

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

OCTOBER 22, 2026



PHOTOS FROM THE JOANNE GIBBS LYON COLLECTION

"Mount Vernon," the luxury car on the Washington, Alexandria & Mount Vernon Electric Railway. Purchased in 1905 and scheduled for two runs each week, it was reserved for private charters and VIPs.



Wellington Villa Station, originally called Belmont, on the electric railway line to Mount Vernon, circa 1920, where the stone bridge at Alexandria Avenue stands today.

The Mount Vernon Area, Once a 'Streetcar Suburb'

Washington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon Electric Railway

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

In the late 1800s, the Mount Vernon area was mostly "wilderness and farms," Kevin Green told a crowd of 120 that filled the Sherwood Regional Library's meeting room on Oct. 13.

Green is the retired former owner of Belle View Shopping Center's Virginia Florist.

The Mount Vernon Regional Historical Society sponsored the talk titled, "The Historic Route, a Brief History of the Washington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon Electric Railway."

An inter-urban electric rail line, established around 1888, created one of the nation's first "streetcar suburbs," putting the area "on the cutting edge of history," Green said.

Calling it "a business story too," Green walked through the commercial competition to build rail lines in Washington, D.C., and the

suburbs in the late 1800s. Washington got its first electric car in 1889 powered by underground wires.

Honoring the First President

The 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia, the first world's fair held in the United States, intensified the drive to appropriately honor George Washington. Some entrepreneurs wanted to improve travel to Mount Vernon over the ordeal of navigating muddy, country roads.

The Mount Vernon Ladies Association had purchased Mount Vernon in 1860 for \$218,000. "It looked like hell," Green said, and

the organization began the mansion's restoration. Visitors took steamboats from Washington and Alexandria to the estate, an all-day affair and the boats did not sail on Sundays.

In 1892, two companies were chartered to acquire land and build a railway in Alexandria and to Mount Vernon. The route crossed Great Hunting Creek on a trestle, continued south parallel to the Potomac River until around today's Collingwood Road where it turned southwest. Today's Wittington Boulevard in Stratford Landing, a straight thoroughfare, was the trolley route. The tracks then

crossed Little Hunting Creek on a trestle and climbed up to Mount Vernon.

The line opened on Sept. 18, 1892, and had 16 stations between Alexandria and Mount Vernon. Some station names persist today, for example, New Alexandria, Wellington, Dyke, Arcturus, Herbert Springs and Riverside. The railway laid the groundwork for the future George Washington Memorial Parkway which opened in 1932.

River Antics

In the 1890s, "all the sin was on the river, all along the waterfront SEE THE MOUNT VERNON, PAGE 7



Dyke Station, on the marsh, along the Washington, Alexandria & Mount Vernon Electric Railway, circa 1920.



"Dream," one of the many houseboats — dubbed "arks" — that lined Alexandria's Potomac River shoreline at the beginning of the 20th century.

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Gum Springs' Founder, West Ford, Still Inspires

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

It was a chilly 58-degree morning and the coffee cooled off, but the rain stopped and spirits were lifted by the inspiring message of Charles Ross II at the Oct. 17 Gum Springs community's celebration of the skilled tradesmen who helped build a free nation and the pastors of the community. Held outside under tents at the Harvest Assembly Baptist Church, the event was part of Fairfax 250, the county's and country's sesquicentennial.

Ross, a direct descendant of Gum Springs' founder West Ford, came from Norfolk and said, "As a carpenter and tradesman, West Ford helped shape both the physical and social landscape of Gum Springs and beyond. His craftsmanship was more than a profession. It was an expression of ingenuity, hard work, responsibility and commitment to others. He built more than structures. He built opportunity, dignity and hope for his family and for generations to come."

Ross reminded the group that Ford was enslaved, learned to read and write, managed the Mount Vernon plantation and became free in 1805. In 1833, he founded Gum Springs, one of the oldest free Black communities in Virginia. "His vision and leadership shaped the early development of Gum Springs," Ross said, "and left a lasting legacy of empowerment, education and community building."

Ross encouraged all to mentor young people, to "teach a young person how to use a tool safely. Explain why accuracy matters. ... Invite them to observe, practice, ask questions, make mistakes and grow. One hour of patient instruction may awaken a gift that changes a life, strengthens a family and transforms a community."

Queenie Cox, the event's organizer, called Ross's remarks "really beautiful."

Dorothy Johnson told him, "I was really moved by your words."

Pastor Johnnie Abram said he was "excited about how God brings all the people together."

As the group warmed up with fellowship, pastries and egg bites, Ross invoked Ford's spirit, "a spirit that values hard work, integrity, resilience, learning and service. Gum Springs stands today as a testament to the power of that heritage and as a beacon of hope for generations yet to come."

Ross grew up on Long Island, New York, and is a graphic designer and voice-over actor. During almost 16 years in the U.S. Navy, he



Charles Ross II and Minister Dana Carter of the Harvest Assembly Baptist Church



Johnnie L. Abram, Pastor, Harvest Assembly Baptist Church, and Charles Ross II

trained and equipped servicemen and women in air crew survival all over the world and taught these skills at installations like Naval Air Station Patuxent River. Growing up, his family members never mentioned a link to Ford. When he submitted his DNA to Ancestry.com in 2019, his connection to West Ford, "just popped up," to his elation, he said.

A Statue and Walkway

The Gum Springs Homeowners Association has two legacy projects underway, a statue of West Ford designed by Michael Alfano which will stand at the corner of Sherwood Hall Lane and Fordson Road; and a brick walkway between Dumas and Douglas Streets. To help by purchasing a brick, contact info@gscho.org.

Gum Springs is near U. S. 1 in the Mount Vernon District. According to the Fairfax County African American History Inventory, Ford purchased a 214-acre farm there after he was freed by Hannah Bushrod Washington, wife of George Washington's brother,



Queenie Cox gave each attendee a puzzle piece.

John Augustine Washington. "Located close to the Mount Vernon Estate, the community was a sanctuary for freedmen and runaways. Samuel Taylor, a runaway slave, established the first institution in Gum Springs, the Bethlehem Baptist Church. Assisted by Quakers, the first school was established at Bethlehem," the inventory notes.

A 1966 film about the community, titled, "Gum Springs, a Certain Pride," is on YouTube at youtu.be/3UUVGYaYFESg.



A historical marker on Fordson Road honors Ford's legacy.



Harvest Assembly Baptist Church in Gum Springs.



Queenie Cox urged attendees to buy a brick to fund the new walkway and Ford statue.

Connecting with Cops Constructively

Coffee with a cop.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Most people probably want to avoid encounters with the police, but at the Oct. 7 Coffee with a Cop confab at Mount Vernon's new Cuppi Coffee, it was mostly friendly close encounters and amicable chitchat.

There were no sirens, speeches or presentations. "We're here just hanging out, connecting with people," said Brandie Allen, the Mount Vernon Station's Community Outreach Officer for the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD). And connect and chat they did for two hours, as all sampled many enticing coffee choices.

"It's nice to get out, to relate to people on a personal level," said Captain Jonathan Steier, a 13-year FCPD veteran who spent much of his career in investigative work and came aboard the Mount Vernon station in July.

Steier said that violent crime is declining in the Mount Vernon police district, but there's an "uptick" in larceny from unlocked vehicles in both parking lots and home driveways.

