

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

JANUARY 22, 2026



PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



The group gathers on the Stone Bridge on the GWM Parkway every Thursday at 4 p.m.

Locals Stage Weekly Stone Bridge Protests

BY GLENDA BOOTH
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

It was a nippy 33 degrees at 4 p.m. on Jan. 15 as the sun set, but 17 bundled-up stalwarts braved the cold on the Stone Bridge on the south George Washington Memorial Parkway to express their worries about their country. With homemade signs, original banners, American flags and a paper maché Donald Trump sporting a bright red tie, the demonstrators waved for an hour to rush hour drivers whizzing by. Many commuters waved, honked, flashed headlights and fist pumped – and occasionally one gave a middle-finger “salute.”

Lisa Finn, a lead organizer, said that the group chose the parkway bridge because Stone Bridge Resistance is a Mount Vernon-area, miscellaneous, word-of-mouth

SEE LOCALS SATGE, PAGE 15



PHOTO BY LISA FINN

One member of the group designed special pins.



Their homemade signs send messages.



The paper mache Donald Trump is an attention-getter.

BABS BECKWITH SELLS OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA



209 South Saint Asaph St
\$4,110,000



1103 Prince Street
\$1,620,000



416 Duke Street*
\$3,600,000



13 Wilkes Street
\$1,725,000



9 Franklin Street
\$1,240,000



319 South Union Street*
\$2,485,000



713 South Union Street*
\$2,500,000



717 South Royal Street
\$1,175,000



404 Oronoco Street
\$1,390,000



421 Oronoco Street
\$1,403,500



306 South Union Street*
\$2,700,000



103 Franklin Street
\$1,695,000



5 Pioneer Mill Way #501
\$4,400,000



5 Pioneer Mill Way #402
\$4,420,000



621 North Saint Asaph Street #405
\$1,255,000

This is just a sampling of some of Babs’ sold 2025 properties.
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PHOTOS BY HUNTLEY MEADOWS PARK PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

The otters are not easy to spot around Huntley Meadows.

Otters Spotted in Huntley Meadows Park

By Mike Salmon
Mount Vernon Gazette

The photographers roaming around Huntley Meadows Park have spotted some otters who have made this estuary in Mount Vernon their home for some time. They've been spotted mainly hanging out under the log and around the corner from "the point" (so viewable only from the top of the watch tower).

Viewers have spotted the "bubble trail" they leave in the water, a good way to distinguish them from the beavers as well, who typically swim mainly on the surface of the water only submerging occasionally.

The otters at Huntley Meadows are the Northern River Otter, a species that's common in Virginia, says the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. They are found all over the state but "are most abundant in food-rich coastal ar-

eas and the lower part of streams and rivers," the VDWS said.

At one time, this species was endangered particularly in the western part of Virginia because their stream clearing habits conflicted with landowners, so the officials stepped in and repopulated the species.

In 1988, 17 river otters were relocated to Virginia from Louisiana and the species rebounded. In 1990, they were taken off the state endangered list.



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/GAZETTE

This is one of five speed humps along this short stretch of Newington Road.

Resident Voices and Outreach Result in Traffic Calming Measures in Newington

By Mike Salmon
Mount Vernon Gazette

For years the residents along Newington Road in southern Fairfax County have complained about the speeding traffic and lack of sidewalks along this narrow, accident-prone road until finally the activism paid off. The result is a set of speed bumps that act as traffic calming measures, showing the power of citizen involvement in Fairfax County.

"Based on available options in our site visit, FCDOT is ready to propose four speed humps and one speed table along Newington Road," said Ryan O'Carroll from the Fairfax County Department of Transportation at the first community meeting on April 10, 2025. Diego Rodriguez Cabrera from Supervisor Dan Storck's (D-Mount Vernon) office attended the meeting as well.

It was late 2025 before the crews came out to lay asphalt and put up lighted signs, but the residents are happy for now even though they still think sidewalks are the way to go.

The transportation planners at the Fairfax County Department of Transportation and the Virginia Department of Transportation know this road is ripe for transportation and pedestrian improvements but it's not that easy.

The county staff report, dated Oct. 22, 2015, points out "poor sight distances, no pedestrian facilities, lanes that are too narrow," so the report from more than 10 years ago reflects the fact that work needs to be done.

"Fairfax County Department of Transportation staff recommends that planned transportation improvements for Newington Road, between Cinder Bed Road and Telegraph Road, not be removed from the Fairfax County Transportation Plan Map and Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan," but also notes that there are no solid plans and no funding available at that point.

Fast forward about 10 years, after countless meetings and multiple cars flipping over into the drainage ditches but now the speed bumps are there and the average speeds along this connector road are lower.

As with other neighborhood improvement projects, the neighbors involved created a website and laid out their wishes, followed by a petition signed by about 100 residents. "This page was developed by neighbors on and around Newington Road who want a safer, healthier, and more accessible community for everyone. It will be updated and maintained until Fairfax County builds a sidewalk on Newington Road," it said on the website, although there was no response to a recent email to the site creator. The humps and speed tables are not a sidewalk but a compromise.

In this same area where Cinder Bed Road hits Newington Road, there is currently an intersection improvement project going on, and this includes a traffic signal. Transportation planners are expecting this to be operational in the coming weeks.

New Trail Proposed for Gum Springs

Trail and overlook would give access to Little Hunting Creek.

By Glenda C. Booth
Mount Vernon Gazette

The Gum Springs community will have a new pedestrian and bicycle trail to Little Hunting Creek if the Fairfax County Park Authority's (FCPA) plans proceed as outlined in a Jan. 13 public meeting.

The paved, 642-foot trail will be six feet wide and extend from the 23-acre, Mount Vernon-area Martin Luther King Jr. Park parking lot to the creek and wetland. The park is bordered on the south by Little Hunting Creek, a freshwater, tidal creek and wetland with headwaters in Huntley Meadows Park. The creek flows under U.S. 1 southeast to the Potomac River and experiences tidal effects two to three miles upstream from the river.

Around 44 percent of the park is developed with a baseball field, swimming pool, playground and tennis courts. The remaining areas have upland forests, a floodplain forest and several freshwater tidal wetland communities, according to FCPA.

At the meeting of 30 in-person and 12 online, park staffers presented preliminary trail design plans which will end with an eight-foot-wide boardwalk, a ten-by-twelve-foot observation platform overlooking the creek and interpretive signage.

Responding to a question, staff said there are no final decisions on lighting. Betsy Martin, president of the Friends of Little Hunting Creek, discouraged lighting because it "interferes with wildlife."

Asked how trash and discarded fishing line will be managed, the staffers said that the county may install signs and invited recommendations. Since 2002, Friends of Little Hunting Creek (FOLHC) has conducted annual trash cleanups in the creek, typically collecting items like plastic bottles, tires and shopping carts.

Responding to Hollin Hall resident Dorothy Keogh on her fishing line concerns, one official said that fishing will not be allowed and that the platform will not be "at the water's edge."

The Park Authority surveyed 99 trees greater than six inches in diameter within 50 feet of the trail centerline and removed one damaged by a storm. According to Andrew Grabel, Public Information Officer, "While some brush and small growth may be removed, we do not anticipate that any other trees greater than six inches will need to be."

A Different Name?

Linda Hollis, a descendant of West Ford, Gum Springs community's founder, asked if the trail could be named for Ford, since it might be on land he owned. FCPA will consider that suggestion, staff said.

Queenie Cox asked if the trail will have public access points other than the design's entrance, such as backyards. FCPA's Section Manager Tom McFarland answered that the design has "the connection from the parking lot only." Cox is the Lead Advisor for the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

View of the site.



The new trail will lead to Little Hunting Creek and expanded access to nature.



Rendering of plans for a viewing platform that would be accessed from the new trail and provide access to nature for Gum Springs.

Gum Springs Homeowners Organization.

Asked to comment on the trail's importance, Cox said, "Water access from MLK Park to Little Hunting Creek and a recreational trail are important to Gum Springs because it protects and preserves natural spaces, encourages healthy outdoor activities, educates people to local history and fulfills a longstanding commitment made by Fairfax County to the Gum Springs community more than four decades ago."

She clarified that the county's committed to develop the Little Hunting Creek Stream Valley Park as "part of the approved 1979

Gum Springs Neighborhood Improvement Program and budgeted for \$160,000."

Schedule, Funds

Trail planning began in 2022, project manager Ken Trinh explained and FCPA held a public meeting in November 2023. FCPA is now preparing the final design, determining the total cost and securing funding and will seek permits and construction bids.

The start of construction depends on permitting, weather and seasonal permit restrictions, according to Grabel. Permitting could take a year or more.

"Water access from MLK Park to Little Hunting Creek and a recreational trail are important to Gum Springs because it protects and preserves natural spaces, encourages healthy outdoor activities, educates people to local history and fulfills a longstanding commitment made by Fairfax County to the Gum Springs community."

— Queenie Cox

Site Surveys

The archaeology report says, "Artifacts recovered from the fill horizon included primarily post 1907/1910 automatic bottle machine glass shards, several hard paste porcelain ceramic and tile shards and a few quartz and quartzite flakes. Only one post-1910 bottle glass shard was recovered ... and one rhyolite flake ... No new archeological sites were recorded." The report recommends more archeological testing.

