

A letter to my pre-pandemic self

Imagine you're writing a letter to the 2019 version of yourself. It's something I think about often. What would you say to that person? What tips would you give them? How would you prepare them for what's to come?

Here is a short letter I have written to 2019 pre-pandemic Alexa. I only wish I could send it to her.



Alexa Massey

Asked and Answered by Alexa

Dear Me,
Hey, congratulations on that new job at *The Kenbridge-Victoria Dispatch*. You've become a reporter at quite an interesting time in history. While I won't get into specifics about what the following year will bring, I'll give you some words of advice. My first tip is to avoid worrying about having a slow news day. Come 2020, they won't seem to exist anymore.

If I were you, which I am, I would consider buying and freezing a lot of meat. Stock up on the essentials, like rice, beans, toilet paper and hand sanitizer, and maybe buy some extra board games and puzzle books. You're going to need them.

If I know you, which I do, you

tend to talk yourself out of doing the things you want to do. Don't do that. Go to every restaurant. Drive to the beach every weekend you can. Go to amusement parks and fairs and festivals and movie theaters. You'll miss them all come spring.

In college, your absolute favorite thing to do on a Wednesday night was to go to downtown Charlottesville and attend Bachata Night at the art park. You would dance bachata, salsa and merengue until your feet fell off. It's a long drive from Farmville to Charlottesville for one night of dancing, but if I could

go back in time, I would make that drive every week and dance the night away for as long as I could. Social dancing isn't a thing anymore here in 2020.

For the next couple of months you should make a special effort to regularly visit all of your friends and family. Make sure to hug everybody, and when you think you've hugged them too long, squeeze them a little tighter. Hugs aren't happening much these days.

It's never been so important to keep yourself in tip-top shape.

You need to increase the hours spent in the gym. On second thought, maybe get used to working out at home. You should probably take some sort of multi-vitamin and do your best to build up that immune system.

A part of me is a little tempted to tell you what to do with your investments. I'm not sure about the legalities of giving financial tips to your past self, so all I'll tell you is that video conferencing, cleaning products and food delivery will all be good areas to watch.

You're probably asking yourself, "Oh my gosh, Alexa, what in the world is going to happen in 2020?"

I know it's scary to not know what the future may bring, but you're going to have to get used to that. The year of 2020 is going to be a year of staring the thing that scares you most right in its face every day. But no matter how frightening looking forward is and no matter how confusing the world gets, focus on what's important. Take things day by day. You've got this.

Take care,
Alexa M.

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EDITORIAL

Delegate Wright has some explaining to do

Speaker of the House of Delegates Eileen Filler-Corn justifiably eviscerated local Delegate Tommy Wright Tuesday, Sept. 22, after Wright allegedly did not report that he tested positive for COVID-19 a week after meeting in open session of the General Assembly.

"The House of Delegates convened in person at the Stuart C. Siegel Center in Richmond only seven days before Delegate Wright reportedly received this positive test result. Delegate Wright was present at that in-person meeting on August 18th," a release from Filler-Corn said. "Given the known incubation period for COVID-19, it is possible that Delegate Wright could have exposed his fellow delegates, Capitol police, clerk staff, press and all those that were in attendance at the Siegel Center that day."

We have heard nothing from Wright in defense of himself, or to offer an explanation as to why no notice was given of a potential COVID-19 infection to 98 of the commonwealth's key leaders from across the state. One would think the fact he was at a meeting of the General Assembly would come up in contact tracing interviews.

"This lack of transparency when it comes to this highly contagious disease is incredibly troubling," the release from Filler-Corn said. "Every delegate and individual at the Siegel Center on August 18th had a right to know of Delegate Wright's reported positive test for their safety, their family's safety and the safety of their communities."

Wright has not said anything to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, which asked for comment for its story on the matter, or to our own Titus Mohler, who has now reached out to Wright on more than one occasion.