He explained that FCPD has many specialty-trained officers who work, for example, on threats and intelligence assessment, child exploitation and crisis negotiation, such as someone barricaded in a home. The protective intelligence officers handle threats and hate language popping up on social media.

One father brought his teenage son to the event to have "mock" encounters with an officer, to learn what to expect, for example, if the young man were stopped while driving. Allen advised that if an officer pulls you over for a suspected traffic violation, drivers should stay seated in the car and keep both hands visible on the steering wheel.

A table of five locals walked through their plans for a Spanish Heritage Festival which some officers will attend.

More Communication Requested

Michael Parker who lives in Woodstone went to Coffee with a Cop to discuss the police department's transparency. He said that police scanner communications are now encrypted, that people can no longer listen to those com-



Fairfax County police officers chatted with customers at Coffee with a Cop.

munications. He argued that residents can assist the police and minimize problematic onlookers at crime scenes if they understand the police's presence. He offered as an example, officers buzzing overhead in a helicopter. If they are looking for a missing person, residents could help, he said, if they knew what was going on.

He also urged FCPD to restore its daily recap, an emailed notice of major events in each district. These encourage "situational awareness," he said.

Parker shared an email he sent to FCPD Chief Kevin Davis on Sept. 28, 2026, making these two points. He wrote, "The recent decision to encrypt police communications has exacerbated this problem, blinding residents to crime in the county." Referencing the daily recaps, he said, "This information helped community members have the ability to be aware of crime, avoid crime and help FCPD solve crime."

In response to our inquiry to FCPD, a county police spokesperson emailed on Oct. 8, "We understand his concern and have responded to Mr. Parker directly.

"Our radio communications transitioned to an encrypted system on July 13, 2026. The Fairfax County Police Department provided an overview of its radio encryption initiative during the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Safety and Security Committee meeting on March 10, 2026. ... Separately, the daily crime recaps mentioned have not been published since 2020. Our commitment to keeping the public informed has not changed.

"We actively share timely updates on significant incidents on our X page and detailed case summaries on FCPD News. Crime statistics are on our Open Data Portal, with more information on our Transparency page. Community Outreach Officers also post week-



Cuppi Coffee offers enticing pastries.

ly crime recaps for each station on Nextdoor.

"Mr. Parker's request for daily recaps has been shared with department leadership. We are actively exploring additional ways to provide residents with more timely, real-time information and will share updates as these efforts progress."

Asked at the event why the police want to sip coffee and mingle with people, Captain Steier replied, "We want to get to know people before they need us."

Allen echoed, "We're here to help."

A New Hangout

Cuppi Coffee opened at 7707 Fordson Road (opposite Hybla Valley Shopping Center) in May. Owner Joshua Park said it is a local franchise and that "cuppi" is a Korean term for coffee.

Park and two employees served coffees from Guatemala, Columbia, Brazil, Ethiopia and Peru, as well as frappes and lattes. The latte options included butterbeer with caramel and butterscotch; pumpkin and vanilla.



Captain Jonathan Steier talked to many, including Christine Morin, Chief of Staff to Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck.



Michael Parker came to discuss FCPD's communications, here with MPO Jeremy Levan.



Joshua Park is the owner of Cuppi Coffee.

The menu's appetizing teasers included pastries, eggs Benedict with avocado, egg salad sandwich-

es and a sandwich called "avocuddle." Cuppi Coffee's mascot is a koala.

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SPORTS

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West Potomac Drops Homecoming 24-14

West Potomac vs. Alexandria City varsity football.

West Potomac came up short in its Homecoming game against Alexandria City, losing 24-14 on Oct. 9. West Potomac falls to 3-3 on the season. Alexandria City remains undefeated at 6-0. West Potomac heads to Lake Braddock (3-3) on Oct. 16 to take on the Bruins while Alexandria City will host Fairfax (0-6) at home.



The West Potomac student section celebrates after their school's first touchdown.

PHOTOS BY TOM MANNING/MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE



Samuel Salazar #5 looks for an open receiver.



Jack Coulter #5 catches a screen pass and looks downfield.



Will Coulter #41 kicks the ball off late in the third quarter after having made an extra point to give West Potomac 14 and close in on Alexandria City's 21.



Kevin Coates #3 takes a handoff down the field while trying to elude the West Potomac defenders.



Callahan Kenney #13 advances the ball along the Alexandria City sideline as Idrisa Kargbo #20 pulls him down.

News

The Mount Vernon Area, Once a 'Streetcar Suburb'

FROM PAGE 1

and throughout Hunting Creek," Green said. With state boundaries blurred in the river, this was a good place "for a whorehouse," he said.

The waterways were home to vessels called "arks." Their owners paid no taxes. The remains of one ark are still visible at low tide across from the parkway's pull-off just north of Morningside Lane. From this ark, "Cigarette" Dodson fished, trapped, rented duck blinds and sold "illicit" cigarettes that "were not stamped or taxed," Green said. Some today call the turnoff "Cigarette Turn-around."

New Alexandria at that time had the Mount Vernon Hotel and few small manufacturing companies, including the Deis Manufacturing Company, the Benham Filter Company and Spoke and Wagon Works.

Near the Warwick station just north of today's stone bridge was the J.W. Kreuttner mansion where some concrete remains are still visible. Kreuttner was president of the American Portland Cement Association. Near today's Ridgecrest Drive was an Episcopal girl's camp, Happy Home. The Wel-

lington Station was near today's Alexandria Avenue.

The line ran along the current East Boulevard Drive where wealthy Washingtonians built summer homes and disembarked at the Wellington, Arcturus and Herbert Springs stations. At least two of these houses still stand, one on Southdown Road and one on Kent Road.

Collingwood Beach, today's Collingwood Park, became a summer resort for African Americans who were barred from recreating in most public places by segregation policies.

The Mount Vernon Ladies Association barred parties, Green said, and drinking was banned on streetcars so at foot of today's Wittington Boulevard the rail company built an amusement park called Riverside, which had a ballpark, carousel and barrel organ which "enlivened the neighborhoods," Green said.

Today's circle at Mount Vernon Estate was the trains' turnaround, a station and tearoom run by the Gibbs family. With the advent of automobiles, the railway between Alexandria and Mount Vernon ended service by 1930.

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Join 11th Annual Tour de Mount Vernon

Begin and end
at Workhouse
Arts Center.

BY SUPERVISOR DAN STORCK

Grab your bike and join me and the Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling (FABB) for the 11th Annual Tour de Mount Vernon Community Bike Ride on Saturday, October 31, HALLOWEEN! This year, we're starting and ending at the Workhouse Arts Center for a scenic ride through the southern and central part of the Mount Vernon District.

Before we hit the road, we'll kick things off with a costume contest,

so come ready to show off your creativity. Then, choose between our 40-mile or 20-mile routes and explore some of the beautiful roads, parks, historic sites and neighborhoods that make the Mount Vernon District such a special place to live, work, play and visit.

Here's what you need to know:

❖ The ride kicks off at 8:30 a.m., check-in will begin at 7:45 a.m.

❖ Riders will explore Lorton and Mason Neck, featuring Pottomac Banks' historical, ecological and cultural sites. Including Mason Neck State Park, Gunston Hall, Pohick Bay Regional Park, the National Museum of the U.S. Army, the Gerry Connelly Cross County Trail and more.

