



Loudoun County

VIRGINIA

WHERE TRADITION MEETS INNOVATION

AMERICA, MEET LOUDOUN COUNTY *The impact of Loudoun County as we step on the National Stage*

State of the County Address

Chair Phyllis J. Randall

May 22, 2019

On January 2nd, 2016, the current Board of Supervisors held a ceremonial swearing in. That moment marked the first time in Loudoun's recent history that Democrats and Republicans were sworn in together, signaling to all Loudoun citizens the elections were over, and we were committed to coming together to work for the good of all county residents. During my installation speech, I looked at the Supervisor from the Ashburn District and said to him, "if you and I can commit to working together during this term, we will be able to accomplish great things for our county and move us onto the National Stage." When I said those words, even I wasn't convinced a Republican man, and a Democratic woman could forge, not just a working relationship, but eventually a lasting friendship. At a time when the word compromise has become forbidden, when working across the aisle is seen as a betrayal of one's Political Party, and when actually agreeing with someone from the other side of the aisle could end one's political career, Ralph and I forming a collaborative relationship seemed to be an almost impossible idea. If I'm honest, what the Vice Chair and I have achieved has not come easily. Obviously, we have disagreements. In fact, we've even had one room-clearing argument; but what we have never done was question one another's, motives, integrity or commitment to the County we love. As Mr. Buona enters his

last months on this board, I can honestly say he and I have found far more that unites us than divides us, and we've had many more laughs than harsh words. Ralph is yes...stubborn... but he is also kind. Ralph has strong opinions and he will share them with you if you ask, and sometimes even when you don't ask; but Ralph is also very hard working with a commanding grasp of the facts. Chris, Ralph is most cranky when you're out of town, but that's kind of endearing. Although not always apparent, Ralph has a great sense of humor. Over the holiday season, five members of our board toured the New Academies of Loudoun. As we entered the school's Greenhouse, Mr. Saines misspoke, instead of saying, "Oh, you're preparing for your Poinsettia sale, he said, "Oh you're preparing for your placenta sale." Without missing a beat Ralph said, "You better believe I'm not buying any of those." Ralph Mark Buona has served his Country, his Commonwealth and his County. He is my friend, and I will miss him. Ralph, please stand and receive your well-deserved acknowledgement.

I believe the story of Chair Randall and Vice Chair Buona—Phyllis and Ralph—is a lesson that can be instructive for so many legislators, not just across the Commonwealth, but across the Country. A lesson of what can happen when legislators, at every level, put down their egos, put away their pride and focus on the people they represent.

When I became Chair, I was committed to Loudoun achieving a higher profile in the Region, the Commonwealth and the Country. I thank the Vice Chair for sharing my vision, even though I wasn't clear how I would accomplish that goal. What I soon realized, the people in Loudoun—our partners, citizens and staff, led by County Administrator Tim Hemstreet, would lift Loudoun onto the world's stage.

Staff like Buddy Rizer and his team in the Economic Development Department have grown Loudoun's tech sector to be the envy of the nation. Some might think it's simply because of the impressive amounts of dark fiber we have in Loudoun, or the county's location near the Nation's Capital that has resulted in over 70 % of the world's internet traffic travelling through Loudoun County, but it's Buddy who seized that opportunity, it's Buddy who continually asked the question "what's next

in innovation and how can we take advantage of it in Loudoun.” It’s Buddy and his team in the Department of Economic Development who are to be credited with bringing 352 Economic Wins totaling almost 16,000 jobs, (sixteen thousand) jobs and over 1.1 billion dollars in Commercial Tax Revenue to Loudoun during this Board’s term. But tech is not the only sector that has yielded success for Loudoun’s economy. During this Board’s term, Loudoun’s rural economy—our wineries, breweries, farms and equestrian industry—have produced over 24 million dollars in Transit Occupancy Tax, a 28% increase from Fiscal Year 16 to the present, with a projected increase of 15% more in Fiscal Year 2020.

While we are pleased that our rural economy has generated significant profits, we continue to be concerned that, like the region and the Country, Loudoun is losing precious farmland. Although this Board of Supervisors has not approved a single new home in Rural Loudoun County, due to by-right development, we have lost over 12 thousand acres of farmland. However, through the efforts of our Economic Development Department and our Rural Economic Development Committee, over the course of this Board’s term, we’ve increased rural Loudoun’s harvest by 5.7%. In fact, during our term, revenue from Loudoun farm products increased from 37 million to 44 million dollars, a 19 percent increase.

