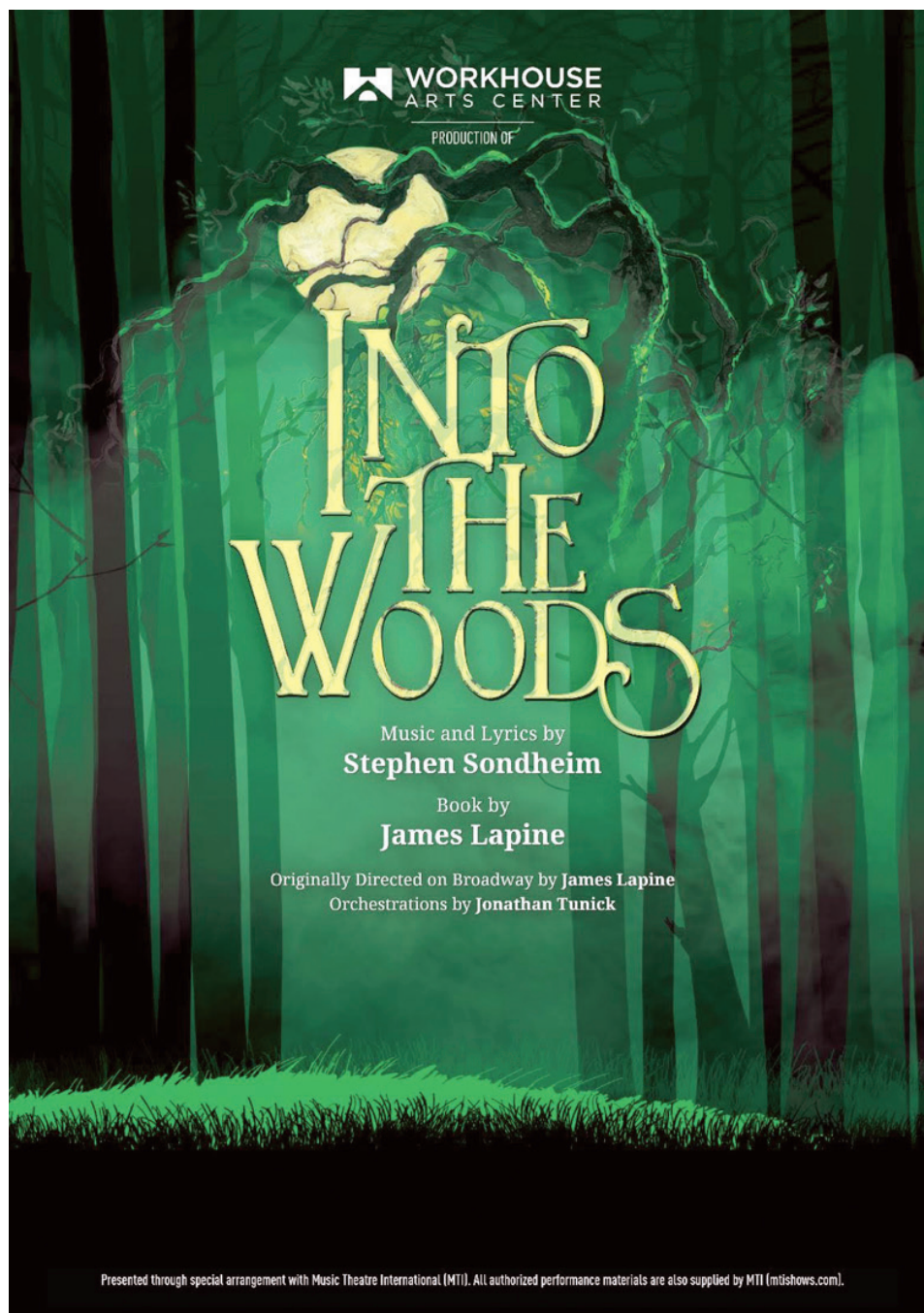
MLK Day of Service — *A Day On, Not a Day Off*. At Northern Virginia Community College, Ernst Community Gymnasium, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Register for one of two volunteer shifts; doors open at 9:00 a.m. Volunteer Fairfax invites families, businesses, and especially youth to unite for an inspiring MLK Day of Service. This event is designed to engage young volunteers in meaningful, hands-on projects that support local nonprofits and neighbors across Northern Virginia. Each child receives a "service bingo" stamp as they complete projects, turning volunteering into an adventure and a lesson in community impact.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 21

Financial Planning: Choosing Your Path to Retirement. 6-7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Presented by Clover Leaf Wealth Strategies, in partnership with McLean Community Center. This seminar provides a comprehensive guide to planning your ideal retirement. Whether you're just starting to save or nearing retirement, this session will help you understand



The Burke Historical Society will meet on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2026 at Pohick Regional Library in Burke.



Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton is staging "Into the Woods" Dec. 20 to Jan. 25, 2026.

key strategies for building and managing your retirement nest egg. Topics include determining your retirement goals, understanding investment options, maximizing employer-sponsored plans and IRAs, managing debt, and protecting your savings. You'll also learn how to evaluate risks, plan for healthcare costs, and create a sustainable income stream. Instructor: Clover Leaf Wealth Strategies.

THURSDAY/JAN. 22

Tech & Cyber Networking and Hiring Event.

11 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Capital One Hall, Tysons Corner. Northern Virginia is one of the nation's most dynamic employment ecosystems. It is home to Fortune 500 companies, fast-growing startups, federal contractors, and research institutions working across a wide range of industries. This event brings together more than 40 employers with thousands of open roles across technical, professional, and mission-focused fields. You will have the opportunity to connect directly with recruiters from organizations such as Amentum, Fairfax County Public Schools, Peraton, Ofinno, Somatus, Systems Planning & Analysis (SPA), Xcelerate Solutions, and many others who value experience, adaptability, and a commitment to meaningful work. Cleared professionals are especially encouraged to attend, and all backgrounds are welcome.

FRIDAY/JAN. 23

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) returns for an exhilarating program of musical masterpieces with violinist and global phenomenon Ray Chen. Under the esteemed direction of Maestro Vasily Petrenko, RPO has cemented its place at the forefront of classical music performance with its unwavering dedication to excellence.

SUNDAY/JAN. 25

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Michael McDonnell will discuss the Manassas Gap Railroad. Incorporated in 1850 but never completed, remnants of the MGRR can still be found around Fairfax County. Email: burkehistoricalsociety@hotmail.com

SUNDAY/JAN. 25

Keyboard Conversations with Jeffrey Siegel: Poetic Tone Pictures. 7 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. In Jeffrey Siegel's next program of Keyboard Conversations, Poetic Tone Pictures features deeply affecting music by Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Debussy, and Ravel, inspired by words and visions. The program will conclude with a short Q&A with the audience.

THURSDAY/JAN. 29

IBS Roadmap: Your Guide to a Better Digestion. 6-7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Presented by Medstar Gastroenterology, in partnership with McLean Community Center. Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a common gastrointestinal disorder that affects 10-15% of Americans. IBS can significantly impact a person's quality of life, but it is manageable through dietary adjustments, stress management, and sometimes medication. Raising awareness about IBS can help those affected seek appropriate care and support. The intention of this to presentation is to provide a brief overview of the symptoms of IBS, how it is diagnosed, and what you can do to manage it.

SATURDAY/JAN. 31

Curious George: The Golden Meatball. 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Monkey around with the mischievous, lovable star of books, movies, and the award-winning PBS television show in this fun-filled musical adventure, Curious George: The Golden Meatball! All-You-Can-Eat Meatball Day comes just once a year and George has been waiting excitedly for the big event. When it arrives, George and his friend Chef