This is not a difference of opinion on gun rights, abortion or state finances. This is not about being a Republican, a Virginian or even an American. This is about being a good human being. Filler-Corn's accusation that Wright tested positive but did not inform those in the General Assembly is a question to the heart of Wright's character.

It's not like Wright didn't tell anyone. He reportedly told his church about the positive test, but not the General Assembly. Why? Why would he not tell those 98 other delegates who had the potential to spread the illness to every nook and cranny in Virginia? That's the question we need answered by Wright, who has thankfully recovered from the illness and returned to work after a short time away.

Wright has been critical of the speaker's virtual sessions in his weekly column, but by not disclosing his test result, Wright does nothing but prove the speaker's point that the pandemic is too serious of a threat for the General Assembly to meet in person.

This is not the Tommy Wright we know. While we can agree or disagree on his political positions, there has never been reason to question his character or his treatment of fellow humans, until now.

Wright needs to explain the situation, or apologize to all those affected. But so far there has been nothing but silence from Wright.

We are waiting for an explanation.

(The views in this editorial are of The Kenbridge-Victoria Dispatch editorial staff. This editorial was written by Editor Roger Watson. He can be reached at Editor@KVDispatch.com or (434) 808-0622.)

HIS THOUGHTS

Legislature protects renters, hurts landlords

Compassion is a good thing when you are using your resources in assisting others in a time of their need. It is far different when you, as a legislator, are shifting the cost of that compassion to others, such as taxpayers, and claiming that you are a good and righteous person.

Members of the majority party in the General Assembly are so proud of helping those whose income might have been affected by COVID-19. However, rather than dealing with those who have truly been harmed, they are using an axe rather than a scalpel. Therein lies the problem.

While some truly need help, most who lost their jobs in March started receiving unemployment, stimulus payments, and \$600 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation, which was paid for all weeks between March 28 and July 31. In many cases, this gave some greater income during this period than they earned while working. Yet word got around that landlords could not evict non-payers during this period. Therefore, some just stopped paying rent and utility bills.

The very compassionate members of the General Assembly want to continue blocking evictions an additional six months, in all a full year. However,



Frank Ruff Jr.
State senator

their compassion does not extend to the house or apartment owner who can easily be driven into bankruptcy because they can't pay their mortgage payments. The legislators pushing these bills don't seem to understand finance. They ignore the blight of the property owner who has to pay his bills. They expect the property owner to let the renter slide for a year then catch up next year. The reality is that, in most cases, when the non-payment protection stops, the renters will simply move out in the middle of the night. If this happens, it will affect two things. First, property owners will be forced to demand higher deposits to protect themselves in the future. Additionally, they will have to raise rents on all renters to recover some of their losses during this period.

UTILITIES

The same is occurring with utilities. The

compassionate crowd thinks the big electric companies are the only ones affected. Actually, over time, Dominion Power and AEP will be the least affected. They will simply file for rate increases to recover profit. This will spread the cost over a broad group of users. Those most affected will be the smaller utility companies that have a limited number of customers. Consider any of our small towns and water authorities that simply do not have the customer base. They can only cover the non-payers for a short time before they will have to raise the rate for all others. Currently, the City of Danville has high electric power rates. If they can not collect from those not paying their bills, it will negatively affect the households and businesses they serve.

As I started this column, compassion should be the role of individuals and businesses. Government confiscation is not compassion. That is legalized robbery.

PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATE

Because we are still in special session, we do not know yet where we will end up on the left's attack on law enforcement. We do know that it will be harder to keep officers in their chosen profession, and it will be more expensive to the

taxpayers of Virginia. The Senate killed the worst House proposal – ending limited civil immunity for officers. The House killed the worst Senate bill that would have dropped the penalty for attacking an officer from a felony to a misdemeanor. It appears that even the Democrats in the House saw and heard the news stories about the throwing of human waste and concrete filled water bottles at police.

