

VIRGINIA'S NEWS LEADER

Richmond Times-Dispatch

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EVA RUSSO, TIMES-DISPATCH

Gov. Glenn Youngkin touts his tax cut plan to community members gathered around the fountain at Westwood Pharmacy in Richmond on Thursday.

Youngkin: 'no hurry' on gap

Governor says he will consider calling special budget session in spring

DAVE RESS
Richmond Times-Dispatch

The whispered worry as legislators think about closing a \$1 billion gap between the House of Delegates and state Senate budgets is that failing to do so will mean a special session this spring — just as more than 35 legislators face primary contests.

And the man who could call a special session, Gov. Glenn Youngkin,

pausing for a moment Thursday after talking up his \$1 billion tax reduction to a friendly Henrico County crowd, says he's non-committal about the possibility.

"We're not at a terribly different place than we were last year," Youngkin said. "We had a big gap, and we worked it out. I'm in no hurry; I'm here all summer."

In 2022, the House and Senate agreed June 1 on a budget in a special session; legislators voted on Youngkin's amendments two weeks before the July 1 start of the fiscal year for which the budget detailed spending.

This year, the House budget would enact Youngkin's \$1 billion tax cut plan

— lowering the top individual income tax rate from 5.75% to 5.5%, boosting the standard deduction and lowering corporate income taxes from 6% to 5% — while the Senate proposes using that \$1 billion mainly to boost state funds for K-12 education and to expand on Youngkin's \$230 million boost for mental health programs.

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WATCH: Gov. Glenn Youngkin meets with locals at Westwood Fountain. Aim your smartphone camera at this code and tap the link. **NEWSVU**

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AG seeks key change to solitary confinement

Critics vow to draw 'line in the sand' on Miyares' request

LUCA POWELL
Richmond Times-Dispatch

An 11th-hour call from the Office of Attorney General Jason Miyares is behind the reason why a House bill to reform solitary confinement has hit the skids.

During the current legislative session, two bills have been introduced to reform solitary confinement of inmates, one in the House of Delegates and another in the state Senate. The House's version was sponsored by Del. Glenn Davis, R-Virginia Beach.

Both initially included requirements that Virginia would no longer hold prisoners for more than 15 days.

But recently, after a conference on the House's version of the bill, Davis said he received a call from a staff member in Miyares' office who asked him to pull the 15-day limit.

"The concern expressed by the attorney general's office was that, if we put it in code, and didn't list all potential exceptions, then something might arise and open up an avenue for litigation," Davis said.

The Department of Corrections maintains that it does not allow solitary confinement, but "restorative housing."



Miyares

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■ **RICHMOND.COM:** Join The Times-Dispatch political team Friday at 2 p.m. for a live recap of the week's news from the General Assembly.

BREACH

Va. Lottery passwords hacked

Personal, financial data not impacted

MICHAEL MARTZ
Richmond Times-Dispatch

The Virginia Lottery has a new message for online customers — don't play games with passwords.

About 1,000 online lottery accounts were compromised earlier this month when the state agency noticed "irregular activity" after outside hackers obtained pass-

words that account owners had used elsewhere. The lottery temporarily locked affected accounts until customers changed their passwords to prevent access to sensitive information.

"No personal or financial information was obtained or compromised," spokesman John Hagerly said Thursday.

"It was a teaching moment, absolutely," Hagerly said. "We feel like our security procedures worked and are working as designed."

The lottery notified online players on Feb. 9 that some accounts had been compromised by use of email addresses and passwords that internet hackers had obtained elsewhere. The information allowed hackers to access accounts, but not "personal identifiable information," such as Social Security numbers or banking information, which are not displayed.

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CHRONICLING LIFE

As he crosses US, man finds the ties that bind us

When it came time to retire last year, Greg Leeson didn't want an aimless retirement, so he planned something, and *something* turned out to be leaving his home in Illinois and traveling around the country, talking to people and telling their stories.

All against a national backdrop of division.



BILL LOHMANN

His conclusion so far? "You realize we're not all that different after all," Leeson said.

Leeson visited Richmond earlier this week as part of his nationwide journey, which will include stops in 39 states before he wraps up at the end of June. He set off on

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Trump election probe grand jury believes some witnesses lied
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Weather
Morning rain, then cloudy
High 65
Low 28
FORECAST • A18

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Opinions	A11	Obituaries	A16	Marketplace	B6
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Proposed Rx affordability board defeated

CHARLOTTE RENE WOODS
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Del. Kathy Byron, R-Bedford, who chairs the House Commerce and Energy Committee, says she shares colleagues' desire to lower prescription drug costs. But ultimately, she and some other lawmakers disagree on how to achieve the goal.