A Key Loudoun partner working closely with Buddy, his staff, and the Rural Economic Development Committee is Visit Loudoun, the tourism arm of our County. Beth Erickson’s team and the Visit Loudoun Board had the foresight to realize the rolling hills, beautiful vistas, and heritage farms of Western Loudoun could be home to: DC’s Wine Country, spectacular wedding venues, vibrant breweries, unique farm-to-table restaurants and a very profitable equine industry. The brain trust that is Buddy and Beth has developed Loudoun’s newest rural initiative, “Take Loudoun Home.” This program encourages people to not only visit our rural venues, but to contribute to the rural economy by purchasing locally grown products.

From Data Center Alley in the East, to event venues and farms in the West, Loudoun’s strong economy is the reason we have been able to lower

your property taxes year after year. The Economic Development Department, led by Buddy Rizer, and Visit Loudoun, led by Beth Erickson, are indeed teaching not just our region, but the Commonwealth and the Country how to manage a multi-faceted county with very diverse geographical areas and industries. Buddy and Beth, I would appreciate it if you and the members of your team would please stand and be recognized for a job well done.

Loudoun, it's not enough for our people to impact the country from our home base, our perch if you will. We have to reach out to other communities and counties, and we have to be willing to respond when they reach out to us. About a year ago, I received a phone call from the chairman of a county in Mississippi I had never heard of, Holmes County. Loudoun, as you know, we are fortunate to be the county in the country with the highest median income. As it turns out, at \$26,000 dollars, Holmes County has the lowest median income of any county in the Country. The Holmes County Chairman called me to discuss a possible Sister County relationship between our two counties. It was...to say the least...an interesting idea. However, what I quickly realized is that the issue of vast income disparity in America's counties is more than just a tale of two counties. It is a much more complex issue, inviting a serious, national discussion. Wanting to broaden the conversation, I made a call to Matt Chase, the Executive Director of the National Association of Counties (NACO). Director Chase informed me my call to him was timely. The discussion about gross income disparity in America's counties is one NACO not only wants to have, but they have asked the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation to help facilitate that discussion. To make a year-long story short, I'm pleased to announce that Loudoun County, Virginia and Holmes County, Mississippi are the first two of 20 counties in the country to be selected to lead a national conversation about income disparity at the county level. That's the impact Loudoun is having at the national level. By the way, Loudoun and Holmes County have signed documents cementing our Sister County relationship, and our staffs are already in discussion regarding how we can help one another. Loudoun, the Chair of Holmes County was not able to be with us this

evening, but I'm pleased Mr. Matt Chase, executive director from the National Association of Counties, has joined us. Matt will you please stand.

Our increased involvement in the National Association of Counties marks a new day for Loudoun and serves as an explicit declaration that our county is primed to step onto the national stage to be recognized as one of the premier counties in the country. Loudoun, I'm proud to announce that in July, as Counties from across America gather at the NACO conference in Clark County, Nevada, I will be the first elected official from Loudoun County to take the stage and speak to the full membership of the National Association of Counties. more importantly, and really very exciting, in July, at the NACO Conference, Loudoun County Administrator, Mr. Tim Hemstreet, will take the reins as President of the National Association of County Administrators. Loudoun, this is a HUGE moment for our county and a message that we are no longer a bedroom community for Washington DC, but a county to be reckoned with, able to stand toe-to-toe, shoulder-to-shoulder and side-by-side with other influential, growing, and thriving counties in our country.

Loudoun, as we boldly and proudly take our place on the national stage, it's so important we remember that the opportunity to reap the benefits of living in the best county in the country belongs to every Loudoun Citizen. Earlier in my term, Mr. Kim Hart invited my Chief of Staff, Bo Machayo, and me to go with him to some of Loudoun's least prioritized communities, including Willisville, Saint Louis and Howardsville. Toward the end of the day, I met a remarkable man whose family has lived in Howardsville for generations. The day I met Mr. Thomas Reid, affectionately known as "Bubbles," was perhaps my hardest day as County Chair. Walking through the Hamlet of Howardsville, I was humbled to come face-to-face with a small community of African-Americans who have been part of the greatness that is our county but whose stories have not been told, nor have they realized the rewards of living in a wealthy county. When Mr. Reid graciously welcomed us into his home, I learned he had no running water or bathroom facilities. No way to wash his clothes, to take a shower or even just to get a drink of

water. When I asked Mr. Reid how he was living, he said to me, “The same way my ancestors lived.” Then he said something to me that made me know I had to address this situation...with all deliberate speed. Looking me straight in my eyes Mr. Reid said, “No one has ever cared about us out here.” Loudoun, how is it that, right in our County, we have an entire community that time forgot, and what, as the County Chair, is my responsibility to them? On the day I was sworn into office, I said to the people of Loudoun County, no matter who you are, no matter your race, age, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, color or who you love “I would see you.” After that day, Bo and I held 16 (sixteen) meetings, organized a community town hall, and worked with stakeholders and staff to explore how to expedite the process of bringing a Wastewater Treatment System to the Howardsville Community. I am pleased to say that along the way, we found others who shared our concerns, including Loudoun County Attorney, Leo Rogers, county staff, especially Scott Fincham and Antwaun Jackson, the staff and Board Members at Loudoun Water and of course Mr. Kim Hart. They joined Bo and ME in our shared urgency and commitment to ensure everyone living in Loudoun County has basic access to water.