VOTING UPDATE

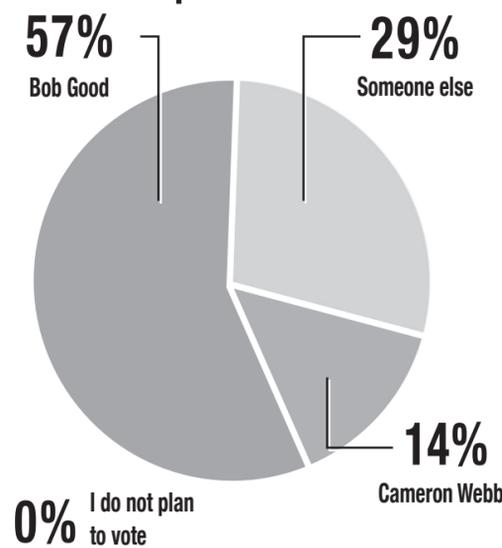
I have been delighted to hear reports that voters are going to the registrars' offices and voting rather than waiting and hoping that the mail-in system isn't compromised. Everyone that I have heard from has been delighted with the ease in which they have been able to vote and watch their vote being recorded.

COVID-19

We all offer our prayers to those who suffer from the virus and we wish for their return to a normal life as soon as possible. I am encouraged by new treatments and look forward to an inoculation being available sooner rather than later.

Frank Ruff Jr. represents Lunenburg in the state Senate. His email address is Sen.Ruff@verizon.net.

THE QUESTION: In the 5th District Congressional race I plan to vote for...



Check www.KVDispatch.com for our latest question.



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A BOX OF LOVE

Jesus wants us all to be saved

I was thanking Jesus for a new day and my mind began to roam. Even through the pandemic, God is keeping us busy for Him.

I count it a blessing when I get up in the morning. I try to give praise to let Him know that I recognize that He has blessed me. Nothing I did or could do could ever repay Him for the way He works in my life. He is my Savior, Lord, Master, Father and whatever Holy name I call Him. Thank you Lord for all the dreams that have come true because You love me.

This pandemic is giving us time to reflect about our lives and what we want to do with our time. Jesus wants all of us saved and He is giving us plenty of time to get ready. This is our day to try to undo some of the mistakes we made and to try not to make the same mistakes again.

Psalms 99:6, "Moses, Aaron, and Samuel cried unto the Lord and He heard them."

Whenever we cry out unto the Lord, He hears us, and He may not answer as quickly as we think He should, but He always answers. When we sin, we can always ask for forgiveness and He will gladly forgive us and wipe the slate clean.

The Lord wants us to know Him, He wants to be our Savior and call us His children. When we know

Him, we can depend/stand on His promises. Have you ever tried to do things on your own when you knew you should have waited for an answer? When I am in trouble I refer to Psalms 102:1-2, "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not Thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me; in the day when I call answer me speedily."

This is the Lord's promises to us, and if we keep his commandments He will always do as He said. The Lord wants us to tell Him our problems and He will

comfort us. The Lord knows what we need, ask and He will provide. The catch is you must believe when asking that He can do whatever you are asking. When we do not have the faith needed, ask Him for help in believing that He can do as promised.

Be blessed in Jesus' name.

Mary Simmons is a columnist for *The Kenbridge-Victoria Dispatch*. She can be reached at aboxoflove37@gmail.com.



Mary Simmons

Water testing offered

Private water supplies like wells and springs are unregulated. It is the responsibility of the homeowner to regularly test water quality, maintain the water system, and address any problems.

Affordable, confidential water testing and education will be offered through Virginia Cooperative Extension offices in Appomattox, Charlotte, Greensville/Emporia, Halifax and Lunenburg. Testing kits may be picked up between Nov. 10 to Nov. 17 at the Charlotte County Extension Office, and plan to drop off samples on Nov. 18 between 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. at the Charlotte County Extension Office, following physical distancing measures.