❖ Come in costume! We'll hold a Halloween costume contest be-

Before we hit the road, we'll kick things off with a costume contest; choose 40-mile or 20-mile route.

fore the ride starts, with prizes for the top three costumes, courtesy of Bunnyman Brewing, the Workhouse Arts Center and the Park Authority.

Fairfax County Police and ride monitors will be on hand to help riders stay safe and on route. After the ride, you'll return to the Workhouse to celebrate with fellow cyclists, grab your limited edition Halloween tie-dye socks, enjoy music and camaraderie and refuel with La Prima Catering's famous sweet potato chili and beverages for purchase from Bunnyman

Brewing.

Whether you're a longtime cyclist or looking for a fun way to spend Halloween morning, the Tour de Mount Vernon is a great way to see our community from a different perspective. Grab your helmet, fill up your water bottle, put together your best costume and join us for another great ride through Mount Vernon District.

Register today at: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/tour-de-mount-vernon-2026>

Let's ride!

Indivisible of Franconia 'Party at the Polls' Saturday, Oct. 24

Indivisible of Franconia, a grassroots organization dedicated to non-violent activism, will host "Party At the Polls" this Saturday, Oct. 24, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the corner of Silver Lake Boulevard and Manchester Boulevard near the Franconia Government Center.

The event is part of Indivisible of Franconia's continued efforts to

encourage and celebrate early voting ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections. The Franconia Government Center is one of 13 additional early voting sites in Fairfax County that opened on Oct. 22, bringing the total number to 18.

"Voting early is an essential strategy to combat efforts to disrupt the election," said Andi Cale, event co-organizer in an email.

"The larger the number of votes cast early, the harder it will be for the ... administration to contest the results."

The event features fun party favors and festive accessories meant to grab passers-by attention and get them into the polls. Voter information will be available. Participants are encouraged to wear costumes and bring signs.

MISSION STATEMENT:

"Indivisible of Franconia works through peaceful actions to mobilize our community in defense of the Constitution, resist authoritarianism, advocate for social justice and civil rights, stand up for vulnerable communities, and seek common ground with others around shared goals."

Don't Stop Personal Importation of Prescription Drugs

Dear Editor:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has a dangerous new rule beginning Jan. 20 that will threaten the healthcare of millions of Americans. The rule, "Indefinite Suspension of the De Minimis Exemption for Mail Ship-

ments," will effectively end Americans' ability to personally import their prescription medicines.

Importing prescription drugs from licensed international pharmacies is the only lifeline for seniors on limited incomes, people with high-deductible health plans, and the uninsured. That's why CBP and the FDA have allowed it for decades. Due to the much lower cost of medications in Canada and

other countries, imported medicine is their only option.

Many imported drugs can be less than half the U.S. price. These necessary medicines prevent blood clots, treat diabetes, and much more.

This CBP rule will cut off access to the only affordable prescription drugs for millions, and that will lead to unnecessary harm and preventable deaths.

Aisar Atrakchi
Fairfax Station, VA

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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

ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-

ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteerallexandria.org/ALIVE>
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.
Join Friends' Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City's most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria's top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work

needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com.
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 donaalrea@aol.com.

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An independent, locally owned weekly newspaper delivered to homes and businesses.

Published by
Local Media Connection LLC

1606 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Free digital edition delivered to your email box. Go to connectionnewspapers.com/subscribe

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A Connection Newspaper



Business Leaders Discuss Workforce Training, Healthcare Education and Campus Growth at Chamber Breakfast

BY DAVID GRIFFIN
MOUNT VERNON SPRINGFIELD
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) is helping prepare the region's future workforce through career training, partnerships with local schools and expanded healthcare education programs. Chamber members heard about these efforts during the Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce's Oct. 8 Business Breakfast at Belle Haven Country Club.

The program featured Dr. Annette Haggray, Provost of Northern Virginia Community College's Alexandria Campus, and Dr. Shelly Powers, Provost of the Medical Education Campus in Springfield. Both shared updates on how NOVA is responding to educational and workforce needs across Northern Virginia.

NOVA currently serves nearly 79,000 students across its campuses and programs, including more than 4,200 workforce students. The college also serves approximately one-third of the total enrollment in Virginia's community college system. Its approach to workforce development includes analyzing labor market and demographic data to help determine program offerings, align curricula with employer needs and guide students toward career opportunities.

At the Alexandria Campus, partnerships with local schools are helping students begin planning

for college and careers earlier. Programs highlighted during the presentation included the Ninth Grade to NOVA initiative, dual enrollment opportunities that allow high school students to earn college credits. There is also a partnership with the Washington Metropolitan Auto Body Association supporting automotive career education.

Healthcare education was another major focus of the breakfast. NOVA's Medical Education Campus, which opened in Springfield in 2003, offers training in nursing, dental hygiene, emergency medical services, radiography, respiratory therapy, physical therapy assistance and other healthcare fields. A surgical technology program is scheduled to begin in spring 2027.

Dr. Powers highlighted the campus's educational outcomes, including a 98.6% nursing program examination pass rate and health sciences board examination pass rates ranging from 82% to 100%. Six health sciences programs reported 100% pass rates.

Students also receive hands-on training in specialized nursing, radiography, dental and simulation laboratories.

The Medical Education Campus is continuing to expand. The presentation highlighted an 8% increase in fall enrollment, a nursing wing addition and plans for a 37,000-square-foot virtual hospital as part of a Medical Center of Excellence.

These investments reflect the need for additional healthcare

training capacity as the region's population and medical workforce demands continue to evolve.

NOVA's community involvement extends beyond its campuses. Programs highlighted included the Governor's Health Sciences Academy at Alexandria City High School, summer bridge and dual enrollment opportunities, dental

services for students at Title I elementary schools in Fairfax County, and the CampMed program with VHC Health.

For Chamber members, the presentation offered a closer look at the educational programs and partnerships helping students move from classrooms into careers. It also highlighted the importance

of cooperation among schools, colleges, employers and community organizations in preparing Northern Virginia's future workforce.

The Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber thanks Dr. Haggray and Dr. Powers for sharing these updates and discussing NOVA's role in supporting students, employers and the broader community.



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- Promote your events in the online community calendar

www.mountvernonspringfield.com/member-benefits/





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
NELSON	12503	628	RHUE HOLLOW ROAD	BRANCH REEDS CREEK	9/24/2026
BUCKINGHAM	4032	601	MANTEO ROAD	SYCAMORE CREEK	9/22/2026
SCOTT	16849	689E	LUNDSFORD MILL ROAD	BRANCH	9/16/2026
BUCHANAN	3825	600E	HURRICANE CK ROAD	HURRICANE CREEK	9/14/2026
SCOTT	16850	689E	LUNSFORD MILL ROAD	STREAM	9/14/2026
FLOYD	7501	221N	FLOYD HWY S 221	BR OF DOBBINS CREEK	9/11/2026
BEDFORD	2832	699E	BORE AUGER ROAD/699	BR OF BORE AUGER CREEK	9/11/2026
BEDFORD	2816	691E	SHEPERDS ST ROAD 691	WOLF CREEK	9/10/2026
CARROLL	4779	881N	CROSS CREEK ROAD 881	L REED ISLAND CREEK #1	9/9/2026
CAMPBELL	4203	604E	RED OAK SCHOOL ROAD	SOUTH FORK FALLING RIVER	9/8/2026
BUCHANAN	29782	3304	MALLARD ROAD	BIG LICK BRANCH	9/3/2026
BUCHANAN	29789	4080	LOCKHART BRIDGE ROAD	WAR FORK	9/3/2026
FLOYD	7631	785N	BURKS FORK ROAD/785	BURKS FORK	9/17/2026
SUFFOLK	22113	616	ROUNDTREE CRESCENT	CYPRESS SWAMP	9/3/2026

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 Travel and traffic/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](tel: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](tel:804-786-2730) or corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov.



