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Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, State of the County Address, Wednesday, May 24, 2023

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- Official meeting video (county, Granicus): <https://loudoun.granicus.com/player/clip/7291>
- Agenda (Granicus): https://loudoun.granicus.com/AgendaViewer.php?view_id=73&clip_id=7291

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[00:10:43] We got the whole thing working out so wrong.

[00:10:49] And it's just the kind that we want.

[00:13:34] It's like a rain candle.

[00:18:09] We got the whole thing working out so wrong.

[00:18:31] We got the kind that we want.

[00:20:42] The mic works for me. Good evening.

[00:21:00] Hello, Loudon. So I'm Bernard Mustafa, 25-year, a resident of Loudon County. And I'm happy to share that Loudon is a great place to live, to work, to learn, and to play.

[00:21:18] So let's do it. Welcome to Chair Randall, Chair Phyllis Randall, 8th annual State of the County Address. Delivering this dress in the boardroom and for all Loudouners to witness either in person or in television or online fulfills a campaign promise that then-candidate Randall made to the residents of Loudoun County. So this is actually the 8th, well, the 8th, right? So she's been doing

[00:21:55] the whole time she's been in office, really sharing with us the progress that we made, the wins and the losses, and so we know where we are as a county. So it's really great to be here and presenting for

her.

[00:22:13] So what I'd like to do first is recognize some special guests. Everyone here is special. But Shea Randall invited a few people that would like to recognize. First, the Ambassador of Ghana to the United States, Aleema Mahama.

[00:22:35] Chief Deputy of Mission from Aguay, Gerardo Rumez. Vice Chair and Sterling District Supervisor, Karan Sands.

[00:23:05] Leesburg District Supervisor, Kristen Umstadt. Gaukeling District Supervisor, Julie Brissman. Blue Ridge District Supervisor, Tony Huffington.

[00:23:25] Clerk of the Circuit Court, Gary Clemens. And I'm going to count a treasurer, Roger Zorn. State Senator Jennifer Bosco is here.

[00:23:46] State Delegate David Reed. I'm sorry, David. Middleburg Mayor Bridge Littleton. Percival Mayor Stan Milan.

[00:24:14] Percival Councilmember Aaron Rayner. Percival Councilmember Mary Jane Williams. Leesburg Councilmember Todd Cimino Johnson.

[00:24:32] Leesburg Councilmember Neil Steinberg. Leesburg Council Member Zach Cummings, and Loudoun County Board Member from the Ashburn District, Harris Mahadavi, Sewell and Water Conservation Commissioner and President of

[00:25:09] Loudoun Branch of NAACP, Pastor Michelle Thomas, representing the office of Senator Tenkane, Corrine Dungo, and our council person, Sylvia Glass.

[00:25:45] Ashburn District. Okay. Let's see who you're pointing at. Mayor Kelly Burt.

[00:26:01] Leesburg. I'm sorry. Is there anyone else that made this update? Tiana Teletoe, representing Mark Warner, Senator Mark Warner.

[00:26:36] To sing the national anthem, it's now my pledge to introduce Loudoun Valley High School junior, Logan Buckley. Logan's an accomplished artist and a member of Virginia's All-State Choir. A Loudoun County vocalist who has achieved notable success throughout his budding career.

[00:26:57] Logan is twice ranked number one as tenor number one in Loudoun County as a regional bland contest winner. Young Logan has also been selected as one of the few high school students to participate in this summer's governor's school program of vocal study.

[00:27:15] Logan hopes to continue performing in Loudoun County and beyond, eventually pursuing career in music professionally. Ladies and gentlemen, to sing the national anthem, Logan Buckley.

[00:27:23] See the dawn's early light, what so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,

[00:28:00] Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming And the rocket's red glare bursting It gave the night that our flag was still there

[00:28:35] Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave O'er the land of the free and the home Thank you so much, Logan.

[00:29:13] Let's give him another round of applause. Good job. Next up, we have a recent graduate from Christopher Newport University.