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 15

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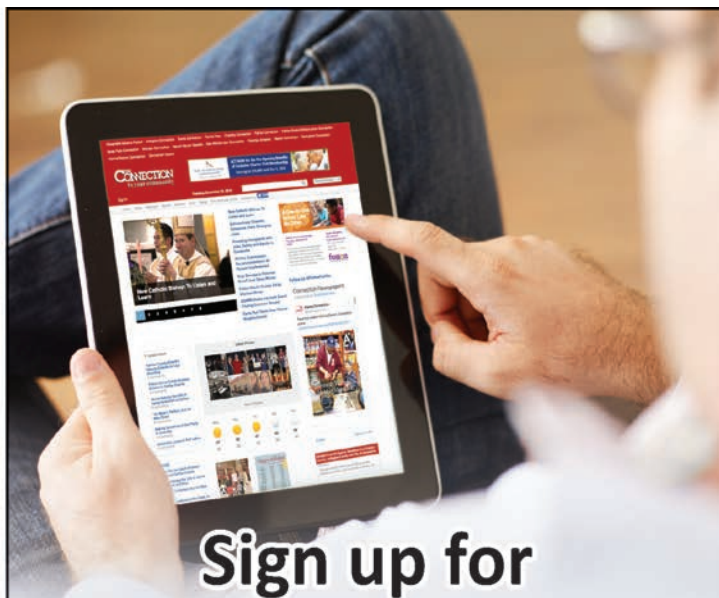
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Hope for the New Year — If We Get Involved

JOHN LOVAAS
INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

Turning the page to this new year seems different. As much as we try we can no longer ignore the effects of news gushing out of Washington like it did in 2025.

2025 kicked off with the inauguration of Donald Trump II. Within weeks, a Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) was created and was dismantling big chunks of several federal agencies. USAID was simply abolished. An estimated 1.1 million feds lost their jobs by November, including about 4,500 in Fairfax County. I know people who lost their jobs and suspect you do as well. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is out rounding up people here, but not as visibly as elsewhere. This is more than concerning to people we know in our neighborhood, especially folks in building and landscaping work.

Yet, we in Virginia have not been hit as hard as elsewhere in the country by brown shirt types of ICE and the Border Patrol, not to mention the National Guard and regular Army. Nor have area universities or governments lost big chunks of funding or otherwise been punished much to date. This may change when Virginia's Trump-compliant Republican Governor leaves office

this month and is replaced by moderately progressive Democrat Abigail Spanberger! I expect Trump will test her with shots across the bow, anything from deep funding cuts to threats of military action. Fortunately for us, Ms. Spanberger, a former CIA operative, is experienced, resilient and not the pushover type Mr. Trump prefers.

I hear a lot of people in our community asking what they can do to push back at the Trump/MAGA regime. They also ask how to get their elected officials, especially Congressman and U.S. Senators to take more effective action to counter often illegal, regularly outrageous deeds. I share their frustration. I'm sorely disappointed that the Democratic Party doesn't speak with a unified opposition voice daily to the daily outrages. Trump controls the narrative, with no response.

I digress. Here are a few suggestions I have for all. First, speak out about your concerns whenever an opportunity arises. We are long past the point where remaining silent is an option if we really care and want to avoid the loss of our democratic values and, indeed, our country. To remain silent is to become complicit, part of the problem instead of a solution.

Second, participate in every rally or protest demonstration you can, and ask your friends to join you. The Indivisibles and No

Kings activities are working very well in Reston, even gaining national and political level recognition.

Third and perhaps most important. Communicate with your representatives, regularly! Here's a litmus test, i.e., regularly visit ICE detention centers. I bring it to Congressman Walkinshaw and Senators Kaine and Warner. The test is something they should do but are not doing. (When I contacted Walkinshaw's office, he had not visited any. Warner had visited one in August-no reports, Kaine staffer "not aware" of any visits.) Residents of Virginia are picked up roughly and stuffed in detention centers, often without proper due process or informing their families!

In fact, my son who teaches special needs kids locally reported that two of his elementary students each had a parent taken by ICE over the Christmas holidays. Our reps should monitor this, going to detention centers and observing how captives are treated. The rep should point out mistreatment or problems to ICE officials AND report them to the media AND to us, constituents. They should then follow-up, revisit and check on corrective actions.

One last thing, you should always thank your representative when they are responsive and take actions you support. A call or note doing so is appreciated.

A Hannukah Miracle



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

No, this will not be a retelling of the legend of the menorah and the Maccabees who, with "one small purse of olive oil" kept their lamp lit for eight days, when they had only enough oil for one. This story will be updated "for your consideration," as Rod Serling used to say to begin the episodes of his "Twilight Zone" television show and whatever "dimensions" he was referring to. The miracle to which I now refer makes this legend hardly worth its holiday association and countless retellings.