PHOTO BY DAVID GRIFFIN

From left, Dr. Annette Haggray, Chamber Chair Mark Viani, Dr. Shelly Powers.
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

GMU Is Official State Climate Center

By GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

The summer of 2026 was the warmest on record for the contiguous United States in the 132 years of record-keeping, surpassing previous records, set in 1936 and 2021 by .4 degrees, reported the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Sept. 9.

“But is very clear that—with global warming now heating the world to 1.2 degrees Celsius above its average in the late 19th century — summers are dramatically ramping up,” wrote Andrea Thompson in a Scientific American article. Other scientists say that El Nino, warmer oceans and urban heat

“Virginia was one of only two states in the nation without an operational state climate office.”

islands contribute to a warming planet too.

A year after George Mason University (GMU) issued the state’s first climate assessment, the Virginia General Assembly authorized a new state climate office to be anchored at GMU. Virginia is experiencing more extreme heat events, more severe storms, more droughts and rising sea level, for example.

The legislation says that the center will “develop and deliver data, analyses, assessments and expertise about Virginia’s weather and climate-related impacts, risks and risk management options to state and local government agencies, businesses and communities of place or practice in the Commonwealth.”

Del. David Reid, one of the sponsors, said in an email, “Prior to my budget amendment, Virginia was one of only two states in the nation without an operational state climate office. The other was Arkansas. While GMU, its professors and researchers had assumed responsibility for all the previously collected climate data, there was no official designation.

“That gap left citizens, localities, farmers and businesses without an identified central source for



PHOTO BY EVAN CANTWELL/GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

A statue of George Mason at Wilkins Plaza on the Fairfax Campus of George Mason



PHOTO BY RON AIRA/GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Luis Ortiz graduate level science class at George Mason

climate information. Hosting the State Climate Office at George Mason puts proven scientists to work for every corner of the commonwealth — collaborating to ensure improved strategic planning, data collection and analysis and information sharing.”

Dr. Luis E. Ortiz, Assistant Professor, GMU’s Department of At-

mospheric, Oceanic and Earth Sciences, explained, “A state climate office provides subject matter expertise and data resources for their state. Right now, those needs are often provisioned either by contracting firms or through individual projects.

“Our vision is to provide a baseline of information, both as a fa-

cilitator of data from the federal government and as a creator of value-added products to serve the needs of specific stakeholders. These may be state agencies, municipalities and economic sectors.” He clarified, however, “We view our role as providing data and analysis to support decision-making rather than prescribe policy to

municipalities and states.”

State Senator Stella G. Pekarsky, another GMU center supporter, said in an email, “With the growing threat of climate change and its impact on the Commonwealth, this office will give Virginia a seat at the national table to research and discuss solutions to protect our communities from the worst impacts of climate change.”

GMU faculty recently partnered with the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions on urban heat island mapping this summer and will report the conclusions in October.

Humans Cause Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Greenhouse gases, like methane and carbon dioxide, trap the sun’s radiation and warm the Earth. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Human activities are responsible for almost all of the increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere over the last 150 years. The largest source of greenhouse gas emissions from human activities in the United States is from burning fossil fuels for electricity, heat and transportation.” Examples of fossil fuels are coal, oil and natural gas.

In 2021, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adopted a Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan. The plan’s goals include energy carbon neutrality in government operations by 2040 and community-wide carbon neutrality by 2050.

The county reports that the transportation sector accounts for over 50 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions. The plan describes several strategies, including electrification of county’s passenger and bus fleets or using non-carbon emitting alternatives.

In 2008, then-Virginia Governor Tim Kaine’s Commission on Climate Change recommended a statewide 30 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions below business-as-usual levels by 2025.

Under this scenario, emissions were expected to continue to increase, reaching a level of 230 million metric tons of CO2 equivalent, which includes methane and other gases.

According to Dr. Jim Kinter, “In the last year for which data are available, 2021, emissions were well below the targeted reduction. There are no publicly available official estimates of greenhouse gas emissions for 2025, so we can’t directly evaluate whether Governor Kaine’s target has been met.” Kinter is the director of GMU’s center.

THE GAZETTE 2026 VOTER GUIDE

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

The 2026 Voter Guide is designed to help prepare readers for the Nov. 3 general election and early voting.

Our questions for federal candidates focused on key local concerns, to address priorities of the community members they seek to serve.

All participating candidates responded to identical questionnaires with set word limits — 500 words total for congressional candidates. Entries appear unedited in the official sequence set by state election officials; we note candidates who did not respond before publication in their respective sections.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Candidates for United States Senate, Statewide

Member, United States Senate — Statewide

The Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette and Connection Newspapers invited candidates on the ballot for Virginia's statewide U.S. Senate race — Democratic incumbent Mark Warner and Republican challenger Bert Mizusawa — to participate in our 2026 Voter Guide. (Mizusawa did not reply.) We asked candidates about issues facing our region, including housing affordability, transit infrastructure, federal job protections and regional utility regulation. Candidates appear in the official ballot order set by state election officials.

CANDIDATE RESPONSES

Mark R. Warner (Democrat)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: There is a housing crisis in this country and we're millions of homes short. I am proud to have co-authored the bipartisan ROAD to Housing

Connection QUESTIONS asked of all Congressional Candidates:

Q1 Housing & Zoning: Under Department of Housing and Urban Development guidelines, housing is considered affordable when costs do not exceed 30 percent of income for families earning up to 80 percent of Area Median Income — including extremely low-income households earning at or below 30 percent of Area Median Income. Given that Virginia's Dillon Rule restricts localities' authority over local revenue and zoning mandates, how will you leverage federal housing grants, housing choice vouchers, federal tax credits, or federal land transfers

Act, a landmark package of legislation. It has key provisions to boost the housing supply while lowering costs, protect veterans and renters, and prevent housing in rural areas from being bought

up by corporate investors. Additionally, I have introduced and supported a range of bipartisan bills to spur new housing construction and redevelopment, including the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act, Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act, New Markets Tax Credit Extension Act, and the Historic Tax Credit Growth and Opportunity Act. I was also the lead author of the Low-Income First Time Homebuyers (LIFT) Act, which would help qualified first-generation homebuyers build equity in their homes by offering a 20-year mortgage with monthly payments comparable to a traditional 30-year loan, and the Yes in God's Backyard (YIGBY) Act, which would help faith-based organizations and institutions of higher education unlock the promise of their existing land holdings by transforming underused property into much-needed affordable housing.



COURTESY PHOTO
Sen. Mark R. Warner (D)

to expand affordable housing in our district?

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: Northern Virginia relies heavily on federal partnerships to fund critical transportation networks. What specific federal infrastructure funding bills, transit grants for Metro, or United States Department of Transportation initiatives like Safe Streets and Roads for All will you champion to relieve traffic congestion and protect vulnerable road users?