[00:29:30] Derek Pugh Jr. is an accomplished performer originally from Alabama. He currently resides in Leesburg, Virginia. Growing up in a military family who moved on a regular basis, Derek found his love of music was often the only thing he felt consistent in his life.

[00:29:46] He made his original goal in life to positively change people's lives through music. Mr. Pugh is newly admitted to a master's program at the University of Southern California, where he will continue studying performance and teaching.

[00:30:03] Ladies and gentlemen, to sing Andrea Day's Rise Up, Mr. Derek Pugh, Jr.

[00:30:09] We can't find the fighter. I see it in you. So we gon' walk it out. Walk it out. The day I'll rise up is unafraid. I'll do it a thousand times again. I'll rise up high like the waves. I'll rise up in spite of the air. And I'll do it a thousand times again.

[00:31:25] For you, for you to breathe to its feet

[00:32:08] And I'm afraid I'll do it a thousand times again

[00:32:30] For you that we have today, I'll rise up

[00:33:26] In spite of the ache, I'll rise up And I'll do it a thousand times again I like the waves, but rise up In spite of the ache, I'll rise up For you, for you.

[00:34:20] There are stars in these young men's future.

[00:34:39] So to introduce Chair Randall, Delicate Sue Haas-Supermanian is going to, well, let me back up. So Delicate Supermanian represents Virginia's 87th House District.

[00:34:56] He's a longtime servant delegate. He served on Capitol Hill as a health care veterans policy aide where he worked to expand and improve health care access for millions of Americans and drafted legislation to increase job opportunities and funding for veterans.

[00:35:14] He later earned his law degree with honors at Northwestern University School of Law while volunteering at the Center for Wrongful Convictions. There he was part of a legal team that freed a man who had spent 21 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit.

[00:35:32] Suhas also clerked for the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, where he helped reintroduce the DREAM Act and worked on criminal justice reform. After spending time as a technology and regulatory attorney, Delica Suhaus was named a White House technology policy advisor to President Obama.

[00:35:54] He led the task force on technology policy that President Obama charged with addressing some of the country's most challenging technology issues, including job creation and displacement, regulatory emerging technologies, addressing cybersecurity, and IT modernization in the public sector.

[00:36:16] He also saved taxpayers money by working on technology projects to make government processes and services more efficient. Suhas is a proud resident of Loudoun County and has always maintained his commitment to serving this community. He served as a volunteer EMT firefighter and was appointed to the Loudoun Health Council, where he works to address some of the most pressing health care issues facing northern Virginia.

[00:36:46] For his professional accomplishments and work in the community, Suhas was named to the Loudoun Times Mayor of 40 Under 40. So he's young. He's married to Miranda Pena, who works for a government contract and volunteers in a free time at Loudoun Abuse Women's Shelter.

[00:37:05] Currently resides in Ashburn with two daughters, Maya and Nina. Ladies and gentlemen, to introduce Chair Phyllis Randall, Delica Suhas to Miranda. Thank you, everyone. I asked them to make the bio shorter, but they wouldn't.

[00:37:27] Chair Randall wanted to embarrass me, so I could embarrass her by giving her a long intro, but it is my honor to introduce Chair Randall. Phyllis J. Randall was elected Chair-at-Large of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors in November 2015 and re-elected in November 2019.

[00:37:44] Her election was historic because she became the first person of color in Virginia's history to be an elected Chair of a County Board. As Loudoun's Chair-at-Large, she represents Loudoun on various regional, state, and national bodies, including but not limited to the NVT, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, the National Association of Counties, Board of Directors, and the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, Board of Directors.