Loudoun, I’m happy to report the Board of Supervisors shared my vision and passed my motion to construct a Wastewater Treatment System that is planned to begin early next year and finally give this community access to water. I want to thank Mr. Thomas Reid for inviting me into his home, telling me his life story, and reminding all of us that our strength on the world’s stage is first predicated on taking care of every Loudoun Citizen. I ask Mr. Kim Hart and Mr. Thomas Reid to stand and be acknowledged.

Mr. Kim Hart has been a driving force for attainable housing for decades. Like the entire nation, our county is facing an affordable housing crisis that we must respond to. This year at a comprehensive plan work session, I made the motion requesting the creation of a strategic plan to address our unmet housing needs and explore various ways to ensure that going forward, Loudoun will become a county where our firefighters, teachers, nurses, wait and retail staff can live. After eighteen years, it is imperative we complete a countywide comprehensive plan that includes a strategic

housing component. I want to thank Ms. Sarah Etro who will be at the forefront of reforming our housing policies just as she was when the last general plan was adopted. Sarah has been a true gem in Loudoun.

One of the other gems of our County, receiving more national recognition than almost any other department, is our Loudoun County Public Library. While our Library Staff and Board hope our residents visit our libraries and get lost in the roaring twenties reading the Great Gatsby or join Captain Ahab in his quest to exact revenge on the white whale, today's modern library system offers many other public services. In fact, Loudoun's Libraries shine as our most visited and used county service. Our libraries are teen centers, where on a Friday night you will find scores of students, public internet stations where residents write resumes, meeting rooms for public gatherings, and children's reading hours where I hope some lucky kid is reading my favorite childhood book...The Small Pig. It's no wonder that during the past three years, Loudoun's library staff has won numerous awards. Most notably, Library Director Chang Liu has been honored with the Ernest A. DiMattia Award, for Innovation and Service to Community and Profession, from the American Library Association. In addition, the Chair of our Library Board of Trustees, Mr. Mark Miller, has been awarded two Trustee Citations, from both the Virginia Association of Counties and the National Association of Counties. Loudoun, while every major county has a library system, it's Chang Liu, Mark Miller and Loudoun's Library services board and Staff who have built our Library System into one that is nationally recognized for excellence. Director Liu and Chair Miller have joined us tonight. Please join me in thanking them for putting our library system on the national stage.

Loudoun, all too often when we talk about law enforcement it's in response to a negative story with an unfortunate outcome. Across the country, thousands of law enforcement officers get up every morning, put on the uniform and answer the call to protect and serve, and we thank them for that service. In Loudoun, we are fortunate to have an officer who has created a program that could be a model for the country. Deputy First

Class Officer, Christina Evans, a nineteen-year veteran of the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office developed the "project first responders program." Realizing that people who may be on the autism spectrum can be more vulnerable during an emergency situation where law enforcement is present, Deputy Evans worked in concert with Loudoun County Public Schools, in order to educate emergency responders in identifying students with autism to successfully manage an emergency situation. "Project First Responders" allows family members and caregivers to provide crucial information about a student on the autism spectrum. First responders have access to details about proper interactions and care for the student, thus ensuring law enforcement can extend individualized assistance to the student and help navigate tense, uncertain or even frightening situations. Deputy Evans' passion and enthusiasm for helping others, and her assistance to people who may not always be able to advocate for themselves, were recognized as ground breaking. It's not just my hope, it's my belief that this type of program is one that should be duplicated across the country and could eventually help thousands of individuals and families. Please join me in thanking Deputy First Class Christina Evans for her care and diligence. Deputy Evans, please stand.

Loudoun continues to impact, lead and receive national recognition in other areas. When this board took the dais, we didn't have a Solar Program. I was in office for a few short weeks when Bob Lazaro, Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC), brought to my attention the "Solarize NoVA Program." With the information and resources provided by Mr. Lazaro and NVRC, I proposed to our County Administrator a "Solarize Loudoun" program. Funded through the U.S. Department of Energy, the "SolSmart Program" recognizes communities from across the nation that have taken key steps to address local barriers to solar energy and foster the growth of a local solar market. County staff, from General Services, Planning and Zoning, Building and Development and Fire and Rescue, all contributed to the application which successfully achieved a "SolSmart Silver Designation". This award was presented at the National Association of Counties

Legislative Conference in February of this year. With the addition of “Solarize Loudoun” and our new Commercial Property Accessed Clean Energy Program, known as Commercial PACE, Loudoun is focusing more on renewable and sustainable green energy solutions. I hope that far into the future our youngest citizens will know that we, the community and elected leaders who came before, realized our greatest responsibility was to them, and that we only have one earth to bequeath to those who follow us.