It happened on Dec. 18, 2025. I ended up - per my intention, at the new Amazon Marketplace in Silver Spring, Md. It is, for all intents and purpose a supermarket, with a few Amazon touches which are hardly worth mentioning since they are not central to my miracle.

I had selected my items and placed them in my basket as I rolled it around the store until I ended up at the self-checkout area (cash not accepted) to pay for my goods. Naturally, I had to take out my wallet from my right rear pocket to select a credit card. The store was not crowded, and I wasn't the least bit flustered by this task. The register was a bit different than I had become accustomed to. Nonetheless, I figured it out, paid for and bagged up my groceries and then walked to my left to exit the store. Unfortunately, I didn't remember anything more about my wallet. I got to my car where I placed my one bag onto the back seat and then drove on home.

It wasn't until the next afternoon that I realized my wallet was missing. This 'missing' is not so unusual as I've experienced similar misplacements as I've aged into retirement and beyond. After exhausting all possible places in my house and car, I started thinking of places it couldn't or rather shouldn't be: outside the house and car. This exact 'missing' had happened a time or two before and in my retracing of my steps/drive there was a successful ending with wallet and contents remaining exactly where I had inadvertently left them.

As I now recalled that strategy, I had made multiple errand-type stops and realized that Amazon Marketplace was my last stop. In fact, I remembered taking my wallet out of my right rear pocket and laying it across the register's scanning window. A bit unusual, but nothing totally irregular. Moreover, I really can't say I remember placing my wallet back in my pocket. However, over the last 60 years, the number of times I've performed this movement has to be in the thousands. As such, it's become almost like a knee-jerk-type reaction. I have no conscious memory of doing anything with that wallet.

After sorting through my movements, I convinced myself that I had left my wallet at Amazon Marketplace and so I grabbed my car keys and off I drove. Finding the customer service counter, I asked about whether a wallet had been found/turned in since yesterday. The lady manning the window picked up a brown cardboard box and quickly she and I both saw my wallet. I said, "That's it." She grabbed the wallet and took out the driver's license and asked my name and home address. I answered correctly so she returned the wallet to me. Once in my hand I checked for cash and credit cards. All were present and accounted for.

Now that's what I call a miracle.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 15

Pisghetti are ready to cook for a hungry crowd, but their audience is nowhere to be found, lured away by a speedier Meatballs-o-Matic machine. Determined to help his despairing friend, George goes on a mission to enter Chef in the Golden Meatball Contest in Rome, learning along the way about the secret ingredient to cooking!

SATURDAY/FEB. 7

Ping Pong Tournament. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

At Wayne H. Nickum Clifton Town Hall, 12641 Chapel Road, Clifton. All ages and levels of playing experience are welcome at this family-friendly event hosted by the Clifton Betterment Association. Call: 703-968-0740. Visit the website: <https://C25K.redpodium.com/clifton-annual-ping-pong-tournament-2026>. Registration closes at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, February 4. To register online, please click on the link listed in the "Website" box.

SATURDAY/FEB. 7

Mark Morris Dance Group and Music Ensemble Presents Dances to American Music. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. The Mark Morris Dance Group and Music Ensemble returns to the Center for the Arts with Dances to American Music, a vibrant celebration of the rich tapestry of American music and dance. Featuring choreography by the legendary Mark Morris, "undeviating in his devotion to music" (New Yorker), this program highlights music by iconic American composers in a celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 11

"An Evening with Friends" Fundraiser. At



The Old Firehouse Center is holding a Snowball Dance on Friday, Jan. 16, 2026 in McLean.

Red's Table, 11150 South Lakes Dr, Reston. The Friends of Reston invites the community to make Reston your Valentine at the "Evening with Friends" fundraiser, an uplifting celebration of local spirit and generosity taking place Wednesday, February 11, 2026 from 6 - 9 p.m. at Red's Table, Reston's favorite lakeside restaurant. With every dollar raised, this event supports the Reston Association's camp scholarships for underserved youth, free monthly movies for senior citizens and awards scholarships to high school seniors. Guests will enjoy a festive evening featuring a cocktail hour with heavy appetizers, followed by dinner and seasonal Valentine's Day desserts. Two ticket options are available: \$75 for dinner including one beverage of choice or \$100 for dinner with three beverages of choice included. For tickets and information, contact friendsofreston@gmail.com or visit www.friendsofreston.org/events.