SEE NEW TRAIL, PAGE 9

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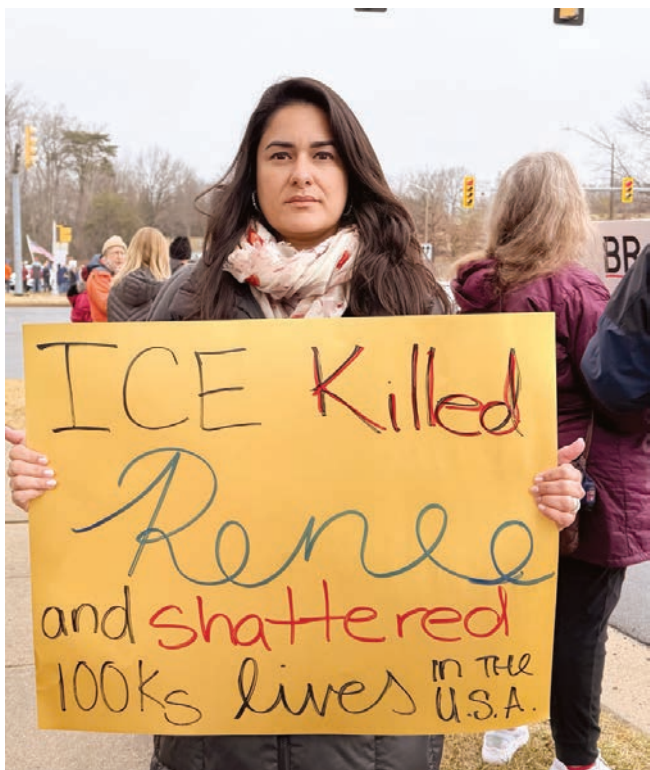
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Carla Bustillos, a first generation American protesting in Kingstowne, expressed her fears for Venezuelans whose TPS status is being withdrawn.



Jessica Tipton (right), joined the "Stop ICE" protest and is part of a community group looking out for neighbors; shown with Marlene Koenig and Norm Hallowell, both of Alexandria.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE GAZETTE
Protestors packed a Braddock overpass on Jan. 6th.

Northern Virginians Protest

'No ICE For Good:' Local demonstrations add to crowds across the U.S.

BY SUSAN LAUME
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

On Jan. 7, many people were caught up in frame by frame analysis of the Minneapolis ICE shooting that killed Renee Nicole Good. Compounded by the ICE shooting of two citizens in Portland Oregon, more than 1,000 protests erupted across the country during the weekend of Jan. 10-11.

Locally, Fairfax Indivisible, In-

divisible of Franconia, and others, acted quickly to hold rallies, including the "Stop ICE Now Rapid Response Rally" in Kingstowne on Jan. 9, and "Stop ICE For Good" rally in Annandale on Jan. 11. Many other area protests opposing ICE activities added to the hundreds of events in Minneapolis and around the country as tens of thousands took to the streets in "ICE Out for Good" demonstrations.

Indivisible of Franconia organizers described their rally as a

"response to the Jan. 7 killing of Renee Nicole Good in Minneapolis by an ICE agent, and in support of protests in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and nationwide against ICE, the Department of Homeland Security and the Trump administration."

Co-leader Erica Soroha said, "The shooting death of Renee Good, an unarmed citizen, is the latest tragedy caused by the unlawful practices of ICE. Officers of the law are supposed to protect the public. ICE is a danger to the public."

Kingstowne Rally

Protestors who turned out described the urgency they felt to show up and speak out against "the horrific actions being perpetrated in communities across the country."

Brittany Wolf of Alexandria said, "It's absolutely unacceptable that ICE is terrorizing our communities; it's domestic terrorism."

Jessica Tipton of Alexandria was protesting "for a lot of reasons; primarily because of the way ICE

threatens communities and neighbors. It's dehumanizing. It has done nothing to make us safer, as they are claiming, and put everyone in danger; immigrants and citizens. I'm part of a community group that looks out for our neighbors."

Carla Bustillos of Alexandria, a first generation American whose family is from Venezuela, got tearful as she spoke. She was thinking about her extended family member

SEE 'NO ICE FOR GOOD', PAGE 7



PHOTO IS COURTESY OFFICE OF U.S. REP. WALKINSHAW

Congressman James Walkinshaw speaks with protestors in Vienna.



Indivisible of Franconia leader Erica Sorohan answers questions for network media at Kingstowne rally.

'No ICE For Good:' Local Demonstrations

FROM PAGE 6

who was here under legal Temporary Protected Status, but left the U.S. out of fear of that status's withdrawal. She said she "is sad and frightened for Venezuelan and Cuban immigrants who escaped high cost and taxes, poor conditions, and even persecution in their countries, only to find State-based terrorism and the mandate of Trump's administration to terrorize communities and break the soul of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants." She shared, as a mom of three, she identified with Renee Good. "Local protest is so important; neighbors showing up to say, 'it's not okay.'"

Bonnie Pacheco of Burke, Susan Brown of Springfield and Mary Kringer of Fairfax Station came to protest together, and not for the first time. Brown said, "There have been any number of good reasons [for protesting] but the murder of Renee Good takes it a further overstep out of bounds. People need to speak up."

Nancy Mellito of Burke, [holding a facsimile of the Statue of Liberty] said, "We didn't put her up to put up with this. ... I stand with Lady Liberty!"

Annandale Rally

Many places in the county attracted people



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE GAZETTE

Meredith Hedrick, a returned Peace Corps volunteer came to the Annandale rally to be with like-minded people.

ple who described wanting to respond to the Renee Good tragedy, and also to be joyous in the company of other like-minded people

SEE 'NO ICE FOR GOOD', PAGE 16

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Virginia Department of Transportation

Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
HIGHLAND	10249	250	HIGHLAND TPKE (ROUTE 250)	TRIB BULLPASTURE RIVER	12/23/2025
FRANKLIN	7920	713	POWER DAM ROAD 713	220 BP	12/11/2025

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit vdot.virginia.gov and navigate to Traffic and Travel/For freight operators/Truck restrictions. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov or the Load Rating Program Manager, Manjil Devkota at 804-786-4064.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730 or corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov.

A Farewell Revisited

Gerry Hyland's wise words, a year after his death.

BY CHRISTIANE GIGI HYLAND
MOUNT VERNON RESIDENT

January 19th marks the one-year anniversary of the death of my dad, former Mount Vernon Supervisor, Gerry Hyland. We, his family, miss his vibrant wit, wisdom, and larger than life personality so much.

I decided to share these words, not as a maudlin reminder of his death, but as inspiration. You see, in going through my dad's things, I found a treasure trove of his thoughts, musings, and perspective on life. We're in a new year and elected officials at all levels – city, county, state, and federal – are getting back to the business of government after the holiday break.

In December 2015, my dad offered

"farewell remarks" when he retired from public service. His words were originally published in the Mount Vernon Voice for the week of December 16-30, 2015. I share them again now as a gentle reminder, wise counsel, and (my words) a bit of a kick in the ass to all of our elected officials from their former colleague, my dad, Gerry Hyland, a true servant leader.

"As I conclude my term as your Mount Vernon District Supervisor, I just want to say thank you to all the people who have made the last 28 years the most memorable and rewarding experience of my life. It is an honor and privilege to have represented you on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Shortly after I announced my intent to not seek elected office again, the National Association of

Counties, an organization I have been involved with my entire elected career, asked me to deliver the benediction at their conference in February. These words sum up my philosophy of service. I hope they will be a guide for every elected official as they try to do the right thing for those they serve.

"Dear God, You have blessed each of us with the opportunity, the privilege, and the obligation to represent our constituents because each of us proclaimed that we cared about others, and we most certainly do. You have allowed us to be called public servants and our masters are the people in our own communities who have entrusted us to make their lives better. Give us the knowledge and the insight to recognize the problems and the needs of all people, young and old,

affluent and poor, making no distinction among persons because of their religion or race; give us the patience to listen before we speak; and give us the ability to work with all persons notwithstanding their political affiliation and even those with whom we disagree or just don't like.

'Help us to never forget how much people depend upon each of us as their court of last resort to solve their problems and to make government work for their best interest. Finally, give us the courage to fight for what is right, the willingness to ask the hard questions and demand answers and be satisfied only when we know – and they know – we have done our very best. It is only with Your help that we may do these things. In God's name we say, 'Amen!'"

Sen. Ebbin's Introduced Legislation

Ebbin will resign his Senate seat to serve in the Spanberger Administration.

BY ADAM EBBIN

Congratulations to Delegate Elizabeth Bennett-Parker on winning the Democratic nomination for State Senate District 39 yesterday. I'm proud of the progress we have made, and I know that with Elizabeth in the Senate, we can continue on that record of progress. Please mark your calendar for the general Special Election on Feb. 10.

I also wanted to update you on my legislative agenda for the 2026 session. I have introduced legislation to:

- ❖ Amend the Constitution of Virginia to protect marriage equality
- ❖ Amend the Virginia Human Rights Act, to ensure that all com-

panies with six or more employees do not discriminate in employment and to allow government employees to also file discrimination claims

- ❖ Ban ghost guns
- ❖ Ban the carrying of assault weapons in public

❖ Provide for random inspections of vape retailers to make sure they are not selling to people under 21 years old

❖ Require data center operators to provide more information when applying for siting

❖ Increase the length of unemployment benefits

❖ Increase weekly unemploy-



Adam Ebbin

ment benefits

❖ Require that the proposed agenda for a public body's meeting be posted on the official government website

❖ Remove the remaining three Confederate statues from Richmond's Capitol Square

❖ Prohibit landlords from requiring a tenant to pay a fee for repairs

❖ Add Virginia to the National Popular Vote Compact, which would bring the country closer to establishing a national popular vote for President.