Participation is voluntary and confidential. Water samples collected by participating homeowners will be analyzed for 14 parameters: iron, manganese, sulfate, hardness, sodium, copper, nitrate, arsenic, fluoride, pH, total dissolved solids, coliform bacteria, ecoli bacteria and lead at a cost of \$60. Results and water system care and maintenance information will be sent to each participant either by email or mail, and a pre-recorded or live video presentation will be made available to help explain the summary results and recommendations to address problems.

Please contact Joanne Jones at the Charlotte County Extension Office, (434) 542-5884, to register or for more information.

OPINION

Stop catastrophizing

Are you a catastrophizer? I am, sometimes. Catastrophizing, while a pretty word, is an act in which a person believes the worst possible outcome imaginable is definitely going to happen. A catastrophizer lets a concern snowball in their mind until it's all-consuming and has become an exaggerated worry that isn't likely, but feels certain.

That birthmark on your shoulder you're not 100% sure you had last month? It's probably cancer. Just leaving for a weekend getaway that's supposed to be relaxing? You'll spend the whole time fearing you left every appliance in the house on and it's burning to the ground as you sip your piña colada. And that family member who isn't back home yet despite saying they'd be there in 10 minutes? They've likely been in a serious car crash just a mile down the road.

While there's a biological reason behind why humans can be worrywarts and even anxiety can sometimes have its uses, catastrophizing is pointless in that it paints a very unrealistic picture of something that is not likely to happen and that is also, for the most part, completely out of your hands.

What are some ways you can avoid catastrophizing, especially in a year when it seems very reasonable to worry?

Firstly, avoid exaggerating an idea until it's an unrecognizable extravaganza of panic. A catastrophizer often thinks in this sort of pattern:

"Oh no, I can't find my wallet after 30 seconds of looking. I must have dropped it when out grocery shopping. Some rando must have picked it up, taken all my cash and cards and is currently applying for a car loan as me. They're going to ruin my



Alexa Massey

Asked and Answered by Alexa

credit, steal my identity and I'm going to have to live in a van down by the river."

Is it impossible that someone has found your wallet and is planning on stealing your identity? No, not exactly. But

is the more likely outcome that your wallet is in your car or your other pair of jeans, as it has been the last five times you lost it? Yes.

Exaggerating the likelihood of disaster can make you blind to the reality of the situation, just like getting panicked over identity theft can make you blind to the wallet that's sitting on the coffee table.

Secondly, learn to soothe yourself (and others) by taking the "advice of a best friend" approach. If a friend came to you and expressed to you the same concerns you are currently experiencing as you spiral into panic, what would you tell them? It likely wouldn't be, "Yes, after careful consideration I do think you're going to be dead by Tuesday because your eyelid won't stop twitching," or, "Sure, you'll probably have to drop out of college because you got a "C" on the last

exam." A friend would tell you that you need more sleep and that there's plenty of time for extra credit.

And if you find yourself too embarrassed about the ridiculousness of your worries to actually ask a friend if your concerns are valid, there's your answer right there.

I can't always stop my anxious thoughts when something has me truly worried, but I can tell myself that the wallet is on the coffee table, the "birthmark" is actually a piece of dirt, someone would have called me by now if my house had burned down and in two more minutes my brother will be at the door, safe and sound, after stopping to pick up dinner.

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Election Day should become election month

America will not walk away from this era of the pandemic without significant bruises and scars both physically and emotionally, but there are rare occasions where the lessons learned from this time of trial will be beneficial in the future.

One of the lessons learned that will certainly stick around is that early voting and mail-in voting works and expands participation in our democracy.

Just take a look at the results in Charlotte County where approximately 3,238 voters went to the polls on Election Day and approximately 3,000, or 49% or those who voted, did so through either early in-person voting or by absentee ballot.

Almost 160 million ballots were cast in the 2020 election nationwide. That's the highest ever and the highest voter participation rate among eligible citizens since 1900. That's before women were given the right to vote.