As we go forward, what I know without a doubt is that Loudoun’s positive impact on our country and our world will continue to grow. I know that because one of my greatest pleasures as County Chair is how much time I’m able to spend with our young people, our next generation. Dr. Williams, we can all be proud of a 96% on-time graduation rate in the Loudoun County Public Schools system, as well as a matriculation rate well above the national average. During past State of the County addresses, I’ve made it a point to highlight the talent, strength, bravery and brilliance of young people in Loudoun. Tonight, I am pleased to continue this practice as I introduce to some, and present to others, two remarkable young ladies.

At the young age of fourteen, Alana Andrews had already written two books...two. Her first book “Timeless: Poetry from the Soul of a Teen’s Heart.” is a collection of reflective, authentic, expressive poems meant to encourage people of all ages. One review of “Timeless” states “This book of poetry will inspire, move and entertain you. Alana writes from the soul of her heart.” Alana’s second book, “Creating Confidence” is described as a blueprint for how young people can overcome obstacles, project self-assurance and rise to one’s highest potential. “Creating Confidence” is a companion book to Alana’s nonprofit, “So Positive, Inc.” Yes, she’s also a CEO and Founder of a nonprofit. At just 15 years old, Alana has dedicated her young life to encouraging others to be their best selves, while understanding the struggles, pain and pressures our young people face. Wise beyond her years and caring beyond the capacity of many, Alana is boldly stepping onto the world’s stage, making a name for herself and for our county.

Alana is joined today by another young woman. Two years ago, Ken Courter asked me to meet Allisyn Lam. He didn't say why, but I'm always willing to meet a young person and offer assistance if possible. When I first met Allisyn, she began to tell me about how she was trying to raise money for an orphanage in Kenya...Kenya. Although confused, I continued to listen as she explained that the kids in the Asande orphanage receive poor medical care and don't have many educational opportunities, especially the girls who are considered less valuable. Allisyn came to know about the plight of the kids at the Asande Orphanage from a woman who works with her mother at Stone Springs Hospital, Rosafina Royce.

It turns out Rosafina's sister was running the orphanage in Kenya for kids as young as four whose parents had died or, for whatever reason, were not available to parent their child. Rosafina herself has two jobs to send money back to her sister for the children in the orphanage. As Allyson told me this story of how she was trying to raise money, I was impressed but perplexed. Thinking that maybe I missed her connection to the kids in the Asande Orphanage in Kenya, I asked her why she was doing this; maybe a church mission trip or a school project. Allisyn looked at me and said, "Chair Randall they need my help. God wants me to help them."

Allisyn Lam at 15 years old, has taken it upon herself to raise and send money to kids in an orphanage on the other side of the world she does not know and with whom she has no connection, just because she wants to help. Allyson raised \$5000 to help them purchase school uniforms, because without them, the kids are not allowed to go to school. On the screen behind me, please see the before and after pictures of the kids in their school uniforms. This is what one young lady has done for 33 young people in Kenya...and she lives right here in Loudoun County. Allisyn's goal is to raise money for their other needs, such as medical care and malaria nets. She wants to eventually build a nonprofit, "The Orphanage Outreach Operation," to be able to help more schools and communities and support family operated orphanages worldwide.

Alana and Allisyn are the reason we all do what we do. Loudoun, as proud as I may be to vote on a road project or a new building, what I know for

sure—and I know I speak for Vice Chair Buona when I say this—the real legacy of any elected official is measured by the lives we improve. Will you all please join me in recognizing these remarkable young ladies Alana Andrews and Allisyn Lam.

So now the time has come, the moment when I declare the State of our County; but we are such a complex, diverse, and inclusive county, that a single word could not possibly cover all that we are. Because of the work of Buddy and Beth, the State of our County is innovative and dynamic. When I think of Thomas Reid and Kim Hart, I say the State of our County is historic and hopeful. Chang and Mark make me realize the State of our County is forward thinking and thirsty for knowledge. When I think of Cristina Evans the State of our county is dedicated and safe. And with Alana and Allisyn, the state of our county is bright and promising.

I'll end where I started; with two people. With the Chair at Large of Loudoun County, and my friend the Vice Chair. Mr. Vice Chairman, board Colleagues, Mr. Hemstreet, ladies and gentlemen of Loudoun, The State of our County, the State of the Best County in the Country, is inclusive, vibrant, brilliant, advancing, and yes, the State of Loudoun County is **STRONG**.

Thank you very much, and I'll see you all next year.