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Northern Virginia's economy relies heavily on tens of thousands of federal civil servants and contractors, whose spending sustains local small busi-

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: I was proud to be a key negotiator of the landmark Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which delivered transformative investments to communities across Virginia. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has delivered hundreds of millions of dollars for public transit across Virginia, including passenger rail, ferry service, and buses. I have also been a consistent and strong advocate for robust Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority funding. As we work on a full-year of government funding and renewal of BIL, I will continue to fight for Virginia to get our fair share of funding that supports our vital public transit systems.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Federal workers in Virginia and across the country are the backbone of services Americans depend on. As the Trump administration continues to target federal workers and use them as political bargaining chips, it is critical to defend the job security, pay, and benefits of our dedicated civil service. I have fought against the administration's attacks on federal workers, from trying to access their sensitive data to attempting to weaken longstanding civil service protections. My Federal Worker Credit Protection Act is legislation to protect federal workers' credit histories during a government shutdown. I have also introduced legislation to keep fed-

nesses and the regional job market. How will you protect federal workforce jobs and government contracting, and what strategies will you pursue to support Northern Virginia workers and industries impacted by economic shifts?

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: Following Governor Spanberger's intervention before the State Corporation Commission regarding the proposed Dominion Energy-NextEra merger, and federal concerns over data center energy load and rising utility bills: What federal legislation or regulatory oversight will you pursue to protect Northern Virginia households from rising energy costs while supporting grid reliability?

eral wages competitive, prohibit RIFs during a shutdown, and preserve collective bargaining for federal workers.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: As I travel around the Commonwealth, I listen to Virginians and I take what they say seriously. Virginians are already being crushed by rising energy costs and they shouldn't have to foot the bill for the data centers in their neighborhood. These companies should have to pay their own electric bills. I've introduced legislation to require greater transparency about energy and water use and other impacts, make data centers pay for the grid upgrades they require instead of passing those costs on to residents, and condition valuable tax benefits on meeting strong efficiency standards.

Bert K. Mizusawa (R)

Did not reply.



COURTESY PHOTO
Bert K. Mizusawa (R)
Did not reply.

Fairfax County Bond Referendums

Fairfax County voters will decide on two local general obligation bond referendums.

❖ The ballot includes a \$180 million Parks and Park Facilities Bond to fund county-wide park maintenance, land acquisition, and recreation center upgrades. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/2020-bond>

❖ A \$75 million Community Health and Human Services Facilities Bond would finance the expansion of health care facilities and human service centers.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bond/bonds>

— MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

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PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY

A health department technician conducts analysis inside a county laboratory. The proposed \$75 million health bond would fund the expansion of the JoAnne Jorgenson Public Health Laboratory in Fairfax and support renovations at the Tim Harmon Campus in Chantilly.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Visitors at Frying Pan Farm Park take a tractor-pulled wagon ride along a forested path in Herndon. The proposed \$180 million park bond would fund countywide park maintenance, facility upgrades, and recreation expansions.

THE GAZETTE 2026 VOTER GUIDE

Candidates for United States House of Representatives, District 8

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Member, U.S. House — District 8

The Connection Newspapers invited candidates on the ballot for Virginia's 8th Congressional District race — Democratic incumbent Donald S. Beyer Jr., Republican challenger Tony A. Sabio, Libertarian challenger Shelly M. Arnoldi, and Independent challenger Tim S. Sharman — to participate in our 2026 Voter Guide. We created a questionnaire and asked candidates about issues facing our region, including housing affordability, transit infrastructure, federal job protections, and regional utility regulation. We capped responses at 500 words total and truncated anything beyond that limit. Candidates appear in the official ballot order set by state election officials.

CANDIDATE RESPONSES

DONALD S. BEYER, JR. (DEMOCRAT — INCUMBENT)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: I am a vocal fighter in the House for policies to make housing more affordable. On the House Ways and Means Committee I lead on housing with the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act, portions of which were enacted last year. I secured federal funding for local affordable housing projects in Northern Virginia. This year, I helped enact the 21st Century ROAD To Housing Act to improve federal housing programs and expand financing options to spur home construction and make housing more affordable.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: My strong track record strengthening our transportation infrastructure and ensuring transit in the DMV is safe and reliable includes helping pass legislation to fund WMATA and create new safety oversight for the Metro system, and passing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to fund transit and other surface transportation. I helped secure funds to renovate Arlington Memorial Bridge, passed legislation to enable the Long Bridge Project to expand rail traffic over the Potomac River, and brought federal dollars home for investments in our bus systems. I've also worked hard to secure safety improvements on local roadways like GW Parkway.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: The Trump Administration's assault on the federal workforce has been devastating. Thousands of civil servants who deserved thanks for their tireless work for the American people were fired illegally, and the essential services they provide were gutted on the whim of corrupt figures like Elon Musk. I've done all I can to stand up for our feds, through

direct challenges to the Administration, through legislation, and by holding jobs fairs and resource fairs for federal workers. It's hard to describe all I have done in response to this local crisis in the space allotted; I wrote about those efforts at greater length here.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: I support policies and have introduced legislation to protect ratepayers from higher electricity costs. I have also long worked to address challenges that hamper the delivery of affordable, reliable energy to the grid. I share Virginians' concerns about the proposed Dominion-NextEra merger, and have long shared the view that consolidation can be harmful to consumers. The merger should only go forward if it is in the best interests of ratepayers and workers, and I am deeply skeptical that this will ultimately be the case.

Tony A. Sabio (Republican — Challenger)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: My goal is to make homeownership attainable while respecting local zoning authority. I would establish a Builder Tax Credit to encourage starter-home and a Workforce Homeownership Tax Credit for police officers, firefighters, teachers, nurses, EMTs, and medical personnel. I would cut unnecessary federal red tape that delays construction and raises costs while supporting responsible use of Housing Choice Vouchers, HOME funding, and housing tax credits. I would also examine appropriate underused federal land for housing. We need more supply, lower costs, and pathways to homeownership.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: Northern Virginia needs both reliable transit and roads that move. I would support long-term federal infrastructure funding for Metro reliability and safety, roads, bridges, congestion relief, and faster project delivery. I support programs such as Safe Streets and Roads for All when they help Fairfax address dangerous intersections and protect vulnerable road users. Transportation policy must also recognize that many Northern Virginia families depend on automobiles. We should improve Metro and bus connectivity while investing in roadway capacity and infrastructure that reduces congestion rather than forcing residents into one transportation option.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Northern Virginia's federal employees and contractors are important to our economy. Government should be efficient and accountable, but indiscriminate cuts are not reform. I would protect mission-critical positions and strengthen opportunities for small and veteran-owned federal contractors. But Northern Virginia must also become less economically dependent on the federal government. I want to build a new jobs ecosystem by attracting and growing industries in advanced nuclear energy, technology, cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, and skilled trades, supported by apprenticeships and workforce development. We can protect essential jobs today while creating high-paying private-sector careers for tomorrow and

building a stronger, more diversified Northern Virginia economy.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: Congress does not set Virginia's retail electricity rates, but federal policy significantly affects energy supply, transmission, reliability, and ultimately costs. My Promise for America prioritizes reliable American energy and grid modernization. I would advance the Nuclear Ready Grid Zone Act, support advanced nuclear and small modular reactors, strengthen domestic transformer production, and accelerate responsible permitting. With data centers creating enormous new electricity demand, I would pursue greater transparency over infrastructure cost allocation so residential customers are not disproportionately burdened. Our objective should be more power, greater reliability, and lower long-term costs.