[00:38:10] Chair Randall also serves on the Board of Supervisors, Finance and Government Operations and Economic Development Committees, and the Transportation and Land Use Committees. And in December 2021, Chair Randall was one of just five local elected officials in the nation chosen to contribute to be a bipartisan policy center report, Public Health Forward, Modernizing the U.S. Public Health System. She authored the section on mental health in the United States health departments. In June of 2018, Chair Randall was selected as one of only 25 women in the United States to be included in the 2019 class of Governing Magazine's Women in Government

[00:38:44] Leadership Program. In addition, in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021, the citizens of Loudoun County voted chair randall their favorite public official an honor which we're all jealous of but she is most humbled and proud of from 2009 to 2011 chair randall served as the chair of the virginia's fair housing board under former governors tim kane and bob mcdonald and from 2014 to 2018 she served on the chair of virginia's state board of corrections under governor terry mcauliffe by profession chair randall is a mental health therapist with substance dependence as her emphasis area. She has worked with justice-involved populations, both in and out of incarcerated

[00:39:22] settings, a career she enjoyed for over 20 years. And she and her husband, TW, have lived in Loudoun since 1993, are proud parents of two adult sons, Aishon and Aaron. And she is also just a pleasure for all of us to work with. I know all elected officials across the county love working with her and appreciate the work that she's done. So it is my honor and privilege to introduce Chair Phyllis

[00:39:45] Randall. Thank you very much. Please have a seat. Please have a seat. Well, first of all,

[00:40:22] thank you all for coming out to my eighth annual State of the County Address. And I always say all the time, people always say they save the best for last. I never do that. I put the best right up front. And for me, the best is my husband, who has heard this speech about 14 times. So thank you so much. Ambassador, thank you for coming today. It is an honor and a pleasure to have you here chief deputy thank you for coming as well so i really appreciate you all coming all the way up from dc to be with me this evening i am as most of you know um the daughter

[00:41:01] of a military man 26 years in the military and i take the national anthem of allegiance very seriously so i give a lot of thought about who i want to give my national anthem or my pledge of Allegiance at my State of the County address. And this year, I'm so proud to introduce you all to a young man, James Butler, who's going to come and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

[00:41:26] I'm going to give you a couple of numbers first, though, to tell you how impressive this young man is. There are, in the United States of America, about 330 million people. Of that, about 33 million are boys under the age of 18. Of that, 7.7% become scouts, which is about 307,000 people.

[00:41:49] Of that number, of 307,000 people, 21,000 are Eagle Scouts who are people of color. 21,000 is a very, very small amount of people. James Butler is an Eagle Scout, and one of the things he wants to do is encourage more young people of color to get into scouting.

[00:42:12] I love that. I love that idea. The other number that I think is really impressive is James has been a Boy Scout for six years. He made Eagle Scout in six years, which is really very fast. So when I heard that and I met James and I talked to his parents, I was just so proud of him. And so I asked him to come today to give me to lead us on a Pledge of Allegiance. So ladies and gentlemen, Eagle Scout from Truth Number 966, James Butler.

[00:42:41] Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance. Pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

[00:43:17] January of 2020, when my colleagues on the board of supervisors and I took office, there was no way we could have known that over our term, we would be serving in historic times in our county, our commonwealth, our nation, and in fact, around the world. 2020 through 2022 were some of the most challenging

[00:43:51] in modern history, but that was the situation that presented itself to our board, county administration, and the county workforce. Over the course of this term, we have dealt with a hundred-year pandemic, a reckoning on race in America, an economic downturn, an explosive rise in housing costs, and unfortunately, the first insurrection in over a century. Loudoun, during my past two terms in office, but particularly over the past three and a half years, we have embraced

[00:44:29] the challenges that each of us faces during our daily lives, during our daily work. Do you know why? Because in Loudoun, we do hard things. Public service is not always easy, which is one reason I am pleased to report how well our county is doing. Public service must be good stewards of your tax dollars. We must protect our community. We must preserve our natural resources and heritage resources. We must support all those in the community who may need help of any kind. We must

[00:45:05] provide programs and services that the people of Loudoun demand, and we must do it all very well. We must engage in civil discourse, even when we disagree with one another. Together, we must address the challenges we face head-on to ensure Loudoun continues to prosper. We need only look back a couple of years in this board's term to see one of the most significant challenges of our time. Earlier this month, the World Health Organization and the federal government declared

[00:45:41] an end to the public health emergency for COVID-19. Through this great challenge and while mourning the loss of loved ones and facing economic obstacles, Loudoun weathered the storm with strategic calmness and economic policies that allowed our county to remain strong and even flourish.