The more convenient we can make voting, the more people will be able to take part. The new voting initiatives passed by the Virginia General Assembly should not be a one-time deal due to the pandemic but should become the



Roger Watson

Roger's Ramblings

way we vote in the future.

At some point, we will be choosing our candidates on an app on our phone. But until we make it that simple, the combination of early in-person voting and no excuse absentee voting will be a huge improvement over standing in line on Election Day in unpredictable weather.

These improvements in Virginia have put us in charge of our vote. We can plan it. We can track it. We can vote when and how it is convenient for us to do so.

The infrastructure surrounding the counting process will catch up. Registrars must be allowed to count ballots as they come in, instead of waiting until the night of or a day later to begin tabulating the vote.

Early voting also takes a lot of pressure off poll workers on Election Day.

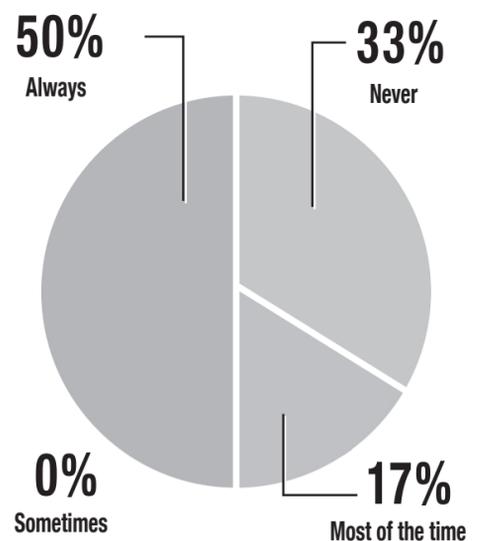
Candidates will have to adjust as well. Any political advertising ran the last weekend of the election missed half the voters. They had already gotten the "I Voted" stickers while Webb and Good were ping-ponging ads back and forth on local television stations.

This pandemic has been a horrible experience, but in 2028 when an 18-year-old logs into the U.S. voting app to cast a ballot for the first time, we can regale them with stories of how we stood in a line a mile long during a pouring rain and driving snowstorm to vote for our favorite candidate.

They will think we were so dumb.

Roger Watson is the editor for *The Kenbridge-Victoria Dispatch* and Farmville Newsmedia LLC. His email address is Roger.Watson@KVDDispatch.com.

THE QUESTION:
How often, if at all, do you wear a face covering when you leave your house and might be in contact with other people?



Check www.KVDDispatch.com for our latest question.



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My biggest Thanksgiving fails

One Thanksgiving Day when I was a tiny kid, I was sitting in the kitchen watching my Mom and my Nana put the final touches on Thanksgiving dinner.

The two women were bouncing around the kitchen pulling casseroles out of ovens, gathering silverware and finishing up dishes.

After the turkey left the oven, these two lovely ladies began making the gravy. I watched them cook a mixture of the drippings and other ingredients in a pot on the stovetop.

As my Nana went to go tend to something else, my mother added some salt to the pot. She then left the room and Nana returned. I watched her add some salt to the pot. Nana left and Mom returned to the stove, stirring the gravy and adding another hefty dose of salt. She then left to set the table and Nana came back. I watched her heavily salt the gravy for a fourth time and said nothing.

Although back then



Alexa Massey

Asked and Answered by Alexa

I knew little of cooking, my tiny kid brain knew I probably should have said something to the two women clueless of the other's seasoning of the gravy, but I just didn't. Imagine the horror on my Nana and Mother's faces as we all sat down for a nice Thanksgiving dinner and the gravy everyone had drowned their food in was 50% salt.

One year in college I signed up to help make

Thanksgiving dinner for the students living in my residential dorm. I was put in charge of the macaroni and cheese, but I severely underestimated how much cheese is needed to make dozens of servings of macaroni. You have never felt embarrassment until you've walked into the university dining hall and filled two entire to-go containers with shredded cheddar cheese from the salad bar. And you've never seen anger until you saw the girl waiting behind me.