❖ Clarifying what a fantasy sports contest is and closes loopholes where a person can currently

bet 'against the house.'

❖ Help fund the transportation needs across the Commonwealth — informed from the Northern Virginia Growing Needs of Public Transit Joint Subcommittee that I chaired over the last two years

❖ Prevent scammers from ripping off Veterans applying for benefits

❖ Allow Arlington County the flexibility to increase its resources and capacity for tourism promotion

❖ Give localities the option to provide a preference in procurement decisions to local firms

❖ See that the privacy of all lottery winners is shielded.

Thanks for the honor to serve you in the Senate.

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event. Or email to calendar@connectionnewspapers.com

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance

League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.

STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2018-19

school year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers in 6 Northern Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551- 2488, or donaudre@alnv.org.

Volunteer Drivers Needed. Drivers needed by the American Cancer Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern Virginia. To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to cancer.org/drive.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of

Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403- 5360. To learn more about RSVP visit www.rsvpnova.org.

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A Connection Newspaper





PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

FCPA invited comments and questions at their Jan. 13 meeting.

Trail and Overlook Would Give Access to Little Hunting Creek

FROM PAGE 4

A 2023 survey documents multiple plant species in the area, like white oaks, sweetgums, winterberry shrubs, silky dogwood and wetland plants like pickerelweed and bulrush and one rare plant.

“Even though Little Hunting Creek runs through residential neighborhoods, there is very little public access, almost no place where people can sit and look at the water and watch wildlife. We think the creek should provide recreation and respite for all and the

FOLHC has worked to improve access from nearby neighborhoods,” Martin emailed.

FCPA is accepting public comments until February 13 at Park-mail@fairfaxcounty.gov or at <https://engage.fairfaxcounty.gov/fcpa-mlkjr>.



This turtle in the wetland plants of Little Hunting Creek is an example of the wildlife people may see from the overlook.



Pickerelweed, which has a purple flower, is a common plant in Virginia's freshwater, tidal wetlands in the warm months.

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New Governor Stresses Unity at Inauguration

Spirits soar as Abigail Spanberger, Virginia's first woman governor, is sworn in.



Inauguration attendees appreciated the free seat pads distributed to help alleviate the cold metal bleacher seats.



Virginia and U.S. flags fluttered in the chilly wind that whipped across Capitol Square.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Under a slate gray sky and a 46-degree chill, the gates opened at 11 a.m. at Virginia's state Capitol in Richmond and people started squeezing in and filling the metal bleachers. At 11:30 a.m., as the inauguration-goers shivered in misty showers, an announcer said, "Our meteorologists tell me that the rain will stop at an important time, 12 noon." Sure enough, it did and House of Delegates speaker Don Scott formally began the inauguration of Virginia's 75th and first woman governor, Abigail Davis Spanberger.

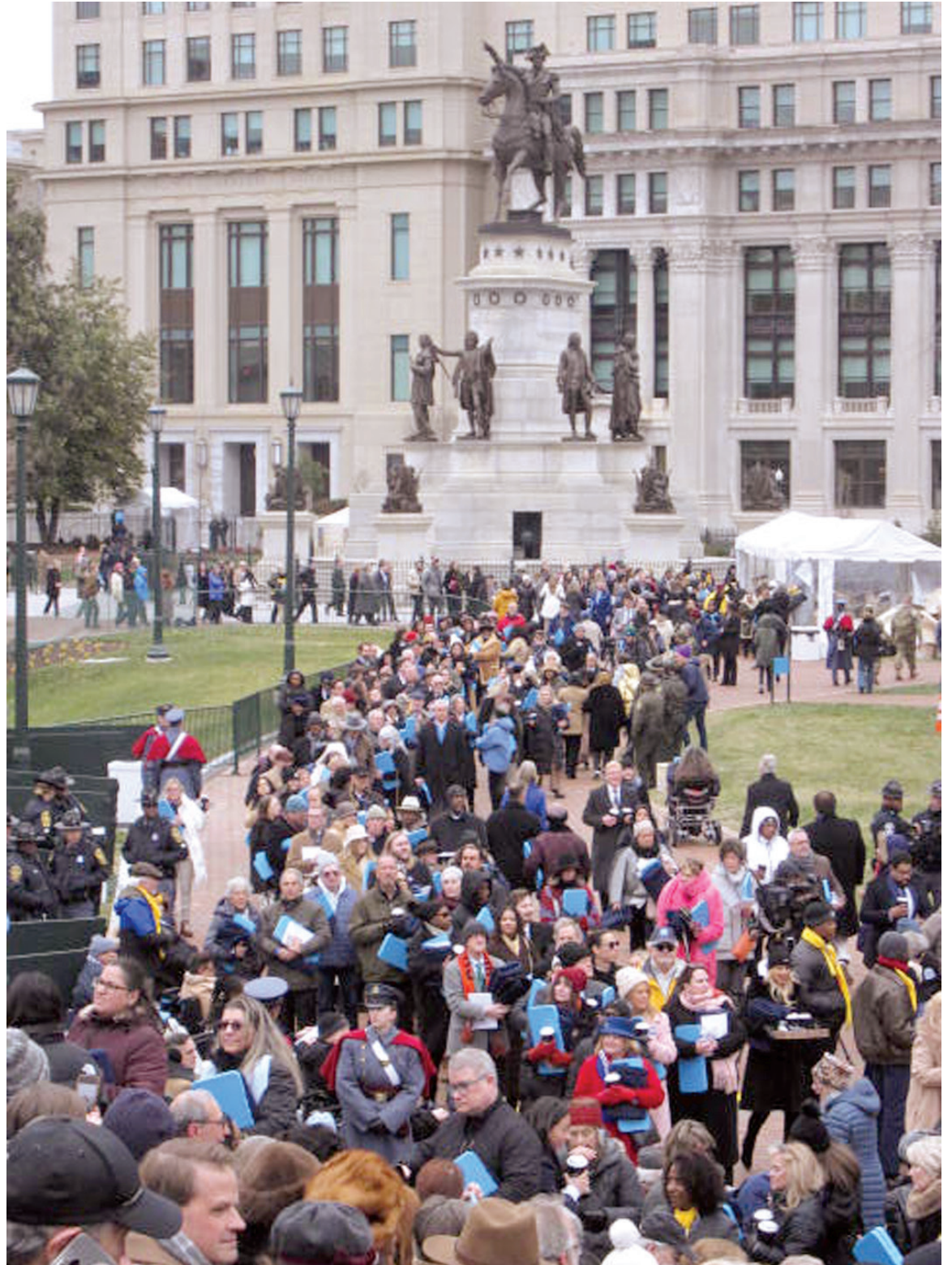
Overcoming division and seeking unity became the theme of the day. Father Jim Curran from Norfolk's Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception prayed for God "to unite us, open our eyes to our brothers and sisters and open



Security was all around.

our hearts to those with whom we disagree."

With the imposing state Capitol designed by Thomas Jefferson as a backdrop, the state's three new top elected officials took their oath of office, spouses by their side: Jay Jones, Attorney General; Ghazala



For the 12 noon inauguration, lines started forming around 10 a.m. on 9th Street and Capitol Square, under George Washington's equestrian statue.

"My fellow Virginians, as we set an example for the country, the world, and most importantly, our children, let us: Choose to stand united. Choose to serve one another. Choose to act together."

— Gov. Abigail Spanberger

Hashmi, Lieutenant Governor; and Abigail Spanberger, Governor. The new, ground-breaking governor is a mother of three, a three-term congresswoman and former Cen-

tral Intelligence Agency officer.

Among the elected officials present were nine former Virginia governors. Spanberger saluted Douglas Wilder, the nation's first African

American governor, waving from several rows back, honoring his 95th birthday that day.

SEE NEW GOVERNOR, PAGE 11
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

New Governor Stresses Unity at Inauguration

FROM PAGE 10

The Governor's Address

Spanberger opened by thanking her parents seated behind her as models of public service, adding

"There's nothing more important than my three daughters," glowing from her stand.

She said the peaceful transfer of power "represents something profound," a tradition begun by a Virginian, George Washington, and called her new position "the honor

of my life."