Loudoun County government added 680 jobs. We had more than 400 economic wins and in Loudoun County we welcomed over 20,000 new residents. Much of Loudoun's financial and business

[00:46:18] success can be credited to Mr. Buddy Reiser and his entire team in the Department of Economic Development or DED. Early in the pandemic, Buddy came to me to discuss how to help our business community survive and, if possible, even thrive in this tumultuous time. Working collaboratively with Tony Howard and the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce, your county board approved multiple rounds of grant funding to support small businesses in Loudoun. In total, \$21 million was allocated to Loudoun businesses to help them weather the impacts of the pandemic.

[00:46:58] That proactive decision helped to fuel one of the strongest local economies in the country. However, we have the opportunity to do more. In Loudoun, we will continue to build on the strengths of our workforce by providing them with opportunities to upscale or rescale their talents.

[00:47:20] We seek to create a diversified and resilient economy built to withstand any downturns and to leverage our location as an international hub to attract businesses from all over the world. Towards these goals, last year the Board of Supervisors funded two new positions in DED to support small and minority-owned businesses.

[00:47:43] As a result of that, we have proudly started a program that we are calling Launch Loudoun. From rural businesses in the Catoctin District to retail businesses in Sterling, From the IT startups in Dulles to restaurants in Algonquian, from our main streets in our towns to our manufacturing businesses in Ashburn, Launch Loudoun will have something for everyone.

[00:48:09] Additionally, we now have a dedicated resource to support minority-owned businesses in Loudoun. According to a study by the U.S. Department of Small Business Association, during the pandemic, minority-owned and women-owned businesses faced unique challenges, including, but not limited to, a lack of relationships with the banking industry, which resulted in less financial capital, continued discrimination in the lending industry, and outsized negative impacts on COVID on minority communities.

[00:48:45] The programming and education provided by Launch Loudoun will address these issues and allow these businesses to start, scale, and soar. Of course, workforce development means not only training and educational opportunities, it also means providing housing options to meet the needs of the day and the expected needs of the future.

[00:49:08] The fact is, the attainable housing crisis does not just only impact Loudoun. It's a problem shared in the region, the Commonwealth, and in fact, the nation. That is why Loudoun has taken proactive steps to provide attainable housing, not just for but for purchase, which is actually more important because homes for purchase creates generational wealth. In September of 2021, the board approved the Unmet Housing Needs Strategic Plan, which

[00:49:42] systematically and comprehensively defines how we will not only increase our housing stock, but ensure we have the required infrastructure to welcome new residents to Loudoun. Our strategic plan engages a number of options and creates partnerships to address the housing shortages.

[00:50:02] It is also forward-thinking, helping Loudoun to address the critical issues far into the future. Required infrastructure includes transit and transportation, available capacity in our public schools, ample green space, utilities, and county staff.

[00:50:19] Under the direction of County Administrator Tim Hemstreet, the Department of Housing and Community Development was created and placed in the capable hands of Assistant County Administrator Valmarie Turner. Believing that attainable housing is imperative in Loudoun, we didn't simply talk about our commitment to creating housing and more housing options, or we didn't simply expect our development community to solve the housing shortage by offering attainable housing in exchange for higher density.

[00:50:53] No. In 2021, I'm sorry, in 2022, I made a motion to approve funding in the amount of a half penny on the tax rate solely dedicated to increasing our attainable housing stock. This is just one of the several policies put into place to address the attainable housing crisis. Leveraging \$32 million in loans from the county's housing trust fund, affordable housing developments have now captured almost \$270 million in additional investments from a variety of sources. We know

[00:51:29] there is still much to do to achieve our housing goals and to reach communities that require attainable housing. But because of the diligent work of Balmerie Turner, Director John Hall, Assistant Director Brian Regan, and everyone on their team, we are now on our way to achieving our strategic housing goals. One significant impact on the future of Loudoun's job and housing markets is the arrival of the Metro Silver Line. The long-awaited opening of the three new Silver

[00:52:05] Line stations in Loudoun, including one at Dulles Airport, will be a game changer. Metro expands the access to jobs and presents new opportunities for housing that never existed before. In our new urban policy area, we can build homes vertically and at higher densities. Metro also provides our single biggest opportunity to deliver on our mission to diversify Loudoun's economy. Implementing our strategy and investing in Metro are also key to attracting international businesses to Loudoun.