Shelly M. Arnoldi (Libertarian — Challenger)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: Federal housing programs like vouchers, tax credits, and land deals grow the bureaucracy without doing much to make housing cheaper. They add rules and then subsidize the cost of the rules. I'd cut the federal mandates and paperwork that make it slow and expensive to build here, and let localities make their own zoning decisions instead of tying them to federal strings. When the federal government is involved, it should put citizens and legal residents first. We get more housing by clearing government out of the way, not by adding another program on top of the last one.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: Northern Virginia needs roads and transit that actually work, but I won't vote for another giant spending bill full of earmarks and wishful thinking. I've spent 27 years managing federal construction projects, so I know the difference between money that fixes a bottleneck and money that vanishes into overhead. I'd put existing infrastructure dollars toward maintenance and congestion relief, with real accountability for what gets delivered, and I'd oppose the bloated programs that leave taxpayers paying more for less.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: This region runs on federal workers and contractors, and I'll protect those jobs. I spent years working inside the federal system as an engineer, so I've seen the waste and the bureaucracy firsthand. I have zero tolerance for financial misconduct with taxpayers' money. I'd push for transparent budgets, cut the unnecessary administrative layers, and hold the government accountable for every dollar it spends. I'd also lower taxes and red tape so small businesses can grow here, so the 8th District isn't one budget fight away from crisis.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: Two things are driving up what families pay: taxpayer subsidies for unreliable wind and solar projects, and data centers pulling huge new loads onto the grid. I'd end those subsidies. Energy that can't stand on its own shouldn't be propped up on the backs of ratepayers. And I'd hold data centers responsible for their own energy and water, not at the ex-

pense of working families. Big power users should fund and secure their own supply, not push the cost or the reliability risk onto households. As an environmental engineer, my priority is simple: power that's reliable and affordable.

Tim S. Sharman (Independent — Challenger)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: would encourage the General Assembly to give Northern Virginia localities substantially greater autonomy over housing and land-use. At the federal level, I would complement that with infrastructure grants that help communities build more housing where transportation and other infrastructure can support it.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: We need federal grants that increase transportation capacity and get more cars off our congested roads. I live close to the Wilson Bridge, and it's a factory of misery most afternoons. We should invest more in mass transit, including exploring commuter ferries on the Potomac. We also need to make our roads safer. In urban areas that means addressing dangerous parking, double parking, scooters and other conflicts between road users. On our highways, reckless driving remains a serious problem. Federal transportation and safety grants should help local communities tackle these problems.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Northern Virginia cannot afford another federal government shutdown. The 2025 shutdown caused immense harm to federal workers, their families, contractors and local businesses. Imagine having your paycheck simply not show up twice. I believe there's a real risk of further shutdowns in 2027–28. We should pass legislation as soon as possible guaranteeing federal workers are paid on time during any future shutdown. I would also protect Northern Virginia's federal workforce and contracting base from arbitrary cuts while supporting reforms that make government work more effectively for Americans. Federal workers and this region should never become pawns of political dysfunction.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: Local communities should decide whether and where data centers are built. Families and small businesses should not pay higher electricity and water costs because enormous new data centers arrive in their communities — the SCC's GS-5 rate class addresses that. And we also need to rapidly build the energy America will need. We need more generation, more transmission and a more resilient grid. I support building all forms of power generation where they make economic and environmental sense.

The answer to rapidly growing electricity demand cannot simply be higher bills for existing customers. At the Federal level we must abolish the Justice Department's AI Litigation Task Force, which was created to challenge state AI laws. The data center issue is so politically hot right now because people are rightly scared for their jobs. We need to prepare for the transformation of work. That's why America needs an AI & Robotics Transition Program.

ENTERTAINMENT

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.

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.

NOW THRU NOV. 1

Plein Air Sketches. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Artist's reception Sunday, Sept. 27 from 4 to 6 p.m. Featuring works by Anne Alden, Ann Meagher Cook, Carol Cowie, Katie Flack, Abigail Muncy, Christine Raymond, Margaret Stewart, Ann Tannous.

NEPENTHE GALLERY EVENTS

Location: Nepenthe Gallery, 7928 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria.

- ❖ October 22nd: Tours with Bill: Art and History Featuring BILL SHUTE;
- ❖ October 29th: Grand Re-Opening.

OCT. 17 TO NOV. 7

"She Loves Me." At The Little Theatre of Alexandria. In 1934 Budapest, co-workers Georg and Amalia seemingly despise one another at

Maraczek's Parfumerie. After both respond to a "lonely hearts ad" in the newspaper, they now live for the letters that they exchange, not knowing that the stranger they're falling in love with is their own worst enemy. Based on the play, Parfumerie, which inspired the films The Shop Around the Corner, In the Good Old Summertime, and You've Got Mail and from the creative team behind Fiddler on the Roof, many theatre-goers feel this effervescent, witty, romantic show is the perfect little musical. Show times Thursdays to Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sunday matinee at 2 p.m.

THURSDAY/OCT. 22

The Chamber ALX Young Leaders Network After Hours. 5:30 to 7 p.m. At The Commodore Old Town, Alexandria. Join them for drinks, bites, and a room full of Alexandria's young business leaders ready to mix, mingle, and make some new connections. Don't miss our final Young Leaders After Hours of the year.

FRIDAY/OCT. 23

Bone/Joint Health. 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. At Kingstowne Regional Library, 7130 Silver Lake Blvd., Alexandria. NOVA ScriptsCentral presents an interactive workshop on Bone & Joint Health! Learn about common conditions that affect bones and joints, practical ways to keep bones strong, medications and supplements for bone health, and exercises that support healthy movement. They'll end with a fun, hands-on activity where participants will use modeling clay to create their own bone shapes while putting what they learned into practice!

SATURDAY/OCT. 24

Both Sides Tour. 8:15 a.m. Meets at Franconia Museum, located in the new Governmental Center, 7130 Silver Lake Boulevard, Suite 103, Alexandria. Park in the garage and go to the first floor. The museum will be touring the sites and locations of the famous Black Horse Troop (Company H, Fourth Virginia Cavalry), that was formed in Warrenton, Virginia (where the town changed hands 67 times). During First Manassas the Black Horse troopers rode black horses and wore black boots, and hats. The tour will be visiting New Baltimore, Cub Run Bridge, the Warren Green Hotel, in Warrenton, General William H.F. Payne's house, Warrenton Cemetery, Waterloo Bridge and Corporal Robert E. McCormick's grave (Don Hakenson's great-great grandfather). If you are interested in attending, send a check for \$130 made out to Don Hakenson, 4708 Lillian Drive, Alexandria, VA 22310. Don Hakenson's cell phone is 703-785-5294.

MONDAY/OCT. 26

Medicare 101. 1:30-3 p.m. At Kingstowne Regional Library, 7130 Silver Lake Blvd., Alexandria. Got Medicare questions? This session, presented by the Fairfax County Virginia Insurance Counseling and assistance team (VICAP), will cover Medicare parts A - D, as well as supplemental plans. The event will be held in Room G105 of the Franconia Governmental Center, one floor below Kingstowne Regional Library.