FEB. 13-16

Winter Weekend Sale in Middleburg, Va.

Where: Washington St., Pendleton St., Madison St. and Federal St., Middleburg, Va. During the Winter Weekend Sale, visitors will be able to hunt for some wonderful gifts for themselves and others while experiencing

the small-town charm of Middleburg. Many local stores and restaurants will be providing special deals throughout the weekend. Just look for the blue and white balloons outside participating stores! The Winter Weekend Sale will be held Friday, February 13 through Monday, February 16. Business hours for the sale will be Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Sunday - Monday as posted by shops.

FEB. 14-15

Virginia Opera: Intelligence. Saturday, February 14 at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, February 15 at 2 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Virginia Opera presents the state premiere of *Intelligence*, an operatic drama that tells a gripping true story of espionage, sacrifice, and the fight for freedom. Based in Richmond, Virginia, in the shadows of the Civil War, Mary Jane Bowser, an enslaved woman turned operative, joins a Union spy ring, unveiling secrets about the Confederacy and her own identity. Packed with riveting drama, powerful music, and dynamic dance, *Intelligence* will keep you on the edge of your seat. Sung in English with English surtitles.

Virginia Faces Climate Change Risks, GMU Warns

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Across Virginia, temperatures are rising, the state is getting wetter, precipitation is more frequent and extreme, drought is a growing concern and sea level is rising. These are the key findings of a recent, first-of-its-kind assessment of how climate change is impacting Virginia.

The state has been warming since the 18th century, said Dr. Jim Kinter, Director of George Mason University's Center for Ocean-Land-Atmosphere Studies, in a Dec. 12 briefing. He drew this conclusion in part using Thomas Jefferson's meticulous 1776 to 1826 weather logs, records that "raised more questions than answers."

Other conclusions of Virginia Climate Assessment:

Of Virginia's 8.7 million people, more than three million live in "relatively high multi-hazard risk" counties and 1.4 million "socially vulnerable residents face the greatest cascading impacts." Impacts vary by region.

Extreme weather, like floods, heat waves and wildfires, is worsened by the events' longer duration, frequency and severity and bigger temperature swings.

The northern and western parts of the state are most affected by drought, with more flash droughts anticipated. Droughts especially affect water supply, data centers, forestry and agriculture. Data centers' water use rose 63 percent from 2019 to 2023. "In Northern Virginia, drought-induced disruptions to water availability in the Potomac River could reduce economic output by more than \$4.5 billion in just one month," according to the report.

In a follow-up email, Dr. Kinter stressed the urgent need to act because he expects the "negative impacts to become more intense and frequent if global carbon dioxide and methane emissions continue to grow as they have for the past several decades. ... Virginia needs to take bold action within this decade to sharply reduce emissions of these pollutants through programs of both conservation and transition to non-fossil energy sources," he argues. He commends Fairfax County's resiliency plan.

Compounding or over-lapping climate events will bring more

power outages, communication disruptions and threaten air quality, infrastructure and emergency systems.

Heat risk is increasing, creating significant health impacts and healthcare costs. Heat risk is "inequitably distributed," with the elderly and outdoor workers, for example, at high risk.

All areas "are experiencing flash flooding and stream overflows," the study concludes. Spring and fall are getting wetter and the flood risk to housing is rising. Nine percent of Virginia's housing stock, 344,000 homes, is already at substantial risk. Flood insurance premiums could rise 45 percent, according to the report.

Warming and increased precipitation will continue through the middle to late 21st century.

All economic sectors and natural systems face more exposure because of climate change.