She quoted Virginia's first governor, Patrick Henry, who warned against divisions in 1799. "Let us not split into factions, which must destroy that union upon which

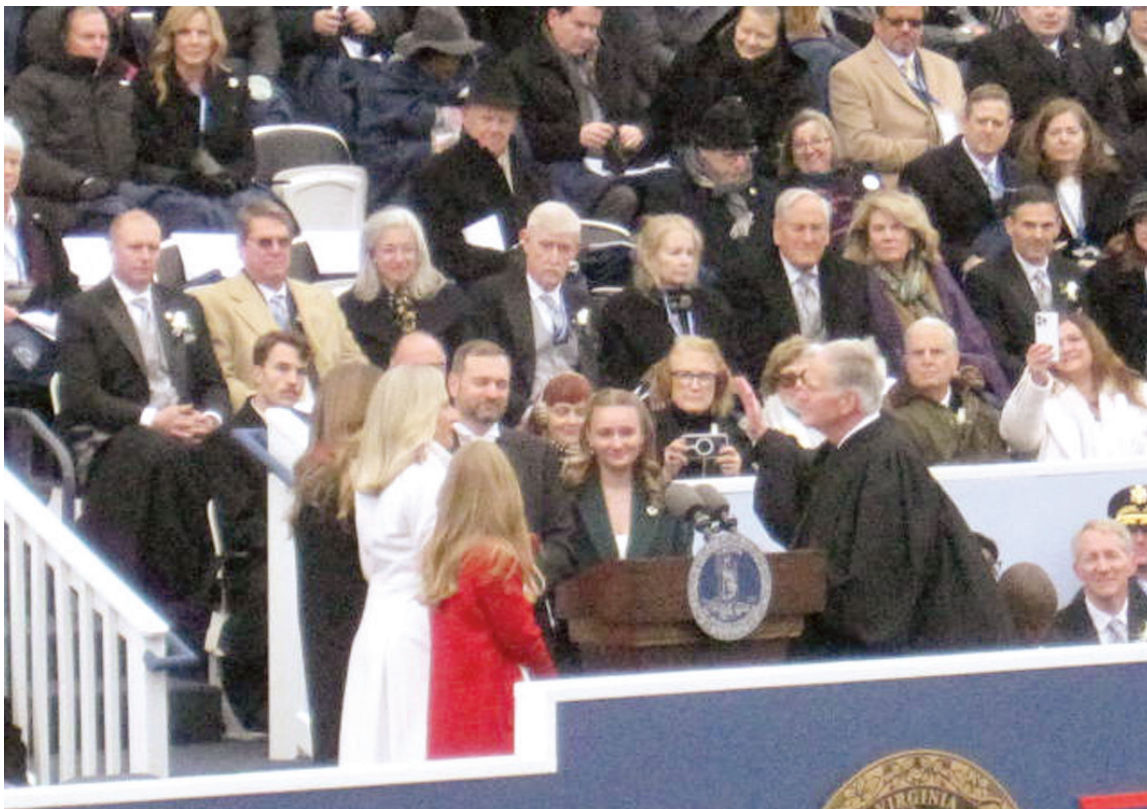
SEE NEW GOVERNOR, PAGE 12



The Spanbergers cheered the paraders.



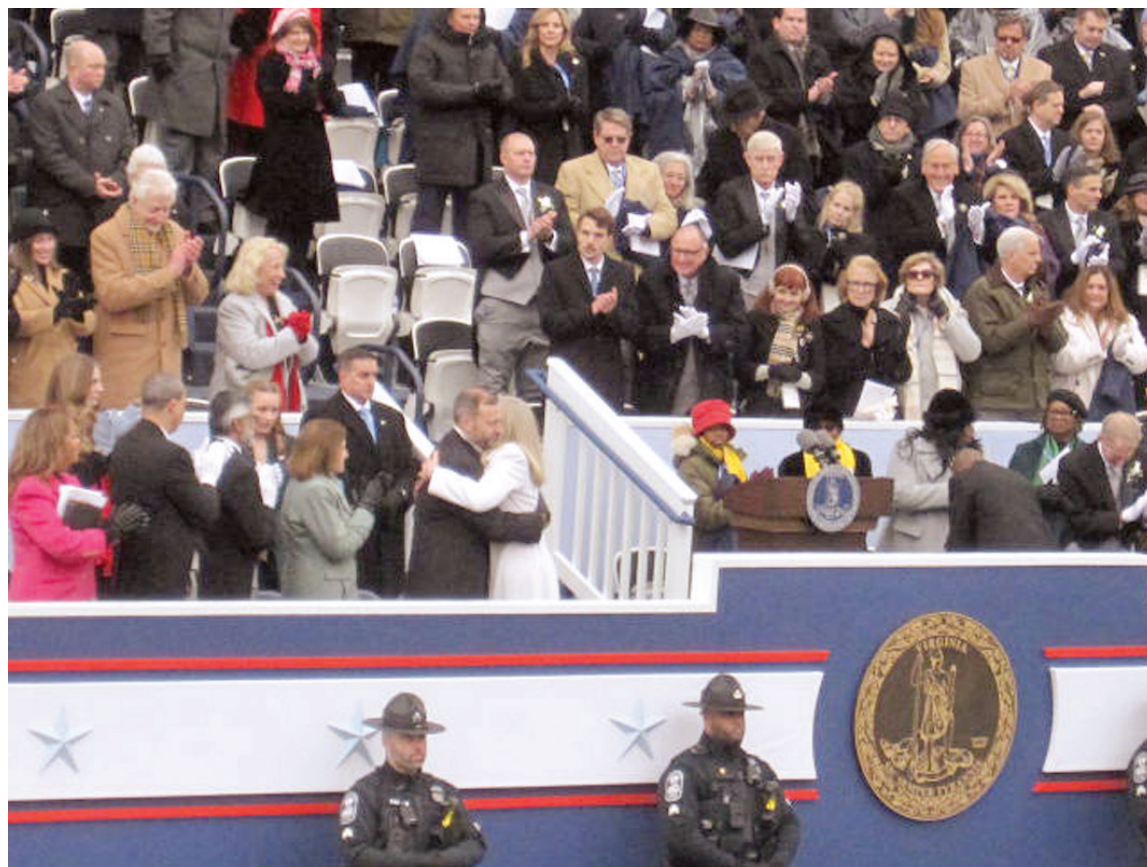
With front row seats, Azhar Rafiq, the new lieutenant governor's husband and Lieutenant Governor Ghazala Hashmi and Adam and Abigail Spanberger enjoyed the parade. The new governor's mother, Eileen Davis had prime seating.



The Honorable William C. Mims, Senior Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia, administered the oath of office to Abigail Spanberger.



Representatives of Virginia's Indigenous people gave and performed the Blessing of the Ground.



Virginia's First Gentleman, Adam Spanberger, and Governor Abigail Spanberger, embrace after the swearing in.

New Governor Stresses Unity at Inauguration

FROM PAGE 11

our existence hangs,' That was the challenge Governor Henry put to Virginia at the close of the 18th century," Spanberger asserted. "And it is the charge we must answer again today. I know that the work of perfecting our democracy has never been finished."

She cited the suffragists' struggle for the right to vote. Wearing white alludes to the suffragists whose efforts paved the way more than 100 years ago. She recalled former Republican Virginia Governor Linwood Holton, who in 1970 stood up to segregationists, and said, "No longer can we be divided into opposing camps of political philosophy."

While recounting chapters of Virginia history, Spanberger said that "today must be about our future and the story we will write together." She challenged attendees to "to fix what isn't working," and without mentioning the U.S. President by name, urged her audience to respond to the "recklessness coming out of Washington," and "an administration that is gilding buildings while schools crumble, breaking the social safety net and sowing fear across our communities — betraying the values of

who we are as Americans, the very values we celebrate here on these steps."

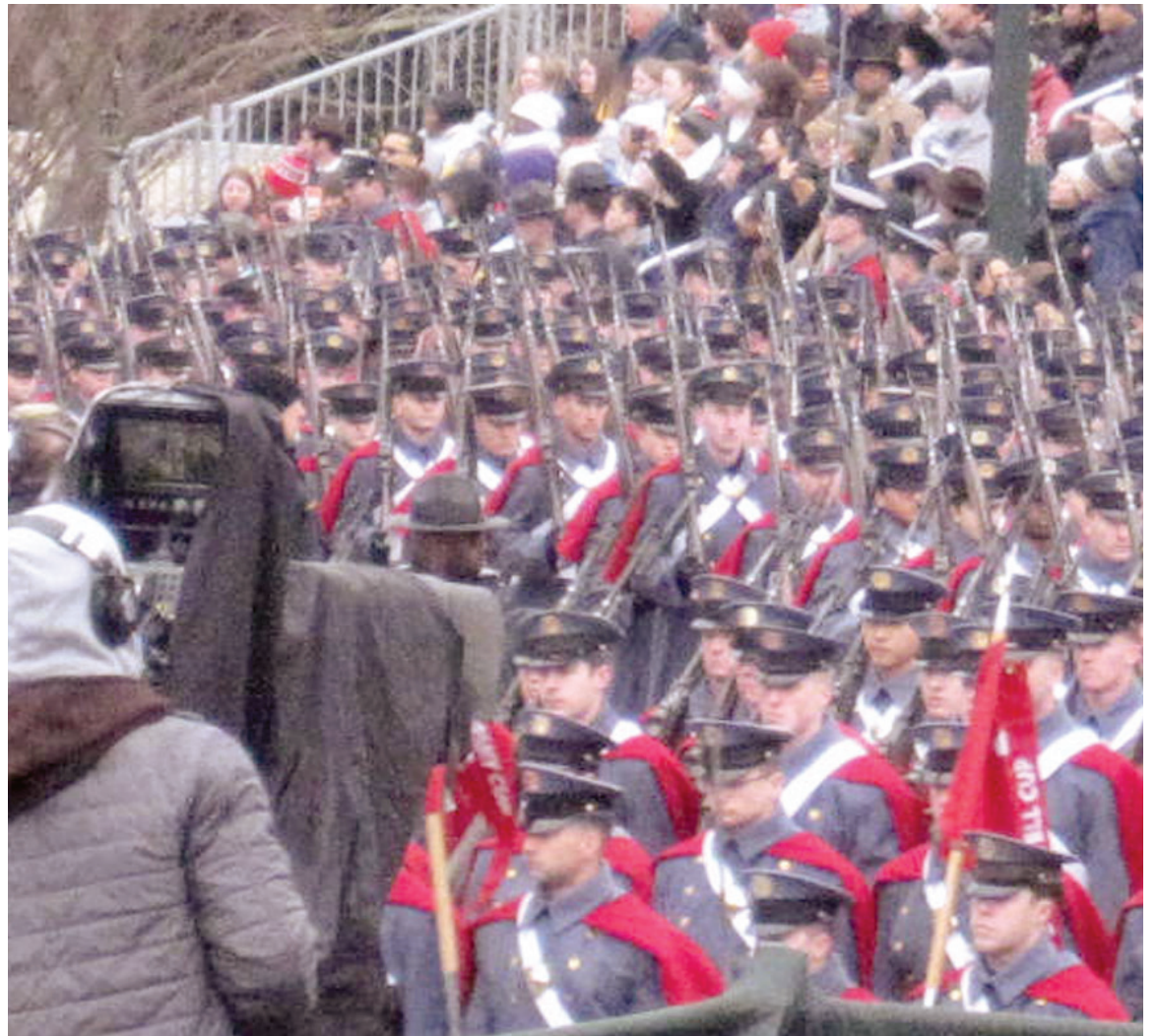
She pledged to help make housing, child care and health care more affordable and make Virginia's "public schools the best in the nation." She promised to stem gun violence. "And in Virginia, our hardworking, law-abiding immigrant neighbors will know that when we say we'll focus on the security and safety of all of our neighbors, we mean them too."