"She Loves Me" is showing Oct. 17 to Nov. 7, 2026 at the Little Theatre of Alexandria. (Pictured): Maura Lacy and Brandon Schenk (Ilona and Kodayl).

MONDAY/OCT. 26

Is ACPS Meeting the Mark? 7 p.m. At George Washington Masonic National Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive, Alexandria. Panel discussion presented by Agenda: Alexandria. The City of Alexandria allocates one-third of its budget to education. Students need and deserve an excellent education. Are we meeting the mark in Alexandria? That is the overarching question that this Agenda:Alexandria event will focus on. Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) tests are a key tool used to measure our students' education and therefore the impact of the city's investment. An SOL is designed to assess whether students are meeting state grade-level standards in reading, math, science, and history. The tests provide a statewide snapshot that informs school accountability and high school graduation requirements. What is the trajectory of the test scores and how can we improve? How do we compare to our neighboring jurisdictions? If our numbers are in need of improvement, what specific efforts should we demand? And, how can parents help their students succeed? The program will address these questions through a moderated discussion featuring four expert panelists representing a wide range of expertise and perspectives.

WEDNESDAY/OCT. 28

The Chamber ALX 2026 Best in Business Awards. 6-9 p.m. At Westin Alexandria Old Town, Alexandria. Celebrate excellence in business with the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce at the signature awards event! They will honor Jen Walker as the 2026 Business Leader of the Year and recognize standout companies across a range of competitive categories. It's their very own version of the Oscars—complete with a red carpet and inspiring stories that showcase the innovation, resilience, and success of Alexandria's business community.

SATURDAY/NOV. 7

First Saturday Used Book Sale: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Open every day, various hours. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional> for information on other days and times for the library's ongoing book sale.

NOV. 7-8

Alexandria Symphony Orchestra: Pictures at an Exhibition. Conductor Chia-Hsuan Lin and pianist Dinara Klinton join the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra for a program filled with color, energy, and imagination. Lin leads ASO through music by Polina Nazaykinskaya, Sergei Prokofiev, and Modest Mussorgsky, while Klinton takes center stage for Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3. ❖ Saturday, Nov. 7 at 7:30 p.m. at Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall; ❖ Sunday, Nov. 8 at 3 p.m. at George Washington Masonic Memorial.

THURSDAY/NOV. 12

The Chamber ALX's Professional Women's Network. 5:30 to 7 p.m. Evening of Perfect Pairings: Wine + Chocolate, Women + Business. At Goodwin House Alexandria. Get ready for an evening of wine, chocolate, delicious bites, and great connections at this Perfect Pairings event. Featuring wines and perfectly paired bites inspired by destinations across the globe—all while celebrating the connections, accomplishments, and possibilities that make our business community so special. Raise your glass. Expand your network. Indulge a little. Celebrate a lot.

THE BIRCHMERE

At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com. Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or www.Birchmere.com.

OCTOBER

Thu. 22: Phil Vassar (Acoustic) w/ Talbot Mayo \$59.50
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PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE

Three proposed Virginia constitutional amendments are on the Nov. 3 ballot, with this sign in support of all three.



This sign in opposition to the first two proposed amendments ("Catholics Vote No") is posted outside the Knights of Columbus on Little Falls Road in Arlington.

Restoring Voting Rights

3rd amendment provides automatic restoration of voting rights, and protection for people with disabilities.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
THE CONNECTION

Part 3 of a three part series.

Three amendments to the Virginia Constitution will be on the ballot Nov. 3: protection of women's reproductive rights; removing the ban on same sex marriage; and automatic restoration of voting rights for convicted felons as well as strengthening the protection of voting rights for people with disabilities. This is the third of a series of three articles focusing on each of the proposed amendments.

A Constitutional amendment follows a rigorous process in Virginia before it can be put before the voters. The proposed language must be passed in the General Assembly. Then after an intervening election, the exact language must be passed by the General Assembly again. Finally the language goes before the voters.

The language of the third proposed Constitutional amendment reads:

Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended (i) to provide for the fundamental right to vote in the Commonwealth, (ii) to revise the qualifications of voters so that a person convicted of a felony is not entitled to vote during his period of incarceration but is automatically invested with the right to vote on the release from incarceration, and (iii) to update the existing prohibition on voting by persons found to be mentally incompetent to instead apply to persons who have been found to lack the capacity to understand the act of voting?

State Senator Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, D-Alexandria, the patron of the third proposed Constitutional amendment in the House



Sen. Elizabeth Bennett-Parker

of Delegates in 2025 and the start of the 2026 session explains, "I think Virginia is one of the most punitive states with their current practice on restoration of voting rights for those convicted of a felony. We are lagging behind."

She explains currently in Virginia a formerly incarcerated person has to apply individually to the governor to have voting rights restored. "This means a person could wait decades to get restoration of the right to vote. One of the problems of the current system is there is no transparency. It is left to a single politician."

The first felony disenfranchisement laws were introduced in the United States in 1792 in Kentucky, and by the Civil War about 24 states had some form of felony disenfranchisement. The growth of these laws led many to conclude that the laws were implemented to target African Americans.

By 2018 most states had implemented policies to restore voting rights upon completion of a sentence but only Virginia and Iowa permanently disenfranchised a former felon unless and until the governor had restored each individual's voting rights.

During his term as Virginia governor, Terry McAuliffe restored the voting rights of more than 173,000 individuals who had been convicted of felonies, one at a time. The Supreme Court of Virginia blocked him from issuing a blanket restoration of voting rights.

Bennett-Parker says during Governor Glenn Youngkin's four years in office, only 10,000 formerly incarcerated people had their voting rights restored but Governor Abigail Spanberger has already re-

stored the rights of 100,000.

"I believe when the Constitutional amendment passes, 230,000 will have their voting rights automatically restored," Bennett-Parker says.

During consideration of the proposed amendment in the General Assembly an amendment was proposed, but defeated, that would have limited restoration of rights to those who had been convicted on non-violent offenses, had paid their restitution and who had completed probation or parole. House Minority Leader Terry Kilgore, R-Scott County supported these changes. He said he supported reform but not the constitutional amendment as written. He says they left Republican votes on the table by not including these changes and putting victims first.

Bennett-Parker explains she disagrees with the changes proposed in that amendment because denying formerly incarcerated people the right to vote until they have paid restitution is a "modern day poll tax."

"Not requiring restitution be paid before restoring the rights to vote doesn't eliminate the obligation to pay restitution.

"Having the right to vote helps a formerly incarcerated person enter society and helps them be able to pay their restitution. The current process lacks transparency. No one knows what to do."

The amendment also strengthens voting rights protections for people with disabilities. "Currently a person under a guardianship loses their right to vote no matter the circumstances.

The amendment would ensure that their voting rights are lost only if a court has determined that a person is incapable of understanding the act of casting a ballot."



People lined up to get signed copies of the book.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



Dr. John C. Rand signed copies of his book, "George Mason and the Tenth Amendment," after his talk.

Local Author Extols George Mason's Significance

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

On Oct. 7, the 228th anniversary of George Mason IV's death, Mason Neck resident Dr. John C. Rand told a gathering that Mason was "the most significant man in America at certain critical times." He argued that Mason's ideas and writings greatly influenced the North American colonies' Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and constitutions of other countries.

