

# THE COLUMN

News from  
the Virginia Institute  
of Government

Fall 2001



## Eyeing Taxes

*State & local taxes remain in spotlight.*

Legislative efforts to consider modifications to the state and local tax codes are continuing. In the last two years this topic has received considerable attention beginning with the Commission on the Future of Virginia's Cities. Issues generated by the Cities Commission were forwarded for further consideration to a blue ribbon citizens' commission. This group, called the Commission on Virginia's State and Local Tax Structure for the 21st Century, completed its work with a report and recommendations to the General Assembly in December, 2000.

During the 2001 legislative session, SJR 387 was adopted creating a joint legislative subcommittee to "study the complete revision of the state tax code." The subcommittee's multi-faceted task is to examine and consider

- recommendations of the Tax Structure Commission,
- loss of sales tax from Internet purchases,
- sufficiency of current local revenue tools,
- all aspects of business and professional taxation, and
- modifications to the tax appeal process.

Underlying the subcommittee's work is the charge to seek broad input concerning the necessity and adequacy of the current tax/revenue system.

The joint subcommittee is to submit its findings and recommendations to the Virginia Code Commission by November 30, 2002 and to the Governor and the 2003 General Assembly.

Members of the joint subcommittee are Delegates McDonnell (co-chair), Howell, Griffith, Rust, Louderback, Johnson, Melvin, and Joannou; and Senators Hanger (co-chair),

Colgan, K. Miller, Martin, Bolling, and Whipple. The Division of Legislative Services is staffing the subcommittee with support from the Cooper Center, Institute, and the Department of Taxation.

Governor Gilmore has created a separate commission with a report deadline of December 31, 2001. The goal of the Gilmore Commission is to "study and recommend fundamental reforms to the Virginia Constitution and tax and spending policies with the purpose of modernizing governmental finances in Virginia to meet the new and unprecedented challenges of the 21st Century."



*For the final report of the Commission on Virginia's State and Local Tax Structure for the 21st Century, visit [www2.institute.virginia.edu/taxstudy/finalreport](http://www2.institute.virginia.edu/taxstudy/finalreport). For more information, contact John Thomas at 434/982-5545 or [jpt@virginia.edu](mailto:jpt@virginia.edu). ▼*

## Leadership 2020 Internships

*Continuation of program depends on you.*

Local governments that have employed interns under the Institute's Leadership 2020 Internship Program, sing the praises of both the program and their student interns. To date the following localities have developed paid internship placements and/or hosted interns — the counties of Arlington, Franklin, Fairfax, Fauquier, Henrico, and the cities of Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Roanoke, and Virginia Beach.

Operating from the "if you build it, they will come" philosophy, Leadership 2020 has been, at best, only a modest success. This summer L2020 staff reexamined the four-year-old undertaking to determine what's missing

### INSIDE

**Engaging Citizens**  
Public deliberation and local government

2

**Choices for a Growing South**  
Book to include Virginia's best

2

**Upcoming Seminars**

3

*continued on back cover*



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## Engaging Citizens

*National Issues Forums taking bold here.*

by Nancy J. H. Gansneder

Local governments deal with big issues. While elaborate processes exist to gather public input, citizen involvement often comes late in the process *after* alternatives have been narrowed and a preferred direction has emerged. Decision-makers often rely on the feelings of a few interested citizens to “read” community sentiment.

An approach called *public deliberation* engages a more diverse and larger number of citizens earlier in the decision-making process. Deliberation of an important community issue — a living wage, commercial rezoning, power-plant siting — produces a sense of direction that can inform local government decision-makers.

Learning the process of public deliberation is not difficult — it just takes some training and practice. Since 1999, an annual National Issues Forum Workshop (NIFW) has been held at the University of Virginia.

The workshop’s three-day, interactive format focuses on both the practice and theory of public deliberation. Through role-playing, participants experience the differences among dialogue, debate, and deliberation. They review a prepared issue book, begin to frame (analyze and define solutions) a new issue, practice moderating and recording skills, and conduct an actual forum. Each workshop concludes with models for applying public deliberation in the classroom, on campus, or in the community.

These workshops are part of the Civic Engagement Initiative (CEI), a long-term collaborative effort with the Kettering Foundation, National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE), Virginia Institute of Government, and Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia.

*The NIF approach to public deliberation is a “must-have” tool for local government leaders.* NIF books used in the workshops contain models for framing important issues faced by citizens working and living in the community. Public deliberation through NIF links personal experience to public action by creating an environment in which citizens adopt “another way to talk, a different way to act.”



Each year, the NIF Institute and its civic network identify and frame two or three issues of national significance. For nearly two decades, thousands of citizens have gathered to deliberate more than 30 of these issues, providing invaluable direction to local and national leaders.

Here in Virginia, both the Charlottesville and Hampton Roads areas are planning their first community NIF forums for 2002.

★ ★ ★

*The writer is director of University Internship Programs at the University of Virginia. She is secretary of NSEE’s board of directors.*

Contact Nancy Gansneder at 434-982-4770 or <mailto:nancyg@virginia.edu>. Or visit <http://www.nifi.org>. ▼

## Choices for a Growing South

*New resource to contain best of Virginia.*

Best practices of Virginia local governments will be included in *Choices for a Growing South*, a publication being prepared to assist local government leaders in managing issues related to growth.