She closed by invoking Dr. Martin Luther King's Pilgrimage of Prayer. "And it gives me cause to reflect on what our path forward must be, not a Pilgrimage of Politics, certainly not a Pilgrimage of Partisanship, but rather a Pilgrimage of Promise, Progress and Prosperity," she said.

"My fellow Virginians, as we set an example for the country, the world, and most importantly, our children, let us: Choose to stand united. Choose to serve one another. Choose to act together," she closed.

Blessings

In his benediction, Dr. Lance D. SEE NEW GOVERNOR, PAGE 13



Virginia Military Institute cadets, 1,500 strong.



A dancer from Richmond's Cultural Center of Indian Bollywood Dancers was one of many examples of the state's diversity.



Virginia Military Institute cadets impressed the crowd.

VIRGINIA'S FIRST WOMAN GOVERNOR

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



Governor Spanberger and Lieutenant Governor Hashmi thoroughly enjoyed the parade.



Attorney General Jay Jones and his wife, Mavis Jones, applauded the parade participants.

New Governor Stresses Unity at Inauguration

FROM PAGE 12

Watson, from Richmond's Saint Paul's Baptist Church, prayed for the "blessings of civility," urging all to "embrace our unity."

In the Blessing of the Ground, a ceremony performed by some of the state's Indigenous people, Chickahominy Chief Stephen R. Adkins invoked the Creator to "heal our land" and "seek peace for all," pointing out that "the blood of our native forefathers stained this very ground and warriors fought to protect the land from tyranny."

Rev. Watson thanked the new governor for "the hope she represents."

In an interview, former Eighth District Congressman Jim Moran echoed that theme, commending Spanberger for "emphasizing common sense government and bipartisan cooperation and for giving a speech inclusive of everyone."

Celebrating Virginia's Diversity

The parade around the Capitol spotlighted the state's diversity, from firefighters to state park rangers, from step dancers to university mascots.

The Virginia Military Institute's 1,500 stern-faced cadets marched in lockstep around the Capitol like a rhythmic, rolling ocean, bagpipes blaring.

Colonial Williamsburg's fifers and drummers recalled Virgin-

ia's pivotal role in the country's independence 250 years ago. Bands, choirs, the Virginia National Guard, Crooked Road fiddlers, India Bollywood dancers and the Hasang Korean School of Dance team delighted the crowd.

When the Girl Scouts paraded by, the announcer quipped, "Governor Spanberger, how many thin mints can we put you down for?"

The new governor was exuberant, clapping, swaying to the music and blowing kisses to parade participants, clearly relishing the day and her new role.

Sartorial Notes

Spanberger wore all white, including white, floor-length, maxi-coat and white gloves.

Spanberger's husband, Adam, wore a formal morning coat, vest and ivory ascot. Male General Assembly members of the Inaugural Committee also wore morning coats, garments that are short in front and long in back with tails, a Virginia tradition.

Several media outlets reported that the Spanbergers will donate their inauguration clothing to Richmond's Valentine Museum, with the First Gentleman's attire displayed alongside former Virginia First Ladies' inaugural gowns.

Given the chilly, showery weather, the Inaugural Committee's free, clear plastic ponchos came in handy. Most inauguration-goers were bundled up in layers of heavy coats, raingear, scarfs, hats and gloves, but spirits soared.



The Hasang Korean School Dance Team from Fairfax invoked flower imagery in their performance.

Canek Aguirre, Alexandria City Councilman.



Children Nearly Hit on the Way to School

Near-Miss Data Exposes Hidden Danger Zones.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

NoVA Families for Safe Streets maintains a “Near Miss Dashboard” that crowdsources data. On Jan. 7, they released the specific and robust, 46-page, Near Miss Report Summary: Child Involved Incidents (Jan 2024-Dec 2025), which identifies hotspots for child pedestrian collisions and dangerous locations. NoVA Families for Safe Streets (FSS) isn’t just counting close calls

in its release and analysis; it is using children’s near-miss reports as impetus for change. The nonprofit organization founded by Mike Doyle, himself a victim of road violence, is feeding the data and thematic analysis to county and local police departments, county boards of supervisors, city and town elected officials, jurisdiction transportation staff and state lawmakers. The mission is to justify stop-sign cameras, redesign dangerous corridors like Richmond Highway, and target school-based safety education. In the long run, Doyle said in an interview with The Connection on Jan. 14., The goal is to turn these reported close calls into a predictive tool to flag where a fatal crash is likely unless something changes.

The 46-page report, “Child-Involved Incidents (Jan. 2024-Dec. 2025),” by NoVA Families for Safe Streets marks the first near-miss report analysis to focus exclusively on child safety across Fairfax County, Alexandria, and Arlington. It organizes the data into meaningful categories — such as infrastructure issues, time-of-day trends, or specific types of traffic conflicts involving children. Authored by Shuo “Ava” Qin, a volunteer data scientist with a master’s degree from Michigan State, the report reviews structured information, such as locations and reported behaviors, alongside unstructured data, such as detailed descriptions, while highlighting hotspots and recurring safety concerns, according to Doyle.

“As we get more data, we’re trying to run correlation of the patterns of our near miss clusters and what’s been reported compared to the patterns of crashes in other



ZOOM CALL

Mike Doyle

er areas, but similar layout, similar structure, and see what type of correlation can we use this data as prediction,” said Doyle.

The nonprofit fills a critical data void by capturing precursors to pedestrian tragedies. Its Near Miss Dashboard documents “ghost” incidents not reported to police. By recording where children and parents swerve or jump back to avoid vehicles, the dashboard could identify high-risk hotspots before a fatal crash occurs.

Mapping the Visibility Gap

The near-miss data involving children will be used after analysis in several ways, including direct advocacy and policymaking. It will be shared with district supervisors, Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT), police and Safe Routes to School coordinators.

Most official reports from VDOT or local police only include incidents involving a crime or physical collision. Since neither occurred, thousands of near-misses went unrecorded until NoVA FSS created its Near Miss Survey app.

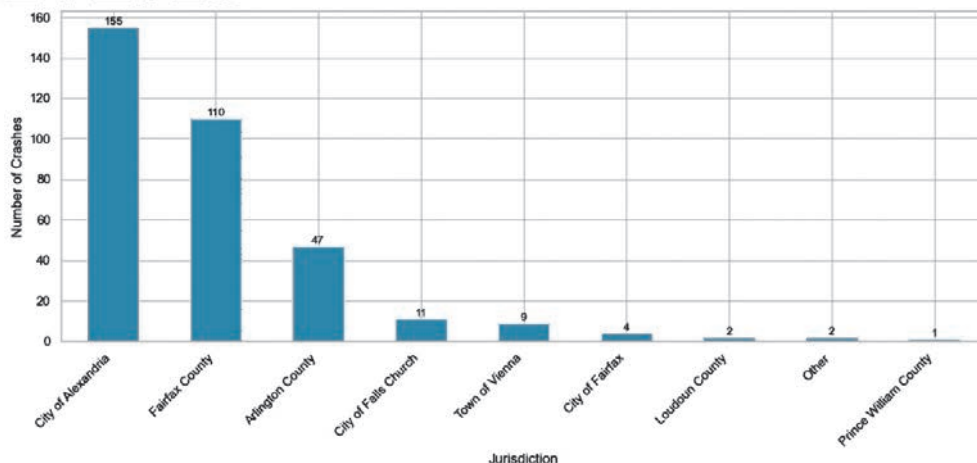
The report gives voice to parents navigating these hazards daily. At one notorious hotspot on Gallows Road near Woodburn Elementary, a resident described the crosswalk as a “death trap,” adding, “Cars do not stop for pedestrians, even when flashing. I will not let my children walk home alone ... It is not safe.”

Newly released report by NOVA Families for Safe Streets fills critical “data void” by capturing the precursors to tragedy.

Regional Hotspots

While Alexandria recorded the highest total volume of child-involved reports in the region, with

Near Miss Reports Involving Children 2024-2025



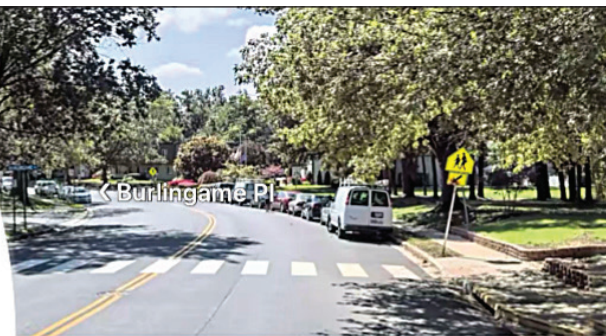
• Child-involved near-miss reports are most frequently reported in Alexandria and Fairfax County, reflecting higher overall near miss reporting activity in these jurisdictions.