At last year's Thanksgiving I was assigned to make my perfect, buttery bread rolls. The treats are a labor of love and take hours to make due to the three rounds of proofing required.

As the family gathered at my grandparents' house for Thanksgiving, I was a tad distracted as I put the rolls in the oven. When it was time to take the rolls out, they emerged looking as if an ogre had sneezed all over them. That's

when I realized I had forgotten to take the plastic wrap off the top before putting them in the oven.

Trust me, you will never hear the end of it if you leave your family bread-less on Thanksgiving.

No matter the mishaps in the kitchen this year, let's all be thankful that we are able to celebrate this wonderful holiday of indulgence and sharing, even if it's just with immediate family. These memories are ones to treasure, even if you have overly salty gravy and no rolls to soak it up with.

What have been some of your biggest Thanksgiving dinner fails? I'd love to hear them. Perhaps they will make me feel better about my own holiday blunders.

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EDITORIAL

The college students showed us the way

The difficult work for Longwood University officials began over the summer.

The school's administration committed to remake the university and turn a student body that treasured community and social interaction into a COVID-safe environment.

Dining options, residence hall living and classroom spaces were all reevaluated to make sure the students had plenty of space to socially distance themselves. COVID-19-related restrictions were attached to the university honor code, making mask-wearing mandatory on campus.

Hampden-Sydney College went through many of the same exercises and came up with a unique fall semester schedule designed to limit exposure to the virus and with aggressive testing of every student that established a sort of bubble environment at the school.

Other colleges around the state and the nation struggled, with many universities returning to the safe haven of remote learning and clearing residence halls shortly after students arrived. The odds appeared to be long for any institution of higher learning looking for some sense of normalcy.

But as it turned out, we could learn a few things from the students. While they regularly followed the rules and wore masks even while walking around the community, many of the townspeople could be found shopping area stores and in other gatherings without masks.

Health officials made it clear throughout the fall that the college students were not the cause of community spread in the area. The rise in cases was from simple community spread caused by gatherings.

The colleges weren't perfect. Each of them had moments of trepidation where you looked at their COVID-19 dashboards and wondered if the virus was getting ready to explode, but they hung in there, quarantined the people who may have been in contact with those who were positive and moved on.

The successful semesters at Longwood and Hampden-Sydney should show all of us that masks work, social distancing works and contact tracing combined with quarantines is an effective way to control the virus.

May we learn from their diligence and commit to keeping ourselves healthy this holiday season and be a safer community for them when the students return in 2021.

(The views in this editorial are of The K-V Dispatch editorial staff. This editorial was written by Editor Roger Watson. He can be reached at Editor@KVDispatch.com or (434) 808-0622.)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Hardy Road project is unnecessary

To The Editor:

I am writing to inform the citizens of Lunenburg of a project by VDOT known as the Hardy Road Curve Realignment Project.

The improvements to Route 675 (Hardy Road) will realign the curve located 0.3 miles south of the intersection of Route 40 (Lunenburg County Road) and Route 49 (Courthouse Road). The Board of Supervisors approved the project citing there had been numerous accidents at this location.

There have been some accidents, but these accidents have all been single-car accidents. The

cause of all these accidents have been related to speed, driving under the influence or both. It has been quite some time since there has been an accident at that location.

It's important to note that since the Board of Supervisors let Container First Services take over the landfill the traffic on Hardy Road has increased exponentially due to the overwhelming amount of trash trucks using Hardy Road to get to the landfill. Realigning the curve on Hardy Road did not become a priority until all the trash trucks started accessing it.

I want the public to be in-

formed because this is an unnecessary multi-million dollar project funded by the taxpayers. According to Thomas Kendrick, project manager with the VDOT, once this project begins, Hardy Road will be totally closed for six months during the construction.

