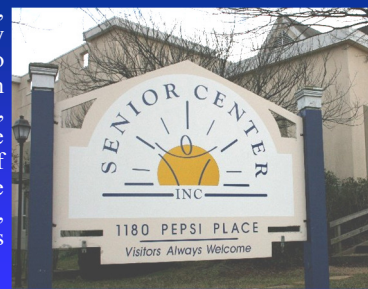


Senior
Statesmen of
Virginia

www.seniorstatesmen.org



The mission of SSV, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, educational and advocacy organization, is to enable seniors to identify and articulate their viewpoints on the issues affecting all citizens of Virginia, to encourage knowledge of and active participation in the legislative process of government, and to disseminate information about the social, governmental, and educational institutions that offer support and assistance.



MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The next meeting of the **Senior Statesmen of Virginia** will be held on
Wednesday, June 8, 2016, 1:30 – 3 p.m.
at the **Senior Center, Inc., 1180 Pepsi Place**

Meredith Richards, Ph.D.

Passenger rail is alive and well in the Commonwealth (but is freight rail on life-support?)

Across the nation, people are demanding more passenger rail service. Virginia is a national leader in funding rail infrastructure and Amtrak services. Six state-supported Amtrak trains connect Virginia to the Northeast Corridor. These are among the most profitable routes in the nation.

Charlottesville is one of Virginia's strongest passenger rail markets in terms of ridership. It has direct, daily trains north to Washington, New York and Boston and south to Charlotte, Atlanta and New Orleans, with east-west service to Chicago three days a week. Future expansions of Charlottesville Amtrak service will require major upgrades to the Charlottesville station.



Passenger rail service is improving, but freight rail is a different story. The unprecedented recent decline in demand for coal is having a dramatic effect upon America's Class I Railroads, which are responding with a policy of retrenchment. This raises questions about the future of rail in Virginia and creates significant public policy challenges for the Commonwealth.

Meredith Richards is a former Charlottesville City Councilor (1996-2004) and vice mayor who has specialized in transportation public policy during her public career. She served three terms as president of Virginians for High Speed Rail (www.vhsr.com) and currently serves as its co-chair. Meredith is also president of the Virginia Rail Policy Institute (www.varpi.org). She formerly served as a member of Governor Mark Warner's

Commission on Rail Enhancement for the 21st Century and was president of the Virginia Transit Association from 1998-2000.

While in elective office, Meredith served on regional and statewide boards, including the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, the Thomas Jefferson Partnership for Economic Development, Virginia First Cities Coalition and the Virginia Municipal League.

Meredith founded and is chairman of CvilleRail, a nonprofit that promotes enhanced passenger rail for Central Virginia, and she established the Piedmont Rail Coalition, a consortium of local governments, economic development authorities, organizations, businesses and citizens throughout Virginia's US29 corridor who work together to bring more frequent and accessible passenger rail to the region.

Meredith holds a Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Illinois and is a former faculty member of the University of Virginia and the University of Louisville.

The program is **free and open to the public** and will be moderated by SSV Vice President **Rich DeMong**.

In case you missed the May 11 Meeting:

Senator Creigh Deeds, and Delegates Steve Landes and David Toscano reported on the 2016 Session of the Virginia General Assembly.

Delegate Toscano led off with a PowerPoint presentation characterizing the actions taken during the session as, “the good, the bad and the funny.” Definitely in the latter category was HB 335 which established the Eastern Garter Snake as the official snake of the Commonwealth and consolidates the Northern Cardinal as the state bird and the American Dogwood as the state tree. SB 352, sponsored by Senator Deeds, designates Nelsonite as the state rock. HB 1142 allows the hunting of wild birds and animals—except deer, bear, elk and turkey—with a sling shot! Moving to more substantive issues, an investment of almost \$1 billion was made in K-12 education. Teachers will receive a two percent raise midyear, \$300 million in new dollars was appropriated for higher education and \$12.5 million in new dollars for community colleges. Delegate Toscano concluded with a review of the numerous actions taken that bear on Virginia’s economy.

Senator Deeds emphasized three points about the session. He noted that over his years of service, things have become increasingly more partisan, yet in this session, both sides joined together for the good of education. Similarly, the gun legislation offered something to like and dislike for everyone. The overturning of Supreme Court Justice Jane Roush was the first time in over 100 years that a sitting governor’s appointment to the Supreme Court was not confirmed.

Delegate Landes made available detailed printed copies of the session highlights and then concentrated his remarks on the budget, education, economic development, restoration of rights, and the process for the appointment of Supreme Court justices. Because of his committee assignments, he spends a lot of time on the state budget which was approved this session for a total of \$105 billion for the biennium.

You can listen to the entire presentation on the Charlottesville Podcasting Network at:

<http://www.cvilpodcast.com/category/senior-statesmen/>



Photo courtesy of Dan Gould, Charlottesville Podcasting network

Mark your calendar

Important reminder: in keeping with SSV tradition, NO meeting in July

Wednesday, August 10: Congressional Candidates Forum.

*Membership in the SSV is open to all past and present citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. **Join now!** Annual dues are just \$20.00. Mail your check in the amount of \$20.00 (payable to “SSV”) to Senior Statesmen of Virginia, P.O. Box 6591, Charlottesville, VA 22906. Telephone: 434-806-4474. E-mail: jimp@videoprovirginia.com*

Please visit our website at: www.seniorstatesmen.org/

Senior Statesmen of Virginia

P.O. Box 6591
Charlottesville, VA 22906