

## The Morning After

A long time ago the sergeants at Fort Benning, Georgia instructed me to 'never assume nothing'. They said assumption was the mother of all mistakes or colorful words to that effect. Yet, writing this column before the election requires that I make an assumption and go with it.

Okay, yesterday the voters rejected the Tax Referendum.

This morning after you have to wonder why the voters would say no. Almost all the politicians, all the money, and most of the businesses and organizations lined up with Yes! Maybe the vote went as Abraham Lincoln would predict. Honest Abe said "It is true that you may fool all the people some of the time; you can even fool some of the people all the time; but you can't fool all the people all the time".

The Tax Referendum was a bad plan with unfair taxing. Worse, it created a cash machine for un-elected regional government with an open door for corruption. The people weren't fooled (if we lost the election – enjoy the laugh).

The amazing thing about America is that sooner or later – the truth 'will out'. Some people can be bamboozled for a while – this is the country that made P.T.Barnum a rich man – but the majority of the people get it right eventually. The majority of people in York and Poquoson share commonsense ideas about government. Frankly, the majority are not card-carrying Republicans. It's simply that the Republicans, today, honor and champion the same ideas as the majority. The rub comes when some Republicans lose touch with the simple, but profound, concepts that most people live by. Like, fair is fair. The truth 'will out'. A public office is a public trust – for every right, every responsibility, and every tax dollar.

Republican officials must do their homework. If they use the politically spun numbers – like gas taxes must be raised 22 cents or the toll will have to be \$13 dollars one way, etc. – then they shouldn't be surprised if the voters figure it all out.

This morning after - now what? The General Assembly can pass the legislation to (it would flow better as and) do it right. When the plan – to include mass transportation – is ready, the legislators can figure out the best funding formula. If that means more in gas and vehicle taxes, fees and new user fees to add to the Federal and Commonwealth's shares, so be it.

The vote on the Tax Referendum provides such an opportunity for good governance. Keep track of who does what during the General Assembly session in January and February 2003. Our Delegates and Senators can do it right or face the voters. We can elect new representatives if needed.

James Atticus Bowden