



**VIRGINIA**  
INSTITUTE OF  
**GOVERNMENT**

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News from  
the Virginia Institute  
of Government

Summer 1999

## Moss Commission Spawns Tax Study

**T**he Virginia Institute of Government and Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service have been providing staff support to the Commission on the Condition and Future of Virginia's Cities (Moss Commission). Among several recommendations made to the 1999 General Assembly by the Moss Commission was the creation of an independent commission charged with conducting a comprehensive study of the Commonwealth's state and local tax structure.

The study will be designed to:

- *assure tax equity,*
- *recommend methods of bringing the tax structure from an agrarian based system to one that reflects the new economy of the 21st century, and*
- *match revenues and service obligations without increasing the per capita tax burden on working families.*

Specifically, the legislation (HJR 578) states, "...the Commission shall study the proper division of revenues and responsibilities for services between the state and local governments and how the state and local tax structure should be changed to adapt to the tremendous economic, social, demographic, and technological trends that are clearly overwhelming the current tax structure."

The thirteen-member citizen commission will be appointed in August. The Moss Commission subcommittee on finance will function in an observatory capacity while the new commission conducts its study.

HJR 578 designates the Weldon Cooper Center as staff for the tax-study commission with the assistance of all appropriate state and local agencies. The Center staffing

approach will follow the model used in supporting the Moss Commission. There will be significant opportunity to explore all sources and perspectives during the deliberations. The tax-study commission is to complete its work by December 1, 2000, and submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 2001 session of the General Assembly. ▼

## The Diversity Initiative — Creating a Climate for the New Century

*Today's organizations are mixing bowls of generations, races, cultures, and values.*

KAREN F. WASHABAU

**O**ver the years, private and public employers have recognized that the harmonious interaction of employees is critical to workforce effectiveness, so they have implemented "diversity programs" to force change. But laws, programs and policies will fail as diversity initiatives unless there are fundamental changes in organizational climates. Diversity efforts should create bridges, not barriers.

In response to requests from Virginia local governments for effective diversity training, twice this year the Institute and VCU's Center for Public Policy sponsored a day-long workshop, *Implementing a Culture Change Process in Local Government*.

During these training sessions, participants were encouraged to explore diversity from analytical as well as emotional perspectives. They had to rethink their own biases

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## Diversity Initiative

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through relevant role playing exercises and reviewing timely case studies.

In addition to conducting workshops for government, workshop leader Carol-Susan DeVaney works with CEOs and businesses around the world to implement many kinds of large-scale change. "What I really do is help people troubleshoot around a wide variety of change issues."

According to DeVaney, creating a safe and productive environment for this increasingly diverse workforce is one of the most dramatic changes underway worldwide in every level of private- and public-sector organizations. When global mergers occur, cultural differences abound. It's important for CEOs to know what teamwork, feedback, and motivation mean in Japan or Germany or South Africa versus what those terms mean in the U.S. "Think how traumatic it is for employees when two U.S. companies merge," she says. "Then think about merging two distinct cultures."

How does she get top officials to focus on diversity issues? "It's easier than it used to be," DeVaney notes. "Not too many years ago, people thought diversity meant racial. Well, race may be a part of the issue, but it is usually not the only part. Don't forget diversity in age, gender, ability, values."

Perhaps the diversity of generations in the workplace has never been greater. Today we have four distinct generations at work, she observes. They have had distinct experiences, exhibit different values, and have different goals. A case in point from an anonymous source has been circulating the Internet recently:

***The people who are starting college this fall were born in 1981.***

***They have no meaningful recognition of the Reagan era, and many do not know he had ever been shot. There has been only one Pope. They can really only remember one President. They have only known one Germany. They are too young to remember the space shuttle blowing up. Their life-time has always included AIDS.***

***The phrase "you sound like a broken record" means nothing to them. They have never owned a record player. They may have heard of an 8-track***

***tape, but chances are they have never listened to one. They have always had an answering machine. They cannot fathom TV without a remote control.***

***They do not consider the Colorado Rockies an expansion team. They have never seen Larry Bird or Kareem Abdul-Jabbar play. They do not care who shot J.R. and have no idea who J.R. is. Kansas, Chicago, America, and Alabama are places, not musical groups...***

These younger people are talented and important to the success of your organization. And, as participants in DeVaney's workshops learn, creating a climate that values and motivates them is what managing diversity is all about.

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*The writer is director of the Office of Public Policy Training in the Center for Public Policy at Virginia Commonwealth University. The Center and the Institute collaborate on developing workshops for state and local government employees.*

*President of DeVaney-Wong International and regarded as an expert on diversity issues, Carol-Susan DeVaney is co-author of the book Workforce Diversity and has more than 24 years' experience as a consultant, trainer, executive coach, and human resources administrator.*

*For more information on the diversity workshop, contact the Institute at 804/371-0202.▼*

## Y2K — What's Now and What's Next

It's only about 180 days until Y2K...do you know where your systems and citizens are?