This would affect a lot of people who use this road on a daily basis.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project you should contact Kendrick at (804) 609-5281.

Robert Foley
Lunenburg

HIS THOUGHTS

Some taxes unfairly affect rural Virginia

We all want to be treated fairly. Sometimes we do not like government policies at the federal, state, or local levels, but if it affects all equally, we are more likely to accept it.

TRANSPORTATION TAXES

The 2020 General Assembly imposed the transportation tax increases. The basic statewide fuel tax went up 5 cents a gallon, but in many parts of the state including ours, a supplemental regional tax increase added another 7.6 cents.

Several years ago, the General Assembly allowed northern Virginia and Tidewater to raise the fuel taxes on themselves because of those regions' need to build new roads. In 2020, those regions overrode the rural parts of the state and raised gas taxes all over the state. The unfair



Frank Ruff Jr.
State senator

factor is that most all of that money will be spent in the cities and suburbs around them. Very little will be spent in rural Virginia. What little work that comes to rural areas could be derived from the funding level prior to the increase if dollars had not been sent to the more populated areas.

Gov. Ralph Northam's latest proposals are going to be far more expensive to you. In spite of COVID-19, Virginia had record-breaking tax revenue this year. Now, more tax increases are

being proposed for the 2021 General Assembly. Northam is proposing to restore a state inheritance tax on some estates. Farmland often makes estates large enough to fall within the range that would be affected. Virginia's leading progressive group is hiring a "revenue campaign manager" to lead the 2021 and 2022 fight "to secure expanded progressive revenue options."

THE TRANSPORTATION AND CLIMATE INITIATIVE

This is an additional new carbon tax on gasoline and diesel. Gov. Northam has Virginia joining a 12-state regional compact that would impose a cap on the sale of gasoline and diesel fuel within the region. It imposes a carbon tax by requiring fuel wholesalers to buy allowances for their Virginia sales, with the added costs passed

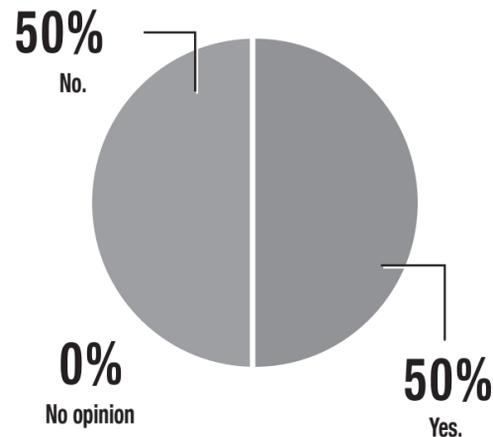
on to retailers and consumers.

The Beacon Hill Institute of Medway, Massachusetts, asserts that the total impact (direct and indirect) on a family would average more than \$700 per year. That would include the higher cost of gasoline or diesel fuel they purchase, and the impact of those costs on the goods and services families buy.

"The Transportation and Climate Initiative would raise taxes on Virginians, cost Virginians jobs, reduce disposable income, result in the rationing of fuel, and lead to reductions in road funding," Chris Braunlich, president of the Thomas Jefferson Institute, said.

An additional factor that should be considered is that many of our citizens must drive farther to get good jobs. That extra expense will

THE QUESTION: Do you agree that marijuana should be legalized in Virginia?



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negatively affect rural families far more than others.

The General Assembly, which begins in two months, will consider whether Virginia should join TCI. The limited information available indicates the initial price for the allowances needed to sell gasoline and diesel will translate to an additional 17 cents per gallon. That would be in addition to the state's

existing gasoline tax of 28.8 cents per gallon, which is already set to go to 33.8 cents next July. Remember only last year we only paid 16.5 cents tax per gallon.

Consider yourself warned of what is about to happen.

Frank Ruff Jr. represents Lunenburg in the state Senate. His email address is Sen.Ruff@verizon.net.



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