*Choices for a Growing South* will include a visioning handbook plus toolkits in four areas — land-use planning, land conservation, infrastructure, and fiscal analysis and finance policy. Each section will describe relevant best practices along with examples of their application in southern communities. The Virginia Institute of Government has been gathering and recommending Virginia examples for inclusion in the book.

The project was commissioned by the Southern Growth Policies Board, a regional center for new ideas and practices designed to encourage the region’s economic development and strengthen its quality of life. Among its board of directors are the governors of the southern states. The Southern Consortium of University Public Service Organizations (SCUPSO), of which the Cooper Center is a member, is doing the work.

The book should be completed and available to localities in participating states in 2002. Copies will be available through the Institute.

★ ★ ★

Contact Tony Gardner at 434/245-9255. ▼

*“Every student should leave the [grant writing] seminar with the tools needed to write a compelling and complete proposal — from the abstract to the supporting appendices. The Institute can offer the seminar on-site for individual localities or on a regional basis.”*

## The Art of Grant Writing

*Seminar shows you the money.*

As demand for local-government service grows and public resources decline, effective grant writers can be worth their weight in gold to their localities.

In response to growing interest in this area, the Institute and the Cooper Center’s Danville office have designed a hands-on workshop — *Grant Writing Basics: Finding New Money* — for new grant writers and those with experience.

The two-part workshop takes students through the entire grant writing process, teaching them how to 1) frame a concept, 2) develop a work plan, 3) identify the information to be included, and 4) write a persuasive request. Every student should leave the seminar with the tools needed to write a compelling and complete proposal — from the abstract to the supporting appendices.

The first seminar was held in Martinsville in late summer. Plans are being made for fall 2001 and winter/spring 2002 classes in Prince William County, Abingdon, Charlottesville, and Williamsburg. The Institute can offer on-site classes for individual localities or on a regional basis.



Contact Bethany Dancey at 804/371-0202 or [dancey@virginia.edu](mailto:dancey@virginia.edu). ▼

## The Last Mile to Virtual Communities

*Fourth forum in series scheduled for January 2002.*

Join us in Roanoke on January 17th and 18th for the fourth in a series of forums designed to help localities go the “last mile” towards the new economies of e-business, e-government, and other network-based initiatives.

The January program will address the interests of both the telecommunications novice and those interested in learning more about the latest developments in the rapidly changing communications area.

Plans call for a pre-conference workshop on telecommunications basics followed by a full day, addressing such issues as

- fiber and wireless infrastructure,
- Internet 2, and
- potential value to community redevelopment and e-education.

A final program description is forthcoming.

The forum series is being planned and coordinated by the Institute, Virginia Tech, the Innovation Groups, and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.



Contact Tedd Povar at 804/371-0202 or [tep3e@virginia.edu](mailto:tep3e@virginia.edu). ▼



## Email Broadcast Information Service (EBIS)

*System gets national attention.*

The Institute’s rapid response list-serve is featured in *PM* magazine’s October issue. The EBIS database contains over 800 topics and 2000 local government contacts.

Below is a sample of recent inquiry topics:

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Responses Received</i>
Financial advisor — RFP’s	14
Personnel policies — recruitment, starting pay, promotions	21
Web page content — approval process	24
Police — high speed pursuit policies	20
Procurement — limits and staffing	26
Land acquisition for public purposes — policies, planning	10

If your locality has email but is not receiving EBIS broadcasts, please contact us. The larger the network, the better we can gather and share information.



Contact Tedd Povar at 804/371-0202 or [tep3e@virginia.edu](mailto:tep3e@virginia.edu). ▼



**SEMINAR**

The Art of Influencing:  
Getting Results  
Without Authority

OCTOBER 31, 2001

RICHMOND



**FORUM**

The Last Mile to  
Virtual Communities

JANUARY 17-18, 2002

ROANOKE



**SEMINAR**

Grant Writing Basics:  
Finding New Money

WINTER/SPRING 2002

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## Leadership 2020

*continued from page 1*

in a program that most agree is a great idea. Here's what we have learned:

- Internships are more popular than ever among students.
- Virtually every Virginia college and university has a mechanism for granting academic credit for internships.
- Increasingly, faculty support for-credit student internships.
- There is strong interest among students in public-sector internships.
- Students view summer as a time to earn money, making private-sector internships understandably more attractive.

*Our most important finding, however, is the paucity of internships in local government. A survey of major localities reveals that local government internships, where they exist, are largely ad hoc and invisible and enjoy little, if any, sustained institutional support.*

*"...to be successful, L2020 must have product. Product for L2020 = internship placements. You can help us create... internships in your locality."*

If L2020 is to flourish, it is critical that we 1) identify existing internship placements and 2) where appropriate, add these placements to the L2020 catalogue. Like our dot.com cousins in the private sector, to be successful, L2020 must have product. Product for L2020 equals internship placements. The mechanism for marketing local government internships to students and faculty are in place. *You can help us create, revise and list internships in local government.* Please tell us about internship offerings in your locality.



Contact Nancy Gansneder at 434-982-4770 or [nancyg@virginia.edu](mailto:nancyg@virginia.edu). Or visit [www.L2020.institute.virginia.edu](http://www.L2020.institute.virginia.edu). ▼