To help answer those and other questions, the Institute conducted three regional forums this spring focusing on two issues — 1) where local governments should be at this point in preparing internal systems and 2) how to properly prepare the citizenry for possible complications associated with Y2K.

The forums, held primarily to facilitate dialogue among localities, included presentations by local government technology

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## ***Programs***

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**The Diversity Initiative: Implementing a Culture Change Process in Local Government.** Cosponsored with VCU's Center for Public Policy. June 9 and February 24 in Richmond. Total attending: 48 participants from 16 localities, agencies, and universities.

**Y2K Regional Forums: Localities Helping Localities into the Year 2000.** May 6 in Blacksburg, April 22 in Winchester, and April 15 in Richmond. Total attending: 158 participants from 64 localities, agencies, and planning district commissions.

**High Performance Government Forum.** March 5 in Richmond. Total attending: 14 participants from seven localities.

### ***Looking Ahead***

September 9–10 in Leesburg. **Creating the Future: How Smart Government Works '99.** Cosponsored by the Virginia Innovation Group and Loudoun County in partnership with the Virginia Local Government Management Association and the Institute.

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## ***Director's Activities***

At the pleasure of the Speaker of the House of Delegates, John Thomas has assisted with the design, structure, planning, and implementation of the work of the Commission on the Condition and Future of Virginia's Cities (Moss Commission). In addition to participating at regional public hearings, Thomas has had general oversight of information gathering and of two statewide summit meetings. Each summit, staffed by the Institute, convened over two hundred invited leaders from local and state government as well as the business and community sectors.

As a result of the momentum generated by the first summit, held in October 1998, the General Assembly took several actions affecting local governments: funding of HB 599, which provides state assistance to localities with police departments; funding for school construction; and housing improvement authority. The results of the second summit, held on June 7, will be presented to the Commission in July.

One of the products of the Moss Commission was the creation by the state legislature of a commission to study the state and local tax structure of Virginia. This two-year commission, to be staffed by the Cooper Center, is charged with making recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly in December 2000. (See related article on page 1.)

On the national scene, Thomas recently served as advisor and on-air moderator of a teleconference on managing for results. The conference focused on training and developing a results-oriented staff and forming and implementing effective cross-trained work teams. The national live conference, presented by the University of Vermont, was broadcast to four Virginia sites.

On the county scene, Thomas gave the closing speech at the Virginia County Board Chairmen's Institute in February, and gave a presentation on behalf of the Institute to Fluvanna County's Board of Supervisors in May.

Thomas is also involved in efforts to foster dialogue between state and local senior administrators on seeking joint solutions to difficult state-local administrative problems.

Looking eastward, Thomas met with a representative of the Japanese government to explore ways in which the operations, policies, and practices of Virginia local government may be relevant to Japan.

Closer to home, Thomas' activities include participating in 1) an initial meeting of public and business leaders seeking avenues of "smart growth" in Charlottesville and Albemarle County and 2) exploratory discussions with representatives of Albemarle County's Department of Social Services on evaluating a portion of the county family support program.

## What's next on Y2K?

The Institute is working with the state CDCI office on a July 13th statewide teleconference on business continuation and contingency planning for Y2K.

The Web sites below provide detailed information on Y2K and contain links to countless related sites:

[www.Y2K.gov](http://www.Y2K.gov)

Presidents Council on  
year 2000



[www.cdci.state.va.us](http://www.cdci.state.va.us)

Century Date Change  
Initiative Project Office



[www.vdes.state.va.us](http://www.vdes.state.va.us)

Virginia Department of  
Emergency Services



[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

American Red Cross



[www.consumer.gov](http://www.consumer.gov)

United States  
Consumer Gateway



### QUESTIONS?

Call the CDCI project office at  
804/786-1434.

and public safety officials and representatives from the state's Century Date Change Initiative (CDCI) project office and the Virginia Department of Emergency Services. The following summarizes key points raised during the forums:

#### Internal Issues

- If you haven't started, it's probably too late to do a complete review and fix; however, there is still time to do some testing and make certain critical improvements.
- The highest levels of leadership must keep Y2K a top priority.
- All departments and division heads should be held accountable for systems compliance.
- Vendor compliance assurance statements tend to be weak. Anticipate some supply problems and maintain stocks accordingly.
- Business continuation contingency planning is vital.
- New software and hardware are not necessarily compliant. Do not be comfortable just because new systems were installed.
- Test and retest. You will continue to find problems even after all are allegedly "fixed."
- Problems will not be isolated to 1/1/00, but may occur over several months.
- Payroll is a critical area. Several localities are preparing to issue employee pay in cash for a short period if necessary.
- Confidence in most localities is relatively high that their systems will escape major problems. However, the smallest jurisdictions may not be adequately aware or prepared.