NEAR MISS REPORT: CHILD INVOLVED INCIDENTS (JAN 2024-DEC 2025)

The bar graph titled “Near Miss Reports Involving Children 2024-2025” illustrates the frequency and distribution of crowdsourced safety incidents involving minors across Northern Virginia.

Location 5: Seven Woods Dr

- **Number of Reports:** 4
- **Jurisdiction:** Fairfax County
- **Nearby Landmark/School:** Mount Vernon Woods Elementary School
- **Driver Behaviors:** Distracted, failure to yield, speeding
- **Notes:** Poor lighting, cars parked in crosswalk, missing ADA access; dangerous for children.



NEAR MISS REPORT: CHILD INVOLVED INCIDENTS (JAN 2024-DEC 2025)

Community members near Mount Vernon Woods Elementary School report dangerous conditions at Seven Woods Drive and Mariposa Place, citing poor lighting and a need for speed bumps. Residents also noted a lack of crosswalks connecting residential areas to the playground at Seven Woods Drive and Corrida Court, while the existing crosswalk at Fielding Street is often blocked by parked cars, creating an ADA accessibility issue.

155 incidents, Doyle pointed out that Fairfax County is a region-

tion in Alexandria, Hickory Street and Kennedy Street, alone saw 53 reports—the highest concentration in the study.

Most child near-misses occur at legal crossings where drivers fail to yield. Roughly 70% of all reported incidents involve drivers failing to yield at crosswalks or stop signs, rather than children unexpectedly entering the roadway. This danger is highly concentrated during school commute windows, with spikes during morning arrivals and again around

4 p.m. as students head home.

“We have graphs ... bar charts ... it’s in the morning and it’s around four o’clock,” Doyle said. “We turn to the kids and say, ‘What are you doing at that time?’ ‘We’re going to school.’ That’s when it’s most dangerous.”

Built for Speed Not for Students

Doyle said that many high-risk corridors were never designed with children in mind. Roads like Richmond Highway (Route 1),

SEE NEAR-MISS DATA, PAGE 18
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Their homemade signs communicate clearly, succinctly.

Locals Stage Weekly Stone Bridge Protests

FROM PAGE 1

gathering of people who have protested on the bridge every Thursday since June. “It is an icon in our community.” The self-named Stone Bridge Resistance is a Mount Vernon-area, miscellaneous, word-of-mouth gathering of people who have protested on the bridge every Thursday since June. Their signs broadcast messages like “ICE Kills,” “Defend Democracy,” “Demand Accountability” and “Make America America Again.”

Why Do They Do This?

Dolores Brown said, “I’m so concerned about the direction our country is going. All of our institutions are being eroded. Congress is emasculated. The Supreme Court is politicized.”

Steph, who asked that her last name not be published, said, “I spent 25 years in a

military uniform. This isn’t why I served. I served to protect the Constitution, not bend it.”

Beverly Gearing said she shows up every week because she “can’t stand what’s going on against my fellow citizens.”

What’s Gone Wrong?

When asked what they were protesting, Finn reeled off a litany of “so many things.”

“Our democracy is being eroded,” she said. “We are protesting the erosion of due process and free speech, the war in Venezuela, the demise of U.S. Agency for International Development and the total disregard for our federal workers.”

“We are protesting the violation of immigrants’ rights, the attack on science, the attack on truth. We are protesting to remind people that this is not normal and it cannot

be normalized. We are protesting the killing of Renee Nicole Good by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and the terrorizing by ICE agents that is happening to people every day.

“We are protesting what the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is doing to our planet and our health.”

We are protesting what is happening at the National Institutes of Health and the decisions made that have nothing to do with science. We are protesting the rise of fascism in our country after only one year. We are protesting the loss of allies around the world.”

Finn says that the Stone Bridge Resistance is part of a nationwide movement called the Visibility Brigade which originally chose a New Jersey overpass for a protest. “Anyone can show up and be part of us, no dues or

payments required,” Finn said.

The Visibility Brigade targets overpasses, especially during rush hour, and promotes nonviolent messaging in public spaces, according to the Visibility Brigade website.

The organization’s online toolkit recommends crafting one- to-five-word “pointed” phrases so passing drivers can absorb them quickly: “On overpasses, we literally stand over our messages, waving at passing cars, reminding everyday people that they are not alone in these unprecedented times.”

Jasmine Ramirez, a bridge protester who lives nearby said, “I believe it’s important to bring awareness and solidarity in the suburbs. I feel more empowered.”

While their messages may be grim, their spirits were high on Thursday, as they waved their gloved hands and high-fived in the frosty air on that darkening afternoon.



The group made a unique plastic banner that they temporarily hang from the Stone Bridge.

Beetlejuice JR

ACCT brings Broadway musical to the stage.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Beetlejuice JR is a musical that takes the beloved Tim Burton film and cranks up the energy to 11 in the adaptation for youth theater now playing at Aldersgate Church Community Theater.

Beetlejuice JR takes the Broadway hit and tailors it for younger performers and audiences. The show captures the quirky essence of the original while making it accessible and fun for schools and community theaters.

The frightfully funny musical follows Lydia Deetz, a strange and unusual teenager still grieving the loss of her mother and obsessed with the whole “being dead thing.” Lucky for Lydia, she and her father move to a new house haunted by a recently deceased couple and Beetlejuice, a delightful demon with a real zest for life. When Lydia calls on Beetlejuice to scare away anyone with a pulse, this double-crossing specter shows his true stripes, unleashing a (Nether)world of pandemonium.

The humor is sharp, the pacing brisk, and the music retains its catchy, offbeat charm, even in a condensed format.

What stands out most is the balance between comedy and heart. Lydia’s emotional journey adds depth, while Beetlejuice’s outrageous personality keeps the energy high.

From the moment the curtain rises, the show immerses you in a world that’s equal parts spooky, hilarious, and surprisingly heartfelt. The bold set design is constantly shifting to match the manic pace of the story. It feels like stepping into Burton’s imagination, but with a Broadway musical twist.

The music by Eddie Perfect is catchy and clever and is brought to life under the deft musical direction of Michael Barranco. The score blends rock, pop, and traditional musical theater styles. Songs like “Dead Mom” and “Say My Name” stand out for their emo-



PHOTO BY HOWARD SOROOS

The cast of Beetlejuice JR brings the acclaimed Broadway musical to the ACCT stage.

tional depth and witty lyrics, balancing humor with tenderness. The choreography by Michele Koros is dynamic and playful, perfectly complementing the chaotic energy of

newly licensed for youth theater and making its debut in this area. It is funny, poignant, and the music is great. I think children of the ‘80s will especially appreciate it as they remember the original movie.”

What makes Beetlejuice JR more than just a comedy is its heart. Beneath the gags and ghostly antics lies a story about grief, family, and finding your place in the world. Lydia’s arc is poignant, and her relation-

ship with Beetlejuice adds layers of complexity to the narrative.

The talented cast comes from nine schools from across the region.

“This musical drew people from around the area,” said director Julia St. Pierre. “We

have over five different high schools represented and around nine local schools total. We have incredibly talented artists, including the actors, the lighting, scenic, costume, sound, and prop designers. It is so exciting to put together our own vision for Beetlejuice.”

If you’re looking for a musical that’s bold, bizarre, and bursting with personality, Beetlejuice JR delivers. It’s not just a spectacle, it’s a heartfelt, hilarious ride that leaves you grinning long after the final curtain.

Said Katie Dunn, who plays Lydia, “I hope the audience leaves feeling uplifted and with a new outlook on the beauty of life and the people we have around us.”

Beetlejuice JR is playing now through Jan. 25 at Aldersgate Church Community Theater, 1301 Collingwood Road, Alexandria, VA 22308. For tickets or more information visit www.acctonline.org.

“There is something truly magical about watching young actors come together and put on a fabulous show.”

— Beetlejuice JR producer Judi Conti

the titular character.

“I absolutely love theater, and especially youth theater,” said producer Judi Conti. “There is something truly magical about watching young actors come together and put on a fabulous show. Beetlejuice JR is

the aggressions ICE is committing. Because we stand up for our rights as defined by the US Constitution, we wanted to show that we will not be intimidated to speak out. Obviously by the size of the crowd, our neighbors and friends feel the same way.”

Sunday’s Fairfax Indivisible overpass demonstration drew an estimated 400-plus protestors. Clare O’Leary and Debbie Halford, of Annandale, donned frog imagery as part of their resistance message. O’Leary said, “Particularly from the death of Renee Good, I’d rather see reasonable treatment of refugees and immigrant neighbors. Love our neighbors, as ourselves. Immigrants de-

serve a fair application process and rights under the law. All of us, including immigrants.”

Meredith Hedrick, of Annandale, participated with a group of returning Peace Corps volunteer friends. “We wanted to do something to honor our beliefs and values. I’m here to be with other like-minded people. There are times when you have to speak up.”

Ying Smith, of Springfield, used song to share her message, as she walked along the overpass playing her guitar and singing the words of Woody Guthrie’s famous folk song, “This Land Is Your Land.”

Both rallies drew support from cars passing by with horn honking and waves, along with a few negative hand gestures. Fairfax County Police officers maintained an unobtrusive presence as they were deployed across the county and are ready to respond as needed.