[00:52:38] With Dulles and its 56 direct flights to cities all around the world, and now with direct access to DC via rail, we look forward to Loudoun being a destination for business investments all around the globe. Some of those direct international flights are to countries where we have established sister counties.

[00:53:01] Our international sister county partnerships are designed to promote economic, cultural, and student exchange programs. Sister counties are of similar size and have similar industries and offer us opportunities to expand our tourism prospects.

[00:53:19] Loudoun County enjoys business partnerships throughout Europe and Asia, but tonight I am very pleased to announce that we have extended our global footprint to two new continents, South America and Africa. In March, I was proud to sign a sister agreement for a new sister county relationship in Catalonia, Uruguay.

[00:53:41] We've already had multiple businesses come to Loudoun from Uruguay, and we look forward to additional international business growth opportunities. Loudoun, I'm also very pleased to report that this fall, we will welcome our counterparts from Uruguay to Loudoun County. Next month, I look forward to leading the delegation to sign an agreement with Tema Ghana.

[00:54:05] In fact, the president of Ghana is personally interested in partnering with Loudoun County. Our new sister counties will provide us opportunities to collaborate in the areas of business, education, tourism, and culture. Tonight, I have the great pleasure to welcome to Loudoun County the Ambassador of Ghana to the United States, Alima Mahama, and from Ghana, the Deputy Chief of Mission and Acting Ambassador, Gerardo Ruiz from Uruguay. I

[00:54:37] ask you both to please stand so we can welcome you to Loudoun County. Thank you. As we welcome visitors from around the region, the Commonwealth, and our new sister county partners from around the globe to enjoy D.C.'s wine country. They will also experience unique bed and breakfast

[00:55:11] facilities, a thriving equestrian industry, working farms that are among some of the most productive in the region, and our vineyards, which are ranked as the number one visitor activity. Yeah, I know, wine. In a recent survey, visitors also identified shopping, dining, historic sites, breweries, and scenic outdoor activities as the primary reasons Loudoun tourism revenue topped three billion dollars. 82 percent of visitors to Loudoun said they are likely to visit

[00:55:47] again, and 81 percent said they are likely to recommend Loudoun to others. Loudoun, these great numbers don't just happen by accident. They happen because of the hard work of Visit Loudon CEO Beth Erickson and her amazing staff. Beth and her team are the reason Loudon is the top generator of tourism revenue in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The partnership and yes, brain trust that is Buddy Reiser and Beth Erickson does the hard job of making Loudon a place where everyone has a chance

[00:56:23] to thrive, where small businesses can grow, where citizens can find the job of their dreams, and where visitors can enjoy a unique, memorable experiences. Buddy and Beth, please stand and allow us to thank you both for your hard work. Hard work completed by Buddy and Beth and so many

[00:56:59] others in making and keeping Loudoun a welcoming community where residents feel not just physically safe, but emotionally safe, must be borne by all Loudoners. Over the past decade, the spread of disinformation has been used as a tool to undermine common decency and our faith in humanity.

[00:57:26] Unfortunately, Loudon is not immune to bad actors who seek out opportunities to exploit our differences, backgrounds, and political ideologies. In Loudon, we have seen an increase in hostile aggressive acts towards communities of color and other socially vulnerable communities.

[00:57:49] The vandalism of an historic cemetery for the formerly enslaved. The continued distribution of leaflets from a group that can credibly only be described as a domestic terrorist organization. Anti-Semitic graffiti sprayed on public buildings.