A subcommittee of the panel voted 3-2 to lay Senate Bill 957 on the table — meaning it will no longer progress through this legislative session. A House version of the bill was defeated earlier this session.

"We're also very concerned about prescription drugs and we may not necessarily agree on the way to get it," Byron said just before the vote.

The measure proposed by Sen. Chap Petersen, D-Fairfax City, would have created a board with authority to review sudden price

increases on prescription medicine and set a limit on what pharmaceutical manufacturers can charge people for them.

The bill passed the Senate 26-13 on Feb. 3, with five Republicans supporting the measure.

"The model that we [currently] have for delivering medications is very tilted towards the suppliers," Petersen said during a news conference last month.

He also noted the strain of costs on people who live on fixed or low incomes.

"It really extracts a lot of resources away from people that have very few resources," he said.

The legislation would have built on federal law. While Congress' Inflation Reduction Act caps insulin costs for people who use Medicare and emboldens Medicare to negotiate drug prices, Petersen said the Prescription Drug Affordability

Board would be able to also help the millions of Virginians who are not enrolled in Medicare.

Sen. Frank Ruff, R-Mecklenburg, spoke earlier this month against its passage. He cited concerns the board could "send the wrong message" and worries that it could make Virginia less attractive to clinical trials and pharmaceutical companies.

Foreshadowing Byron's Thursday statement, Ruff had said: "We all want to lower the price of health care, but I'm not sure this is the right vehicle."

After the bill was defeated, Petersen said he was disappointed.

"We will be back next year, and we'll get this done," he said.

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ALEXA WELCH EDLUND, TIMES-DISPATCH

Del. Kathy Byron, R-Bedford, speaks during a House of Delegates session at the state Capitol in Richmond on Jan. 23.

Lohmann

From A1

June. He set off on his adventure on May 1, 2022, the day he turned 65.

He maintains a website where he blogs about the places he's visited and the people he's interviewed — thelifechronicler.com — with a long-range goal of publishing a book when he's done.

Leeson grew up in Canada and has lived in the United States since the early 1980s, but it was a trip back to his home province of Nova Scotia for his 40th high school reunion in 2015 that helped set all of this in motion.

Conversations with classmates made him start to wonder about collecting the interesting stories of "ordinary" people and sharing them with a wider audience.

He was inspired by other projects, such as StoryCorps, which features the stories of people from all walks of life. He also wanted to see more of the country of which he became a citizen in 2021.



COURTESY OF GREG LEESON

Greg Leeson, seen here at the Statue of Liberty, lives in Illinois. He set off on his adventure on May 1, 2022, the day he turned 65. Leeson maintains a website where he blogs about the places he's visited and the people he's interviewed with a long-range goal of publishing a book when he's done.

Leeson comes to this project not as a journalist — he has worked as an investment banker, software engineer and project manager — but as someone who will "talk to any person, anywhere and time."

On the latter portion of the trip, he's discovered a good way to meet people is by speaking at places such as Rotary Clubs. Besides such meetings, when he arrives in a new place, he often visits churches, libraries and

historical societies. He keeps a large placard handy that identifies himself and what he's doing as sort of an invitation to meet people wherever. He stays in Airbnbs as he drives from city to city, so he's also met some interesting hosts.

One of his stops in Richmond was historic St. John's Church, where he attended a reenactment of Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death" speech. Richmond's history, as you would imagine, stood out to Leeson, who had never visited here. He also did a lot of walking around the city.

His usual approach is to spend about five days in every city, meet some people to get a feel for the place and conduct occasional lengthy interviews — two hours or more — for stories that find their way onto his website and, potentially, into the book he proposes.

So far, he's conducted 55 of those interviews and published 47 of the stories. By the time he's done, he expects to have compiled as many as 80 such interviews.

"I'm traveling the country because I wanted to get different points of view from different people, but I'm finding there's really the same story over and over again, in a lot of ways," he said, noting highs, lows and loss are common threads. "Doesn't matter who you are."

How does America get past the divisions that now seem to afflict us?

"Obviously, I do not have the answer, but I think if we stop to get to know each other, we discover that we have much more in common than that which is different," he said. Leeson hopes people read the stories he's published on his website — and hopes to expand into book form — because he's convinced "they will literally see themselves in the stories of others."

He's been mockingly asked if he thinks he can change the world.

"The answer is actually, 'Yes!'" he said. "We all can."

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City of Richmond's Celebration of the Adoption of

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RVAgreen
2050

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ATTIRE: BUSINESS/BUSINESS CASUAL ATTIRE

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