

**VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS  
PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Remarks by Alan Lee  
Secretary/Treasurer of VASS and  
Superintendent of Washington County Schools**

Predictions for Virginia's revenues, used to fund education, social services, law enforcement and our infrastructure continue to be dire. The governor necessarily has had to reexamine the proposed budget for fiscal year 2009-2010.

That reexamination has resulted in his proposal to reduce the funding to all of the entities receiving support, including the public schools. This is a legitimate response from the governor. However, he is proposing that the reductions, which he has characterized as being from funds allocated to support of administration and support staff, be made permanent.

I am uncertain why the governor's advisors would have concluded and then recommended to him that the cuts be permanent. However, I do know that those who are inexperienced in the operation of schools often generate proposals intended to cause school systems to operate more efficiently. These well-intended proposals sometimes are founded on a hope that education, like production in a manufacturing plant or the end-of-the-day receipts, can be evaluated by precise measurements of student achievement. And, it then follows that a belief is adopted that student growth can be quantified and used to suggest targeted reductions to enhance efficiency. This sort of thinking is fallacious.

Schools are complex institutions that marshal their resources to provide a full array of opportunities for children to learn and develop into valued citizens. It is not possible to accurately measure the impact of a targeted input that is associated with a child's education. Just as a good parent will not say "our children have learned enough, have had enough enriching experiences, have done all the things that will benefit them in the future, good schools are those that strive to provide as many enriching experiences as possible knowing that children's needs are so varied.

Virginia funding for education has been instrumental in Washington County Public Schools students achieving outstanding results on the Standards of Learning tests, going on to be successful in post-high school careers and education, and permitting us to have a rich array of programs that "catch and keep" kids in school. It would be detrimental to our efforts to assume that cuts can be made without negative impact. To make those cuts permanent will have a devastating impact on our programs into the unforeseeable future.

Washington County has been reducing expenditures, shelving capital needs, leaving vacancies unfilled, and identifying one-time funding sources, and these efforts will permit us to keep programs in place for 2009-2010. However, during the second year of the proposed reductions when the one time monies will have been exhausted, Washington County Schools would need to respond to the shortfall by reducing our administrative staff by 12 positions and our support staff by 79 positions. Such reductions will devastate in our county. I suspect the proposed permanency of the reductions will have similar results across the Commonwealth.

I urge the legislature to do what is necessary to guide Virginia through the near and longterm fiscal future, but to reject proposals for permanent school funding reductions.