

EDITORIAL

'Greek tragedy'

These last few days of July are traditionally a slow news time here in the commonwealth, but the corruption trial of former Gov. Bob McDonnell and his wife, Maureen, promises to restore the heat of summer to the Old Dominion.

To most Virginians, the story to date is well-known, even before *The Washington Post* opted to regurgitate it recently: The former governor was investigated during his final year in office regarding his (and his family's) relationship with Richmond businessman and supporter Jonnie R. Williams.

The McDonnells have pleaded not guilty to the compendium of charges in the 14-count indictment. The trial, certain to be a spectacle, started Monday, July 28. This type of high drama is new and unfamiliar in Virginia, but stories of corruption have flowed out of many governor's offices over the years.

In 2011, *The Washington Post's* Reliable Source column noted the recent conviction of former Illinois Gov. Rob Blagojevich that summer by commenting that "Blago" would be the fourth former governor of his state to go to prison. And, at the time, he would also be the fourth of the last seven men to leave the governor's mansion and eventually take up residence behind bars.

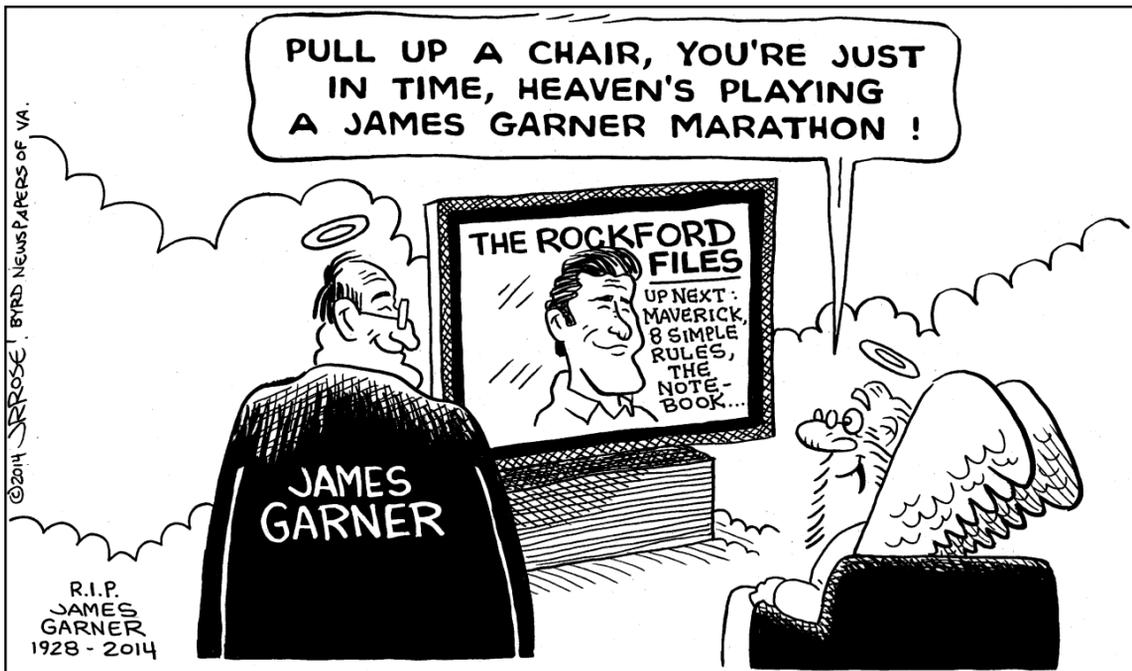
The column went on to examine, as best it could, the records of all states and projected that, at that time, some 17 governors had served time. While this type of sordid affair may be SOP in President Obama's home state, the upcoming trial will break new ground in the commonwealth.