[00:58:06] The unwarranted and unexplainable attacks on our immigrant and LGBT communities are all acts of emotional violence that seek to make residents feel unsafe and unwelcome. Likewise, responding to those acts of emotional violence with threats and intimidation is equally unacceptable and does equal harm to our community with large. Sadly, we now live in a world where bullying, hatred, and disdain for others has been given a voice, perhaps and hopefully louder than their

[00:58:45] true representation. For some, political discourse has coarsened to the point they no longer see one another as political opponents, but as political enemies, not to engage with, but to destroy.

[00:59:00] Former President Ronald Reagan once said, peace is not the absence of conflict. It is the ability to handle conflict by a peaceful means. Loudoun, like the rest of the world, we will have disagreements. But to those who seek to turn those disagreements into division, I say this to you, the cost of sacrificing respect, decency, trust, and love to sow seeds of discord, division,

[00:59:33] and distrust is not a cost we are willing to pay. No matter your ideologies or affiliations, intentionally spreading disinformation or resorted to threats of violence will never be welcomed are

normalized in Loudoun County. I stand today as your county chair speaking on behalf of the Board of Supervisors, county administration and staff and the overwhelming majority of Loudouners

[01:00:12] when I say together we will meet hate with compassion. We will meet attempts to divide with acts of unity and kindness. We will meet falsehood and disinformation with truth and facts And we will drive out darkness with a light so bright the entire Commonwealth will come to know that in Loudoun, kindness, diversity, equity, accessibility, and unity are our core values and reflect our core values.

[01:00:43] I need everyone tonight to hear me say this. In Loudoun, we will not be deterred. We will not be cowards.

[01:01:00] We will not be silenced. We are Loudoun. And in Loudoun, we do hard things. Keeping Loudoun residents and visitors safe is the goal of county government and our first responders.

[01:01:20] If you speak to our Combined Fire and Rescue Systems Chief, Keith Johnson, or Sheriff Mike Chapman, they will tell you that so many of the calls received by our first responders are due not to someone having a physical ailment, but a mental health crisis.

[01:01:37] When answering mental health calls, our first responders use their education and experience to meet the immediate need, but rely on mental health experts to provide sustained care going forward. Sadly, when a resident experiences a serious or prolonged mental health crisis, they often struggle to find placement in a suitable facility and are forced to spend many hours or even days in a hospital emergency room.

[01:02:04] By Virginia Code, a law enforcement officer is required to remain with that resident until placement is found, resulting in a shortage of deputies to respond to other calls. Loudoun, if we are to provide the best possible treatment for residents experiencing a mental health emergency and allow our first responders to do the jobs for which they are extensively and well-trained, a crisis receiving center will be essential. A crisis receiving center staff of licensed clinical staff will provide temporary beds and treatment for residents

[01:02:43] experiencing a mental health crisis until longer-term treatment is available or until the crisis is resolved. This month, we learned that our United States Senators, Tim Kaine and Mark Warner, and our Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton submitted a joint request in the amount of \$15 million for federal funding for a crisis receiving center to be located in Loudoun. Congress will evaluate those projects for inclusion in the annual appropriations budget later this year.

[01:03:13] We offer our thanks to our federal officials, and we will do all we can to advocate for the funding request of a crisis receiving center. We also recognize and thank our first responders for their continued service in Loudoun County. And at this time, I'd like all first responders who serve Loudoun to please stand and be recognized.

[01:03:35] Just as our first responders serve Loudoun, I want to highlight three men who have also served our county for a combined 67 years. I'm speaking of Treasurer Roger Zern, Deputy County Administrator Charles Judd, and my colleague on the board, Tony Buckingham. Let's start with Roger. Most people

[01:04:15] in Loudoun know the name Roger Zern because it appears on their tax bill twice a year and because he's been treasurer for an amazing 27 years. Yeah, but before serving as treasurer, Roger sat in the district seat now occupied by Vice Chair Sains as the Sterling District Supervisor. Elected in a special

election in 1990, he served the people of Sterling for six years before running for a county right office. Treasurer Zern has led the county through economic downturns

