

Virginia's March Madness

The most unpredictable basketball tournament, fueled by the passion of youth and scored by the success and errors of amateurs, follows the historical Ides, the time of foulest betrayal, to close a month noted for ending the opposite of how it began. It's all March Madness. This March Virginia's Republicans mimic the madness in their own competition with themselves. No one knows if they will end the month as lions or sacrificial lambs. Republicans are starting this March with a lot of hot wind.

It all began almost a half a year ago. Republican Speaker of House Bill Howell, Attorney General Bob McDonnell and selected Senators and Delegates met secretly to create a 'compromise' transportation deal for Virginia. They knew the Democrats had a winning political issue for the General Assembly elections in November 2007 if the Republicans did nothing on Transportation. The Republicans had to do something. Something always beats nothing. The problem was getting something past His Lordship Sir John Chichester and his tax-and-spend Republicans in the Senate.

Something had to include more money. Higher taxes, but don't call anything a state-wide tax. Neither the higher fees and fines, nor the assorted regional revenues. Furthermore, push the responsibility for raising the new tax revenues off on the cities and counties. So, Republicans can shade the truth and say they didn't raise taxes. RINOs can point to more money, more money, more money - even as the cash surplus continues to flood from 2004's largest tax increase in Virginia history.

Throw in some borrowing which violates the spirit of the Virginia Constitution – by not facing the voters as bonds - and add less than one per cent of the General Fund to complete the funding. Assemble some land reform and shift the burden and some funding for roads from the Commonwealth to the cities and counties. The particulars may be flawed, but imperfection is the expected price of legislative compromise. Finally, in the act, where cynicism triumphs over good governance, re-create the Frankenstein of old regional plans for NoVa and Hampton Roads. Especially for my home here in Tidewater.

The construction projects don't reduce traffic congestion. According to their own analysis the projects INCREASE congestion. After 20 years of construction delays, accidents and death there will be MORE congestion across Hampton Roads. Telling The People otherwise is – no way to sugar coat this – a lie. And a lie about 'regional authorities'.

Whence cometh Regional Government for the 4th time. Rejected by '98 Constitutional Amendment, '02 Transportation Tax Scam Referendum, and '05 votes against Jerry Kilgore's Regionalism, the Republicans in the General Assembly are going to cram it down the voters' throats. Except, super cynically, they rely on 7 Democrat-controlled cities and counties to vote in an unelected, unaccountable, unseparated powers Regional Government for all 13 localities. An expansion, a new level, of government to be dominated by Democrats and feed with \$209m in fun money from Year One – more in following years.

Thus, Republicans betray the principles in their Virginia Republican Creed by raising taxes – as revenues and spending skyrocket – and expanding, not limiting, government against the will of The People.

The Republicans do so with the intent of turning it into a political wedge issue that cuts Republicans vs. Democrats. The fearful panic of losing the majority in the General Assembly and the redistricting power after the 2010 census is palatable. The Republicans are sweating fear of the voters. Enter the new Chairman of the Republican Party of Virginia, and former Republican National Committee chairman, Ed Gillespie.

Ed ran the table faster than a Newark pool shark in his native New Jersey to pick up the coronation election. He is hustling to get a State Central Committee (SCC) vote at the 24 March meeting to support the Republican caucus's Transportation abortion. He may win, but the vote won't be unanimous. I'll vote against it. At the very least, we would have to repeal the prior SCC resolutions with this language:

...That lower taxes create more jobs and more prosperity.

...That higher taxes destroy jobs. That higher taxes will fall most heavily on Virginia's small businesses which create the most new jobs. That Virginians recently overwhelmingly rejected in referenda his earlier scheme to raise taxes.

...Republicans win most elections because Virginians understand that, with us, it's: Promises made, promises kept.

...Virginia's government can and should live within its means.

...What should Virginia families cut from their family budgets to pay for his proposed tax increases?

...The era of higher taxes should be over in Virginia. To really modernize, we should continue the Republican policy to cut taxes, not raise them.

...A truly fair tax system is one which creates jobs and prosperity, not one that destroys both.

This statement about Gov. Mark Warner's 04 Tax increase was ignored by Republicans in the GA who voted for the largest tax increase in Virginia history (prior to 2007).

2. That the State Central Committee of the Republican Party of Virginia calls upon the Republican Caucus of the State Senate to expel Senator Potts from Senate Republican Caucus and to cast all votes necessary to effect the forfeiture of his seniority in the Senate of Virginia (pursuant to Senate Rule 8(a)) and the forfeiture of all of his Committee assignments, and therefore, his Chairmanship of the Committee on Education and Health (pursuant to Senate Rule 20(a)).

Adopted by a vote of the State Central Committee (SCC) of the Republican Party of

Virginia (RPV), March 19, 2005.

Chairman Gillespie authorized a commercial blaming Democrat Governor Kaine using the name of the RPV, but without a vote of the Executive Committee – to the best of my knowledge – and, certainly without the approval of the SCC. Which leads to ultimate insanity of the ‘stra-teg-ery’.

Republicans can run ‘Conservative’ Republicans for city and county governments to stop the tax increases and regional government passed by the Republican majority in the General Assembly. Except, the voters in Virginia aren’t that stupid. Conservatives aren’t that passive.

Conservatives across Virginia who have donated real money or motivated serious advocacy groups are going to meet (probably on the same day as the SCC). The object of their attention will be the Republicans – the Caucus and the RPV.

The Republican Caucus is bleeding Republican voters from the base – again. At some point excessive bleeding is fatal to the Party. Challengers to Republican incumbents must file by April 13th. The primaries close June 12th. If too few good men and women can stand in the breach, then what to do? Unfund the GOP for 07? For 08? Start a new political Party?

Virginia’s March Madness may turn the political status quo on its head. It’s such a fickle month. March 2007 may be, like many historical Aprils, a month of grave decisions.

James Atticus Bowden