As the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported, "If convicted, the McDonnells could become Virginia's first Executive Mansion couple to go to prison." A detailed article on the matter by Jim Nolan and Olympia Meola recaps the events that have brought us to the hour of trial, and Larry Sabato, head of the Center for Politics at U.Va., summed it up best when he told the paper, "This is the closest thing to a Greek tragedy that we've had in Virginia politics."

The trial, to be held in Richmond, is expected to last up to six weeks, and will likely command state and national attention until after Labor Day. Both sides have postured legally over potential witnesses and the motives of the erstwhile benefactor, Mr. Williams, on and off for weeks, but the theater will soon be confined to the courtroom.

A jury will decide whether the executive couple broke the law, but there is no doubt the abject lesson of the trappings of political power has already been exposed for all to see. As the T-D reminded us, "Whatever the McDonnells financial condition might have been, interviews, disclosure forms, and court documents suggest that once the family occupied the Executive Mansion, they indulged in an appetite for the high life that was largely financed with other people's money."

We don't look forward to this production of what Mr. Sabato and T-D called "Virginia's Greek Tragedy," but we can only hope for a swift end to this sordid mess, with some important lessons learned by all in high office, or considering it, here in Virginia.



PUBLIC FORUM

Message from Medjugorje

The Mother of God gave this message on July 2, 2014, to Mirjana in Medjugorje, stating that humility is the key:

"Dear children, I, the mother of all of you gathered here and the mother of the entire world, am blessing you with a motherly blessing and call you to set out on the way of humility. That way leads to the coming to know the love of my Son. My Son is almighty, He is in everything. If you, my chil-

dren, do not become cognizant of this, then darkness/blindness rule in your soul. Only humility can heal you. My children, I always lived humbly, courageously and in hope. I knew, I became cognizant that God is in us and we are in God. I am asking the same of you. I desire for all of you to be with me in eternity, because you are a part of me. I will help you on your way. My love will envelop you like a mantle and

make of you apostles of my light - of God's light. With the love that comes forth from humility you will bring light to where darkness/blindness rule. You will be bringing my Son who is the light of the world. I am always alongside your shepherds and I pray that they may always be an example of humility for you. Thank you."

Tom Sayre, Front Royal

Riding investors — and the tourists they bring — out of town on a rail

Todd and Brenda are putting their mountain chalet on the market today. After all the TLC they poured into it, after all the lovely comments in their guest book, they can't help but be saddened by the sudden turn of events. Warren County is denying them a permit to continue their vacation rental business.

Warren County is issuing a flurry of cease and desist orders to private property owners who are offering hospitality to tourists. After being invited into the approval process for a special county permit called a CUP, the process is grinding to a screeching halt, midway, at the behest of county attorneys.

On the Warren County website it says, "Warren County has long attracted tourists and seasonal residents, who have come to the area because of its climate, accessibility to major cities, and scenic beauty."

Yet tourists who desire family-style lodging are going to be denied all the comforts of home.

Landlords who specialize in furnished, fully equipped tourist rentals are a special breed. They enjoy rehabbing of distressed properties, decorating, and sharing their homes with the tourist and business traveler who prefer to cook their own meals and come 'home' each night. Often, these properties are second homes, and when the owner or extended family are not using them, they are rented to help pay for upkeep and maintenance.

The owners of vacation rental cabins and cottages operating in Front Royal create local jobs. They employ landscape workers, handymen and housekeepers. Their guests come and enjoy and discover the quintessential small town community, bringing their tourist dollars here. They frequent our parks, restaurants, Front Royal Canoe Company, Shenandoah Caverns, antique stores and wineries.

As each cabin or cottage owner grows their clientele and extends their hospitality, they become a goodwill ambassador to promote commerce and encourage visitors to return again.

Why should citizens in the county welcome real estate investors and support short term rentals?

Residential real estate investment is a driver of economic growth. Property owners invest money to bring distressed or under-performing properties up to higher standards. They do so for an expected return on their investment.