FCPD Public Information Officer described recognition of residents’ rights to exercise First Amendment speech and the police role “to facilitate lawful protest activity while maintaining order, managing traffic, responding to emergencies, and addressing safety concerns.”

‘No ICE For Good:’ Local Demonstrations

FROM PAGE 7

who oppose the administration actions on immigration and other issues. Fairfax Indivisible, Falls Church Indivisible, and members of the Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church wanted to provide an outlet for people’s expression.

Marianne Burke of Fairfax Indivisible said, “We were horrified by the tuggish actions committed by ICE agents against immigrants and others in Minneapolis which led to the killing of an American citizen. It was critical that we bear witness immediately to

ENTERTAINMENT

YEAR ROUND ON SATURDAYS

The City of Alexandria's historic Old Town Farmers' Market will temporarily move to the 100 block of North Royal Street and the courtyard at Tavern Square starting on Jan. 10, 2026. The new location is just across the street from Market Square. This move allows the market to keep operating during the upcoming renovations to City Hall and Market Square. The Farmers' Market has operated uninterrupted at Market Square since 1753. Because City Hall and Market Square will undergo major renovations starting in early 2026, the Farmers' Market must move to keep operating during the renovation. The Market Square Garage will also be closed during construction, and the new location provides easier access to nearby parking options. The Market Square Garage will be closed by Jan. 17. After this time, Farmers Market visitors are encouraged to use the Tavern Square garage (418 Cameron St.), which will offer FREE parking on Saturdays from 6:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. There is also parking at nearby Courthouse Square (111 S. Pitt St.). For a full list of parking locations, visit the Parking in Alexandria page. Shoppers can expect the same variety of local produce, baked goods, flowers, meats, dairy, and specialty items from over 70 vendors, now in a more spacious setting. The Market continues to run every Saturday morning from 7 a.m. to noon, year-round, rain or shine.

MEETS EVERY SUNDAY

Bird Walks. 8 a.m. At 6401 George Washington Memorial Parkway, Alexandria. Friends of Dyke Marsh organizers lead bird walks every Sunday morning. Meet at 8 a.m. in the south parking lot of the Belle Haven picnic area. Walks are led by experienced birders and everyone is welcome to join us.

MEETS EVERY MONDAY

Monday Morning Bird Walk. 7 a.m. Meets at 3701 Lockheed Boulevard Alexandria. The Monday Morning Bird Walk is sponsored by the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park and takes place every Monday at 7 a.m. April-September and 8 a.m. October-March. Following the walk, members of the group gather at the nearby Denny's for breakfast and to compile the morning's bird list. Call (703) 768-2525.

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

Wednesday Night Bingo. 7 p.m. At Atlas Brew Works, 2429 Mandeville Lane, Alexandria. The Capital City Showcase, the company that brings you some of the DC area's best events, is hosting an amazing night of everyone's favorite game at Atlas Brew Works Alexandria. Win prizes on every round, and the winner of the final round gets a \$50 Atlas Brew Works gift card for your next visit! There's also \$6 select Atlas drafts! Plus pizza served from the world famous Andy's Pizza! Email at capitalcityshowcase@gmail.com

MGNV PLANT CLINICS ARE OPEN

The Alexandria Old Town Farmer's Market Plant Clinic at 301 King St., Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 7 - 9:30 a.m. Del Ray Farmers Market Plant Clinic at Oxford & Mt. Vernon Avenues, Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 8:30 - 11 a.m. The Arlington Farmers' Market at N. 14th and N. Courthouse Roads, Arlington operates on Saturdays from 8 - 11 a.m. The Fairlington Farmers' Market Plant Clinic at 3308 S. Stafford St., Arlington, operates on Sundays from 9 - 11 a.m.

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

Farmer's Market. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Casa Chirilagua Community Center, 4109 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Experience fresh foods, native plants, artisan crafts, music and community at Four Mile Run Farmers & Artisans Market in the heart of Arlandria outside the Casa Chirilagua Community Center, every Sunday 9-1 p.m.

ONGOING

Revolutionary War Exhibit. At the National

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Celebrate America's 250th Birthday starting now through the summer 2026 in Alexandria.

Museum of the U.S. Army, Alexandria. The National Museum of the United States Army has opened a special exhibition, Call To Arms: The Soldier and the Revolutionary War. The two-year exhibition commemorates this year's 250th Birthday of the U.S. Army and next year's 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. This 5,000 square-foot exhibition features a rare collection, specially curated by the Museum, that includes Revolutionary War artifacts from the original colonies, England, France and Canada. Among the exhibit's highlights are a pair of General George Washington's pistols, the original flag of the 1st Rhode Island Regiment carried by the Army's first African American Soldiers, and a complete Loyalist uniform—one of the rarest items in the collection. The sword of British General Charles Lord Cornwallis, presented to Washington at the surrender at Yorktown, Virginia, will also be displayed for a limited time.

AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY

Starting now through summer 2026, Alexandria will host major events and experiences commemorating America's 250th birthday. Located on the Potomac River just minutes from Washington, D.C. and George Washington's Mount Vernon, Alexandria, Virginia invites families, friends and history-lovers to stay in, explore and commemorate America's 250th birthday in a city older than the United States itself with a dynamic lineup of events and immersive experiences. Learn more and find additional details on these and other events at VisitAlexandria.com/250.

250th Events Itinerary:

- ❖ January 26: Alexandria's America250 Kick-Off Event at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum will feature Historic Alexandria announcing a robust slate of programs, exhibitions and community events commemorating America's 250th in 2026.
- ❖ February 14: The oldest and largest George Washington Birthday Parade in the country will run through George Washington's adopted hometown on the streets of Old Town Alexandria. The theme for the 2026 parade is "Virginia's Son ~ America's Founding Father."
- ❖ March: A new, major exhibit will open at Mount Vernon. Called George Washington: A Revolutionary Life, the exhibit will immerse visitors in Washington's world through recreated spaces, interactive role-playing, lifelike figures and artifacts.
- ❖ March: A new exhibit will open at Gadsby's Tavern Museum highlighting Hannah Griffith,

who ran a coffeehouse there from 1794-1800. The exhibit will explore her resilience during the Revolutionary War, its impact on families and her ties to Alexandria's modern entrepreneurs.

- ❖ May-November: A temporary public art installation from artist Sandy Williams IV will commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence as part of the City of Alexandria's Time & Place public art series.
- ❖ June 12-14: Alexandria's major signature 250th event, Sails on the Potomac, will host iconic tall ships as a Sail Virginia 2026 Affiliate Harbor and will feature a weekend packed with activities including Alexandria Jazz Fest performances.
- ❖ June: A new exhibit will open at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum. Called Stories of U.S. Collections Capture our History, the exhibit will bring out objects from the collection that are seldom seen.
- ❖ July 3-4: Enjoy evening Fourth of July fireworks shows at George Washington's Mount Vernon on July 3 and 4, and a daytime fireworks show on July 4.
- ❖ July 11: Take part in the City of Alexandria's 277th/USA 250th Birthday Celebration complete with fireworks, music and more at Oronoco Bay Park along Alexandria's waterfront.

JAN. 2-31

Toy Stories Art Exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Explores the cultural, emotional, and imaginative world of toys. Celebrate the toys that brought you happiness in your childhood or comfort you with nostalgia as an adult. Opening Reception: Friday, January 2 from 7-9 p.m. Gallery hours are Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits.

THURSDAY/JAN. 22

The Chamber ALX's Professional Women's Network January Coffee & Connections. 8:30 a.m.-9:30 a.m. At Together We Bake, Alexandria. Start 2026 with meaningful connections and inspiring conversation! Join the Professional Women's Network for its first Coffee & Connections of the year, where you'll network with some of the region's most accomplished women (and men)! This quarter, they're thrilled to welcome Tricia Allen, Executive Director of Together We Bake, who will share her powerful journey and the inspiring mission behind an organization that's changing lives.

JAN. 23 TO FEB. 1

Alexandria Restaurant Week. Visitors and locals can explore the flavors of Alexandria's vibrant neighborhoods throughout the city, including Old Town, Old Town North, Del Ray, Carlyle and Eisenhower, Arlandria-Chirilagua and the West End. For 10 days and two weekends, more than 90 restaurants in Alexandria, will offer prix fixe dinner menus at \$35, \$45 or \$55 per person. Find additional special offers at participating fast casual restaurants throughout Alexandria and sample a wide variety of cuisines at every budget. First-time participants in Alexandria Restaurant Week include exciting new additions to the city's dining scene: flavors inspired by Italy and the Mediterranean at Pupatella and Valletta Port, tastes and traditions of Central America at LaPluma Coffee & Wine and a chef-driven menu at Continues Arcade with delicious bites from executive chef Brian Lacayo and chef advisor Spike Mendelsohn that visitors can enjoy while playing vintage arcade games. Look through the digital flipbook of menus at participating restaurants at AlexandriaRestaurantWeek.com.

FEB. 6-28

"Lunar New Year: Year of the Horse" Art Exhibit. Del Ray Artisans presents "Lunar New Year: Year of the Horse" art exhibit celebrating traditions, mythology, and the dynamic symbolism of the horse in the zodiac through diverse interpretations inspired by movements, heritage, and storytelling with an emphasis on cultural respect and authenticity. View at Del Ray Artisans, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Gallery hours: Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

FRIDAY/FEB. 6

The Thirteen Concert. 7:30 p.m. At Virginia Theological Seminary/Immanuel Chapel, 3737 Seminary Road, Alexandria. The Thirteen explores the vocal music of Sergei Rachmaninoff. "Beautiful and grandly mystical... exud[ing] a spiritual force that is deeply moving and restorative" (New York Times), Rachmaninoff's Liturgy exalts the power, beauty, and emotive range of the human voice. This concerto for choir in a symphonic palette has moved audiences for over 100 years with soaring melodies, rich harmonies, and vocal pyrotechnics.