Northern Virginia

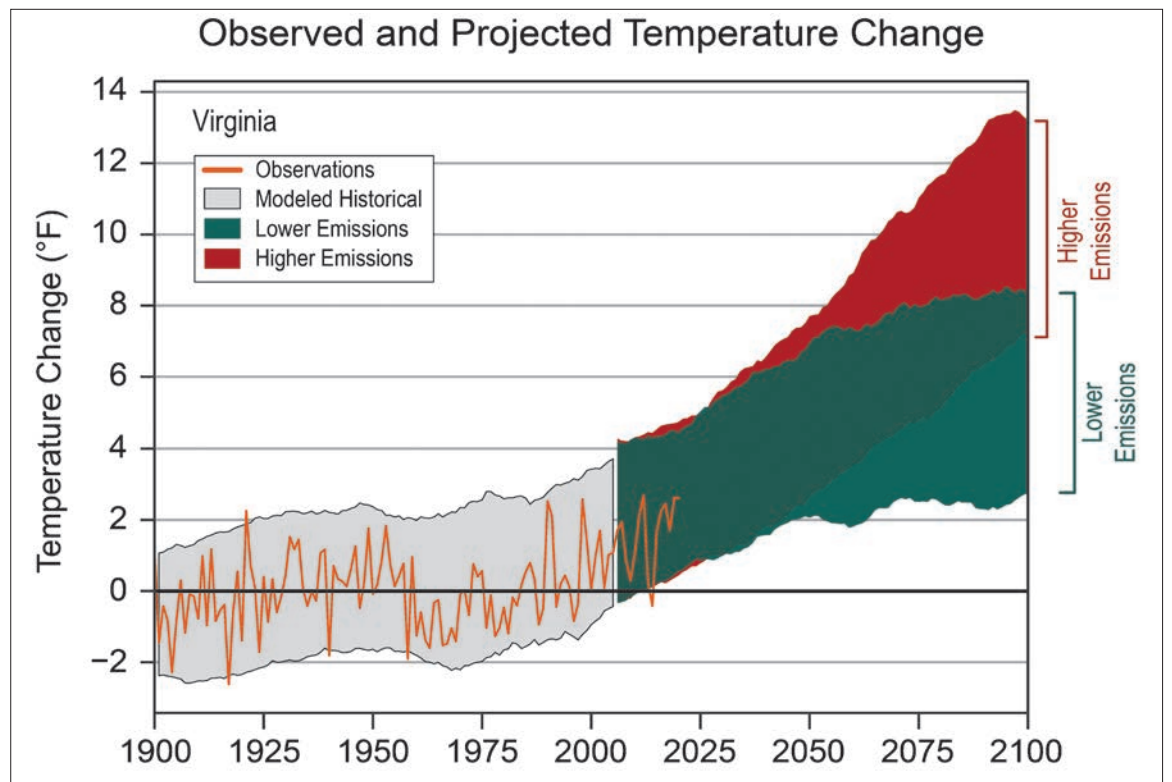
"Compound flooding" is already affecting Northern Virginia, the report maintains, "caused by the interaction of precipitation, storm surge, tides and riverine overflow" in the Potomac River corridor.

One of Northern Virginia's vulnerabilities is aging stormwater infrastructure, with some systems a century or more old. The study includes a photo of flooded Alexandria streets during concurrent high tides and rain.

The assessment singles out as a "credible and growing concern" Northern Virginia's concentration of data centers as being at "emerging risk" and cites data centers in California and the United Kingdom overheating and shutting down from power failures during heat waves. "Northern Virginia, home to the world's largest concentration of data centers, with 13 percent of global data center capacity, has seen outages and is increasingly exposed to flash floods, extreme heat and grid strain," notes the report.