Rand's new book, "George Mason and the Tenth Amendment," was on sale for the first time at the Oct. 7 event at Gunston Hall, hot off the George Mason University Press.

Mason (1725-1792), who owned the Gunston Hall plantation in southeastern Fairfax County, was the chief author of the U.S. Constitution's Tenth Amendment. He also was the primary author of the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights, a founding document that historians say was the first to support individual liberties such as freedom of religion and the press.

Mason helped write the Fairfax Resolves, "one of the first documents to question British authority over the colonies," urging a boycott of British goods, Rand said. Mason was the principal author of the Virginia Constitution, a document that inspired Thomas Jefferson in writing the Declaration of Independence.

The 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia was a "rancorous convention," Rand noted. Mason advocated for provisions guaranteeing individual rights and refused to sign the Constitution because it lacked protections for individual liberties like freedom of speech and assembly.

Once the Constitution was proposed to the states for ratification, "Mason was the face of opposition to the new Constitution," said Rand, because a bill of rights was not included. Mason was "pilloried in the press,"

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Tenth Amendment to the Constitution

"The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

Rand told the attendees. The Bill of Rights was added and ratified in 1791.

The Tenth Amendment

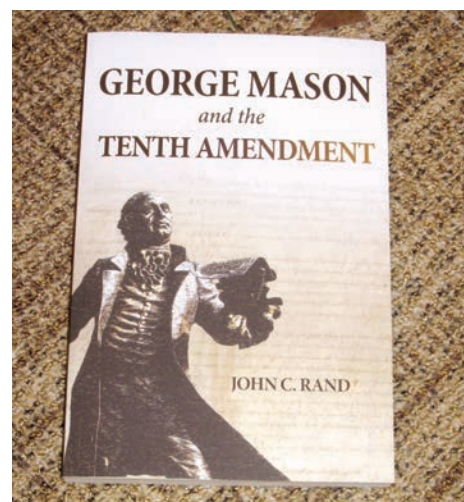
Having revolted against the British monarchy, the convention delegates had heated debates about the powers of the new federal government versus the states' powers. James Madison and Alexander Hamilton "wanted a strong national government." Mason "was a localist. The division of authority was important to George Mason," said Rand.

The Tenth Amendment to the Constitution reads: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

"It is one of the most critical Constitutional clauses of the Constitution," Rand opined.

The Tenth Amendment has been used in numerous cases over the years, for example, to support slavery before the Civil War and discrimination against African Americans after the Civil War. "The legal rationale was the same after as well as before the Civil War; the Constitution through the Tenth Amendment had guaranteed states the right to manage their internal affairs," Rand wrote in his book.

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, was a 2022, abortion case that overturned Roe v. Wade. In Roe v. Wade, the 1973 landmark, U.S. Supreme Court decision ruled that unduly restrictive state reg-



Rand's book was published by the George Mason University Press

ulation of abortion is unconstitutional. Mississippi argued that the state had the power under the Tenth Amendment to choose to restrict abortions. (The Supreme Court decided the case under another amendment, the Fourteenth.)

On how much power to give the states, Rand said, "We have George Mason to thank for what we have today."

Pohick Episcopal Church's Rev. Daniel Cenci commented that Mason was on the church's vestry for 36 years. Cenci offered a benediction thanking God for "a nation founded on the basis of freedom, liberty and justice" and urged that all "strive for equality."

John Rand, an attorney, received a PhD in American history from George Mason University in 2024.

Verbatim:

"Is there anything in this constitution which secures to the states the powers which are said to be retained? Will powers remain to the states which are not expressly guarded and reserved?"

"I wish a clause in the constitution with respect to all powers which are not granted, that they are retained by the states. Otherwise the power of providing for the general welfare may be perverted to its destruction."

— George Mason, 1788

Are You Listening to Me?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I think I crossed the relationship Rubicon in the early days of our marriage, sometime in the early 80s. Dina and I had gotten married in the fall of 1978 and it took a few years to build up the trust and familiarity with one another so that in the following examples, I wasn't being sent totally on a fool's errand.

The first example of my wife having to ask/send me on an errand that was normal for her (but due to miscellaneous physical problems became difficult/awkward for me was to buy feminine hygiene products for her. (And yes, I would look for a male cashier to lessen my anxiety.) Under the circumstances, I was happy to help; a bit uncomfortable with the process, nevertheless, I did what any good husband would do. However, not having been raised with sisters or having had too many serious girlfriends previously, I was quite inexperienced for the task at hand. That being understood between both parties, and my having failed at previous similar "shopping," I began to ask Dina for explicit, mind-numbing details - and back-up options as well, to buy exactly what she needed me to buy. And since there were no cellphones back then, I was given those details because if left to my own devices, Dina no doubt would have ended up with a variety not of her preference. After fits and starts and poor choices by yours truly on previous occasions, eventually I learned what options - so to speak, to select and what never to get. Over time and with proper follow-up training, I became a reliable purchaser.

The second similar situation involved the purchase of stockings. Sometimes, Dina would get behind in her preparation - or suffer a stocking malfunction, and once again, yours truly would be thrown into the breach. And quite a breach it was. There seemed to be endless varieties: size, color, "sheer," "opaque," "reinforced toe," "ventilated panel," "reinforced waistband," et cetera. It was all very intimidating, almost equal to the feminine hygiene aisle. "I was," to quote my late brother, Richard, "flying blind." Moreover, I had become aware of the importance of the correct stocking. Likewise, this was no place for an executive decision to be made by you know who. As repeated purchasing opportunities arose, it gave me a chance to right some previous wrongs. I was now writing down Dina's explicit instructions on a piece of paper. Forearmed is forewarned. A necessary step as it had become clear I had bad stocking-purchase instincts.

The final example which re-rose recently are food selections made at the supermarket. Typically, I am the food shopper (Dina is the social director). And since we have different tastes/requirements, again I am thrust into situations where if my instincts take over, I will likely make the wrong selection. Cottage cheese and yogurt are those recent requests where I am at a loss. At least now, after multiple errors or incorrect presumptions, I know to ask specific questions depending on whether the product is available or not. (Obviously cellphones make this current issue less impactful as the two previous examples but hopefully you'll appreciate the problem nonetheless.)

If I were left to fend for myself in the dairy aisle, I would likely come home with less-than-desirable choices. For cottage cheese, I need to know the brand (no substitutions I now know), the size of the container, the fat content, the curd size and the sell-by date. Are there flavors? I don't know. I'm getting plain. As for yogurt: what brand? what size? what fat content? what flavor (very important?) what style (flip top, with or without fruit, Greek or not? Not that I'm a dunce but if I don't my notes in hand, once I'm in store and see all the choices and variables, my mind goes blank. Every product looks and sounds similar enough to what Dina requested - but?

Years ago when I was a rookie husband, these choices were all new to me. Very often I did not fare very well. I was willing but for awhile, it appeared as if I was unable. But I was willing to learn and I was somewhat coachable. Oh sure, I made plenty of mistakes. Generally speaking, I knew what trouble was in the offing by the request and tried to anticipate my inevitable failings. But thanks to my evolution as a husband, I write everything down now and then review it all with Dina before I leave the house. Sure the cellphone eliminates the real disasters but sometimes my instincts kick in and it's 1978 all over again. I never said I was perfect.

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



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