

**Commission on Civics Education**  
**Monday, December 4, 2006**  
**The Virginia Historical Society**  
**Richmond, Virginia**  
**2 p.m.**

**Meeting Summary**

The Commission on Civics Education, established by House Bill 1769 as an advisory commission in the executive branch of state government, held its fifth meeting on December 4, 2006.

**Members Present**

The Honorable Kenneth C. Alexander  
Carmela C. Bills  
Dr. Stephen G. Bragaw  
Thomas C. Coen  
The Honorable James H. Dillard, II  
Dr. Sheila G. Hill  
Glen H. Hoptman  
The Honorable William Roscoe Reynolds  
Kenneth S. Stroupe, Jr.  
Richard C. Sullivan, Jr.  
The Honorable Robert Tata  
Kathryn Williams

**Ex-Officio Present**

Jean Bankos (Designee for The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine)  
James Firebaugh (Designee for Dr. Billy K. Cannaday, Jr.)

**Ex-Officio Absent**

Dr. Mark E. Emblidge  
Jeremy Greenfield (Designee for The Honorable Bill Bolling)  
David E. Johnson (Designee for The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell)  
Dr. Barbara A. Perry

**Members Absent**

The Honorable Frederick M. Quayle  
The Honorable Beverly J. Sherwood  
J. Westwood Smithers, Jr.  
Ginger Stanley  
The Honorable R. Lee Ware, Jr.

**Department of Education**

Betsy Barton  
Joel M. Dexter  
Dr. Beverly Thurston

**Other Persons in Attendance**

Colleen Bryant  
Bill Obrochta

**Welcome**

The Honorable Robert Tata called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. and completed the roll call. The minutes from the September 18, 2006, meeting of the Commission on Civics Education were approved.

## Presentations and Discussions

Stephen Bragaw:

- Report on the Fourth Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education
  - The conference was created as a network of state civics organizations.
  - It provides information on what is happening in other states related to civics education.
  - Virginia is considered as the “Gold Standard” because of the *Standards of Learning* and Commission on Civics Education.
  
- Presentation about the Southern Coalition for Civic Education
  - Twelve southern states met last year as an outgrowth of the national meeting.
  - Resources are provided by the coalition for professional development.
  - North Carolina and Kentucky are considered the prime movers.
  - Virginia and Missouri are seen as having “model civic education programs.”
  - Funding comes from national civics organizations.
  - The coalition is trying to bring more uniformity to civics education.

There were questions concerning what constituted “uniformity.” It was explained that there was considerable diversity in how the member states approached teaching civics. The focus is on state, not national, standards.

- Programs offered by the Center for Civic Renewal
  - Street Law, which is both a course in Practical Law and a high school textbook.
  - Project Citizen
    - This program is part of the curriculum for existing courses.
    - Forty-two different countries are participating.
    - A “learn by joining” model is used.
    - Real world examples are provided.
    - Local officials are contacted and provide feedback on issues selected by students.

The commission was favorably impressed by the emphasis on local government involvement. It was pointed out that this is the level at which students can observe and interact most effectively. Presenting to adults also encourages students to know their issues and causes well, since the responses and questions from the officials are sometimes unpredictable and therefore more challenging.

## Subcommittee Reports

- Civic Education – Dr. Stephen G. Bragaw
  - Several two-day regional seminars were proposed to serve thirty public school teachers each.
  - They will be provided by Dr. Barbara Perry and Dr. Stephen Bragaw of The Center for Civic Renewal and the Virginia Law-Related Education Center.
  - They will focus on content applicable to Virginia’s *Standards of Learning*.
  - Model units will be created by participants.
  - Funding will be provided by the Virginia Commission on Civics Education.
  
- Curriculum and Instruction – The Honorable James Dillard
  - The commission should focus on making the available resources more accessible for teachers.
  - A new edition of The Good People of Virginia was proposed.
  - There was discussion of possible changes in licensure requirements for teaching civics.
  - The importance of the upcoming review of the *Standards of Learning* was stressed.
  
- Professional Development – The Honorable William Roscoe Reynolds
  - The need for maintaining the EveryDay Civics site was highlighted.
  - Possible additional uses for the site were encouraged.
  - There was a suggestion that teacher training programs across grade levels be developed.
  - Increased collaboration with businesses was encouraged to support civics instruction.

There was discussion of the upcoming hearings on changes in licensure requirements for teachers of civics. The commission voted unanimously for the Honorable James Dillard to represent the commission’s interests at those hearings. There were also many suggestions concerning Dr. Bragaw’s proposal for seminars to support civics education. There was a concern that more teachers might be reached through a publication. There was also interest in both the composition of the intended audience and in the selection process for the seminars. Some wanted to target teachers from low-performing schools. Others wanted to look at the feasibility of inviting newer teachers rather than the current leaders in the schools. It was thought that teachers with four to seven years of experience might be an ideal audience. In order to ensure accountability, participants would produce lesson plans to be shared with teachers from across the state. By a vote of ten to two, the commission gave approval to proceed with planning the seminars, but also to monitor closely and reevaluate while the process moves forward.

## Adjournment

The Honorable Robert Tata adjourned the meeting at 4:15 p.m.