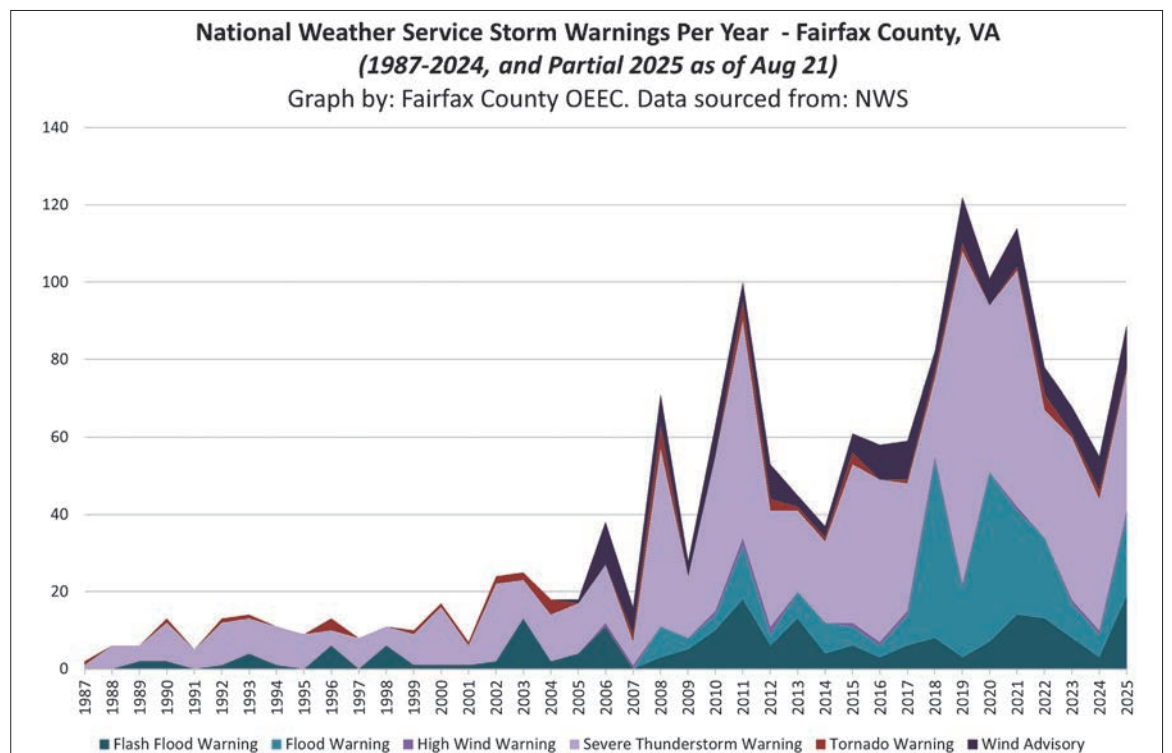
Federal agencies and contractors could face "disruption of mobility" and telecommunications. "Tidal flooding and storm surge at Naval Station Norfolk, the world's largest naval base, threatens military readiness," the report warns.

"Northern Virginia's economic output, based in government and data infrastructure, depends on continuous access to high-functioning transportation and facility



NOAA TECHNICAL REPORT NESDIS149-VA. NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION. <https://statesummaries.ncics.org/chapter/va/>

Observed and Projected Temperature Change Changes (relative to 1901–1960 average) in observed statewide average mean annual air temperature for Virginia (1900–2020), and projected temperatures (2006–2100) under uncontrolled (higher) and optimistic (lower) global greenhouse gas emissions pathways. Shading reflects confidence around observed and projected temperatures.



PROVIDED BY ALLISON HOMER (FAIRFAX COUNTY OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY COORDINATION)

Examples of flooding in Fairfax County, VA, showing A) a swift-water rescue, B) transportation infrastructure failure due to flooding, and C) the increasing trends of flash flooding, thunderstorms, tornadoes, and other related weather events over the past nearly four decades.

operations," the report contends. "Flash floods in 2019 and 2021 overwhelmed parts of Fairfax County, shutting down arterial roadways and temporarily closing government buildings, demonstrating an instance where a localized event threatened government functions."

Global Warming Emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions in Virginia peaked in 2005 and declined by about 26 percent in 2023, according to U.S. Energy Information Administration data. Dr. Kinter attributes the drop to converting some electricity generation from coal to natural gas since "natural

gas combustion emits about half as much greenhouse gases as coal combustion." The EIA data does not reflect Virginia's 2020 Clean Economy Act effects.

A State Climate Office?

Dr. Kinter advocated for a state climate office to collect and analyze data, conduct assessments and recommend solutions, noting that Virginia is one of only two states without one. George Mason is "willing to host it," he said, and will again ask the state legislature to fund a state climate office.

A Landmark Study

The science-based assessment

is the first of its kind establishing a baseline for measuring future changes. Unlike national and global analyses which examine broad climate trends, this study focuses on regional impacts in Virginia.

The 90-page study reflects the work of 26 authors, eight institutions and over 300 articles, coordinated by GMU professors. GMU plans future reports with finer-scale geographic details, sector impacts and "adaptation effectiveness."

For more, see <https://www.gmu.edu/news/2025-11/george-masons-virginia-climate-center-releases-first-ever-statewide-climate-assessment>

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