

Government Reform & Restructuring – Part I
By Delegate Albert C. Pollard, Jr.
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The following is the first half of recommendations I sent in a letter to Governor McDonnell for his Commission on Government Reform and Restructuring:

Dear Governor:

I am writing this letter as a follow up to the various conversations I've had with you and your staff concerning possible governmental efficiencies. As I have stated previously, I believe the best possible way to achieve efficiencies is to remove unnecessary regulation and bureaucracy by decreasing legislative mandates on the executive branch and offer flexibility at lower levels of management. In other words, the Commonwealth of Virginia should strive to hire good people and give them the latitude needed to make common sense decisions that will avoid duplication of and delay in providing core government services to the citizens of Virginia.

To this end, I offer the following list of recommendations:

- 1. My first recommendation deals with the Department of General Services (DGS). As you know, any structure placed on state land must go through DGS and their architectural and engineering process (A&E). This has led to extraordinary inefficiencies and decisions which are clearly not made with the taxpayer in mind.*

For instance, I have attached copies of correspondence for the engineering requirements on an information kiosk for the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). In it you will note DGS is sending plans back because some of the non-structural trim boards do not meet at the proper angles. I also have attached correspondence from DGS requesting more gravel to be placed along the drip line of a tractor storage shed. Finally, it has been confirmed to me by state employees – including DGS employees - that an engineering study is needed before a flag pole can be placed on state property.

With all due respect, engineering flagpole placement is akin to using a band saw to cut butter. My proposed solution dealt with an exemption for projects under a certain dollar value, however, another solution could create a default for following the uniform statewide building code for lesser projects.

- 2. An additional recommendation concerns the Virginia Correctional Enterprises (VCE). As you are aware, VCE uses prison labor to build office furniture which is sold to non-profits and which most state agencies are required to purchase. The VCE is non-general fund and receives the vast majority of its funding from state agencies. Furthermore, the Code of Virginia in §53.1-51 says that it is malfeasance for a state employee to purchase furniture from a source other than VCE.*

I am sure we agree the rehabilitative aspect of VCE makes it a valuable program. There is no social program like a job, and for many in our correctional system VCE provides training which positively reduces recidivism.

However, I'm sure we further agree that VCE should be a standalone program, and if office furniture and supplies can be bought more inexpensively on the open market, then it should be done for the benefit of the taxpayer. Perhaps VCE should become a general fund agency whose funding is offset by the traditional non-general fund sources. This would give VCE better flexibility for job training in today's environment, and decrease the taxpayer's burden.

Finally, it should be noted that the legislature has exempted itself from this program it deems worthy for all other state agencies. I find this unconscionable.

Next week: Part II includes VMRC, DGIF and pickup trucks.

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