#### Public Preparedness Issues

- A strong public information campaign is the key to an informed and prepared citizenry.
- Several localities have established committees representing all sectors of their population to formulate their public preparedness programs.
- As in any emergency service scenario, localities should prepare for the worst and hope for the best.
- Several informative brochures and other publications are available to help people prepare and gain a reasonable understanding of what to expect.

- Public panic may occur during the last weeks of December 1999. Runs on banks and food stores are possible.
- Citizens must be responsible for their own safety for at least a few days. Neighbors need to help the elderly and others with special needs.
- Electricity is the wildcard. If it remains on, the remaining problems should be manageable.
- Localities in a given region must coordinate their public information to avoid confusion.
- Localities should not be relied upon to shelter large portions of their population. Facilities with emergency power generation capacity are very limited in most localities.
- This is an excellent opportunity for localities to inventory their special needs population for this and future potential emergency situations.
- Those reliant on prescription medication should have a multi-week supply on hand.
- The Virginia Department of Emergency Services will serve as receiver and transmitter of reliable information, combating rumors and erroneous news.
- As is normal procedure, localities will be "on their own" during the initial phases of any emergency situation. The state will react to special circumstances after the event. ▼

## Revised FOIA Guide — Hot off the Press

**T**he Cooper Center has published a fully revised edition of the *Local Government Officials' Guide to the Freedom of Information Act* in collaboration with the Local Government Attorneys of Virginia, Inc., (LGA) and with the assistance of the Institute.

The revised edition is written by Roger C. Wiley, the original author. The LGA, Virginia Municipal League, Virginia Association of Counties, and Institute will distribute copies to officials of their respective member localities. Additional guides can be purchased at nominal cost from the Cooper Center. (Call 804/982-5704.) ▼

*“The library’s biggest information gaps are in the areas of police and fire, emergency management, public works, and social and youth services. We need documents to fill these gaps.”*

TRACY MILLER  
LGDS ADMINISTRATOR

## **Local Government Document Service — A Give and Take Proposition**

*Keep sending in your documents.*

The Institute and its members continue to be strong users/supporters of the Local Government Document Service. LGDS is the Internet-based, national electronic document library created by the Innovation Groups in partnership with the Institute and several major local governments across the country. Operated by the Innovation Groups from their Tampa, Florida, headquarters, the searchable archives contain over 7,000 documents, covering hundreds of topics. Sixteen Virginia localities have contributed a total of 1,500 documents.

If your locality is an Institute member, your employees and elected officials have free and unlimited access to LGDS.

Over the past several months, the Institute has asked local governments across the state to contribute materials to LGDS, focusing on topics identified in a 1998

survey. Those priorities included municipal ordinances, zoning regulations, personnel policies, pay plans, job descriptions, and best practices.

In the call for documents now being distributed, you will notice an expanded list of subjects, including sample budgets, charters, management/organizational studies, resolutions, technology plans, policies and procedures, and utility rates. According to Tracy Miller, the library’s administrator, the biggest information gaps are in the areas of police and fire, emergency management, public works, and social and youth services.

Documents should be provided in electronic form (as an email attachment or on floppy disk, zip disk, or CD ROM).

The Innovation Groups continues to enhance the LGDS Web site, having recently unveiled an updated, more user-friendly format. We invite all Institute members to visit LGDS to see these improvements.

The value and relevance of LGDS depends on a continuous addition of materials into the system. Please help us in this endeavor.

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*For more information on LGDS, contact Tedd Povar at 804/371-0202. ▼*

## **INSTITUTE UPDATE**

### ***Electronic Information Services***

The Institute recently completed a Web site for the **Richmond Metropolitan Authority (RMA)** and is currently developing a site for the **Treasurers’ Association of Virginia**. Materials from the fall ‘98 and spring ‘99 conferences of the **Local Government Attorneys of Virginia, Inc.**, have been added to the association’s electronic bulletin board and can be downloaded.

The Institute created an integrated database for the Web site of the **Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC)**, the primary sponsor of the 1999 Virginia GIS conference. The database allowed prospective presenters to enter proposals for presentations at the October conference easily and quickly. (The submission deadline has passed.)

Staff of the **Town of Marion** can now administer their own Web site, expanding its scope and updating information, thanks to training provided by the Institute.

All of the Web sites mentioned above can be accessed through the Institute’s site at [www.institute.virginia.edu](http://www.institute.virginia.edu).

### ***Programs***

**Summit II on the Condition and Future of Virginia’s Cities.** Cosponsored with the Cooper Center for Public Service in partnership with the Moss Commission. June 7 in Charlottesville. Total attending: 255 participants from 176 localities, agencies, and organizations.

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