Short-term rentals can be managed responsibly, with sensitivity to neighbors. Life in any neighborhood requires an open line of communication about issues. Responsible landlords appreciate communication about any problems that arise and would like to hastily resolve them.

Many homes in Warren County are languishing on the market for lack of buyers. Some neighborhoods are plagued by abandoned homes. Attracting real estate investors is an important way to keep the neighborhood up, and improve property values. And, a strong real estate economy means a better resale market.

In the experience of local vacation rental owners, short-term rentals result in reduced traffic on neighborhood streets, not more. Our guests are out and about discovering our area all day. And, many days a year, the homes are vacant.

As for noise, there are two ways to avoid that nuisance. County of Warren can enact a noise ordinance which neighbors can help enforce by notifying property managers of any violation. Lowering the maximum occupancy allowed as a condition of the permit also solves this issue. Three people just don't make as much noise as ten.

Landlords interested in short-term rentals, and merchants and businesses that rely on tourism are invited to join our newly formed Shenandoah Lodging and Tourism Alliance. We aim to advocate for and educate about short term rentals in hopes of helping Warren County residents warm up to the idea of the good things they can bring to our community.

Kimberly Hartke, Reston

(Kimberly and Keith Hartke are real estate investors who own BearLodgeCabin.com. To learn more about the Shenandoah Lodging and Tourism Alliance, go to TouristsWelcome.net.)

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Russian president a global danger

Your editorial in recognizing Putin to be a global danger is right on the mark.

In a 2011 meeting with Vladimir Putin, Vice President Biden actually told Russia's then-prime minister that he had no "soul." Even more remarkable was Biden's recountal of Putin's response: "he looked back at me, smiled, and said "we understand one another."

Russia's leaders have a long record of inhumanity and Putin is no exception. He started as an agent of the Soviet Secret police — an institution more bloody than that of the Nazi SS. There is strong evidence that he plotted the bombing of two apartment buildings in Moscow as a pretext for invasion of Chechnya. 300 people died in the bombing and an estimated 25,000-50,000 Chechnians were killed in the resulting war. After eight years of planning, Putin launched an invasion of Ukraine which has already cost thousands of lives, billions in damage, and the wanton death of 298 passengers on Flight MH17. Despite the terrible tragedy, the man without a soul has doubled down on the carnage by dis-

patching into Ukraine even more of his murderous thugs and equipping them with even more lethal military equipment.

To top it off, the man is a certifiable nut case — not unlike his earlier mentors, Hitler and Stalin, both of whom he admires and appears to be emulating. He has a vehement hatred and contempt for western civilization and values, is intolerant of all religions other than Moscovled Orthodoxy, and is determined to reconstruct the Soviet empire and dominate Europe. His media is filled with racial, ethnic, and anti-semitic invective and his party's youth movement and summer camps are reminiscent of the Hitler Jugend.

We are all tired of involving ourselves in foreign wars and can scarcely afford doing so. But, unfortunately, in an age of supersonic missiles, satellites, and global relationships on which our own well-being depends, we no longer have the luxury of a "Fortress America." Can we stop this madman "without a soul" before he engulfs all of us in a war of his making? Yes, we can if we do two things

....and do them now.

(1) Putin's economy is the size of Italy's — a mere 5 percent of that of the U.S. and Europe combined. It is very vulnerable to economic sanctions — particularly in energy, finances, and technology. These sanctions must be deep and must be undertaken in concert with the European Union, and his economy is certain to collapse. (2) We must provide immediate military and economic assistance to Ukraine to help that country defend itself against the Russian assault. Ukraine, despite a 10-to-1 imbalance in military resources (in comparison with Russia's), has been winning. But it can not continue fighting a modern military machine with antiquated Soviet-era equipment. They do not need American "boots on the ground".....they simply need U.S. intelligence and military supplies and equipment. Let's give it to them. Better that Putin's conflagration is stopped in Ukraine, by Ukrainians, than in the NATO countries with American forces.

George Woloshyn, Linden