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News

Near-Miss Data Exposes Hidden Danger Zones

FROM PAGE 14

Route 7 and Route 50 were built around “level of service” (LOS) — a standard intended to minimize driver delay — before dense housing and transit-dependent residents populated the areas.

“The infrastructure is designed to [favor] volume, not for multi-user safety,” Doyle said. “The old standard was level of service (LOS) ... how infrequently the drivers have to stop.”

Data Influences Legislation and Prediction

To bridge the gap between close calls and actionable safety data, Doyle relies on a team of highly educated volunteers. This data team is composed primarily of master's-level data science graduate students, alongside experts in other fields and several PhDs he said. These scientists are currently analyzing clusters to turn the survey into a predictive safety tool that identifies where a fatal crash is likely to occur before it happens.

Doyle said he recently testified in support of a stop-sign camera bill for school zones, SB 84 (2026 Session) - Speed safety cameras; stop sign violation monitoring systems, which passed a Senate Transportation Committee on an 11-3 vote.

Fairfax Safe Streets has recorded more than 3,000 near misses, about 70% of which involve drivers failing to yield at crosswalks. He noted the bill would allow these cameras to be installed around schools and added they are studying Richmond Highway to link near misses and crashes to gaps in infrastructure, such as missing sidewalks and poor lighting.

“Near misses,” Doyle said, “raise a level of awareness ... both for the children as well as the parents, the adults.” He added that his team hopes to show that clusters of reported near misses can help predict where serious crashes could occur, but he cautions that they still need more data to make that link statistically. The question now is whether decision-makers in Fairfax, Arlington and Alexandria will act before the next child near miss becomes the next obituary.

Read the 46-page Combined NoVA FSS chapter Near Miss reports - Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets at <https://novasafeststreets.org/combined-nova-fss-chapter-near-miss-reports/>.

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SCREENSHOT

The Braddock District seat on the Fairfax County School Board remains vacant (empty chair at far left) during a board meeting on Saturday, Jan. 10. The vacancy, created by Rachna Sizemore Heizer's December election to the Board of Supervisors, will be filled in a March 3 special election.

Domino Effect of Spanberger's Appointments

Special Elections triggered in NOVA.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

While most Virginians are settling into the new year, voters in Fairfax, Arlington and Alexandria have spent January in a state of constant political motion. Triggered by a domino effect of executive appointments, these special elections are reshaping Northern Virginia's legislative delegation even as the General Assembly begins debating multibillion-dollar budgets and the retail future of cannabis.

Before the Virginia General Assembly convened for its 164th session on Wednesday, Jan. 14, voters in key Northern Virginia districts returned to the polls to navigate a significant shift in power. Gov. Abigail Spanberger (D) reshaped the state's executive branch by appointing veteran lawmakers to her cabinet, triggering a wave of vacancies as former Gov. Glenn Youngkin's (R) administration concluded.

Cabinet and Agency Nominations

Spanberger's nominations included Mark Sickles (D-17) of Fairfax, whom she tapped to serve as secretary of finance, and David Bulova (D-11), the pick for secretary of natural and historic resources. Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-39) will transition from the legislature to the executive branch as a senior adviser, overseeing the 2026 rollout of a retail framework for cannabis sales.

While Spanberger had the authority to nominate her cabinet, those positions were not automatic. Under the Constitution of Virginia, all cabinet secretaries must be formally confirmed by the General Assembly. The process remains a constitutional check, requiring each appointee to submit to committee reviews of their professional qualifications and financial disclosures.

Navigating the Representation Gaps

This created a paradox for Northern Virginia: while the region gained influence within Spanberger's inner circle, thousands of local voters lacked a voice at the State Capitol during the session's critical first days. State officials fast-tracked special elections to minimize this time, but the strategy for managing these vacancies varied by office.

In House District 11, voters elected Gretchen Bulova to succeed her husband David during a special election Jan. 13 — just one day before the opening gavel. In the two-way race, she defeated Republican Adam Wise. Her swearing-in was expedited so she could join the General Assembly immediately as it convened for the start of the 2026 legislative session.

In House District 17, residents in Franconia, Kingstowne and Huntington faced a one-week "representation gap" before their vote Tuesday, Jan. 20. Democrat Garrett McGuire defeated Republican Christopher Cardiff to fill the seat vacated by Sickles. McGuire, who narrowly won a four-way Democratic primary in December, will represent the district as it debates budget amendments and cannabis rollout.

In Senate District 39, Sen. Adam Ebbin delayed his resignation until Feb. 18. This move ensures he can represent his constituents through crossover — the deadline for bills to pass their chamber of origin — before joining the administration. A general special election is set for Feb. 10 to succeed Ebbin. Del. Elizabeth Bennett-Parker won the Democratic primary for this seat in a landslide, capturing 70.6% of the vote. On Feb. 10, she will face Republican nominee Julie Robben Lineberry.

The Domino Pipeline

Northern Virginia's election season may not end in February. Should Bennett-Parker succeed in her bid for the state Senate, her current seat in House District 5 would become vacant, necessitating yet another special election to represent the City of Alexandria. To date, these offices — along with House District 23, where Margaret An-



PHOTO COURTESY OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

Triggered by Gov. Abigail Spanberger tapping veteran lawmakers for her administration, the 2026 Virginia General Assembly session convenes Wednesday, Jan. 14, with two local seats in flux: House District 17 and Senate District 39. Legislative offices in the General Assembly Building (pictured) were filled through special elections to replace representatives departing for cabinet roles.

gela Franklin was elected Jan. 13 to succeed Candi Mundon King — are the only General Assembly seats requiring special elections due to cabinet appointments.

Fairfax County School Board Vacancy

Local gaps extend to the Fairfax County School Board, where a special election is scheduled for March 3 to fill the Braddock District seat left vacant by Rachna Sizemore Heizer's resignation. In the Democratic endorsement caucus held Jan. 10, Tom Danna secured the party's endorsement with 75% of the 2,928 ballots cast. He will face Sandra Davis, an independent candidate. While the seat remains vacant, the school board's three at-large members — Kyle McDaniel, Ryan McElveen and Ilryong Moon — are providing interim assistance to Braddock residents

Who's He Calling Sir?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

It's hardly unique to me or anybody else born into the Baby Boomer Generation, but many of us are seniors now with more being added to the Medicare rolls every day. Nevertheless, knowing that fact doesn't affect what age I feel in my head or what age I truly am. The non-reality is, as Bob Dylan sang on his 1964 album entitled "Another Side of Bob Dylan: 'I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now.' And my life goes merrily along as I continue to delude myself until I see someone that I think is probably older than me holding a door open for me (as but one of many examples) and then adding insult to non-injury, calling me "Sir." You think I'm older than you?! (It's a rhetorical, in-my-head question.) Yes, the answer must be. Otherwise, this door-opener wouldn't be respecting his perceived elders.

Let me juxtapose this age-sensitivity issue with another example, though not one about my presumptive elderly appearance. Years ago, 20 or so, my wife Dina and I went into our local package store to buy some beer and wine. I walked up to the register and placed my items on the counter as we were the only customers paying at that moment. While sort of half turning to my right to grab my wallet from my pants' right rear pocket, I hear the store employee on the other side of the register say: "May I see your driver's license, please?" Turning back toward the counter, and snickering as I say: "Excuse me?" "May I see your driver's license, please?" Laughing some more I ask: "Are you kidding?" He says blah, blah blah, store policy, et cetera. I had stopped listening by this point and knew the inevitable end was near, so I just "chagrined" my shoulders and handed over my driver's license and the stupidity ended. Suffice is to say I was over aged 21, comfortably so.

My takeaway from this exchange was not that I looked pretty good for someone to think I was under aged 21, it was quite the opposite: I sure looked bad for someone who was thought to be aged 21. I wasn't the least bit flattered. Oh contraire. I was more bemused at the question and the requirement that this poor store employee had to follow this presumptive store rule.

Fast forward to the other day when this door was held open for me (and time sure does fast forward - and/or one's perception of time does as one gets older, as confirmed by the AI explanation on Google which refers to the Sept. 10, 2025, issue of Psychology Today to explain our reality). The date of this previous age-related nonsense doesn't seem so long ago because I am older and time has passed quicker - for me. More so than it has for the door holder. Irrespective of the lyrics in this classic - but old, Bob Dylan song, referred to in the opening paragraph. And mostly I can live with the perceptions rolling around in my head. However, it's other people's perceptions/comments that often cause me to pull back the figurative curtain in my head to reveal the truth. This situation conjures "The Wizard of Oz" when Judy Garland and all see the Wizard for what he is: a man with an impressive sound system. And though he does know/guess at some truths, he's not exactly what he makes himself out to be. As for his age, it never comes up. He is simply a man behind a rather large curtain trying to make the best of an unusual situation: life among the Munchkins. For me, it's being someplace I've never been, with a lot less time left than the door-opener has to be there (navigate what's left of my life, cancer issues notwithstanding). And though my life (or what's left of it) isn't a dream or a fantasy, I still find it important to not always believe what I see or hear, especially when it comes to my age. At least, that's what I tell myself, regularly.

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



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