[01:04:50] and the Great Recession. After becoming chair, I remember during my first meeting with Treasurer Zern, he told me he believes in conservative investing. As a member of Loudoun's finance board, I can tell you that Loudoun's financial house is in order. Mr. Zern's prudent investing has been a leading reason Loudoun continues to keep our triple AAA bond rating. In a county where the budget has grown from \$500 million to \$4.5 billion, receiving a triple AAA bond rating

[01:05:24] is no small feat. So what don't you know about Roger? Did you know he loves Motown music and can do a mean karaoke to almost any Motown song? Did you know he has three grandchildren who are the light of his life? Did you know that I tell Roger all the time that he is without a doubt the best-dressed man in county government? And did you know that earlier this term, two constituents, Philip Thompson and Harold Butler, approached me inquiring if the county had any investments with minority-owned banks or brokerage firms.

[01:06:03] I took this question to Mr. Zern, who I knew would ensure that any bank or brokerage firm we invested with would be well-vetted and well-qualified. Working closely with my office, Treasurer Zern and his team helped secure not one, but two minority-owned brokerage firms to assist in managing a portion of Loudon's portfolio.

[01:06:26] It is the first time Loudon sought the opportunity to engage. Minority banks are brokers. For over a quarter of a century, Roger Zone has been a dedicated public servant. Roger will humbly tell you he's not a perfect man. I will tell you he is a good man, and he is somebody that we owe our thanks. Roger, if you please stand and accept

[01:06:50] the thanks of the great faculty. Thank you, sir. In 2016, when I became chair of Loudoun, I was pretty nervous about how I would be received. But then I met Charles Judd. This one man almost

[01:07:26] single-handedly made me feel welcomed and confident. Charles Judd joined Loudoun County government in 1997 as the Land Use Review Division matter in the Department of Planning and Zoning. He moved to the Office of County Administration in 1999, working initially in the areas of land use, economic development, and development review. During his career in county government, Mr. Judd has overseen nearly all areas of purview under the county administration including the Department

[01:08:01] of Animal Services, Building and Development, Economic Development, Planning and Zoning, Transportation and Capital Infrastructure, and he also served as a liaison to the Loudoun County Public Library System and the Office of Elections and Voter Registration. Some, and I just mean a few of Mr. Yud's key accomplishments that have had a significant impact on Loudoun include leading the staff that delivered the zoning ordinance rewrite in 2000, managing the 2000 Route 50 corridor transportation project, spearheading the county's work that supported

[01:08:35] the move of Raytheon Technologies to Loudoun in 2010, leading the 2012 missing link transportation study, leading the multi-departmental team and key community stakeholder group that resulted in the 2019 Comprehensive Plan, spearheading the 2021 efforts to improve safety in county facilities, and he is currently leading the zoning ordinance rewrite and implementation of the county's long-awaited land enterprise management system.

[01:09:05] Those are two of the most significant projects underway right now. So obviously, Mr. Yudd has done a lot. But if I only tell you about Mr. Yudd's works duties, you miss the man.

[01:09:23] Charles Yudd is stern and kind, funny and focused, knowledgeable but never voiceful, calming yet intense. In so many ways, Charles Yudd has been the heart of Loudoun County government.

[01:09:46] Charles, I speak for so many when I say to you, you will be dearly missed. But I am really happy for you. I want you to go enjoy your daughter's wedding and go enjoy your retirement, which you richly deserve. In fact, Charles, you deserve every good thing that this world has for you.

[01:10:07] Ladies and gentlemen, Charles Yad. Not least, my friend, Supervisor Tony Buffington.

[01:10:38] I met my friend Tony in 2015 while we were both seeking office. After we won, Tony was the first of my new colleagues to call me. He reached out to me even before I had a chance to reach out to him. Now, all of you know some facts about Supervisor Buffington.

[01:10:57] For instance, he is deeply committed to ensuring Western Loudoun retains its character and rural economy. Supervisor Buffington has voted against allowing even one home in Western Loudoun County. His commitment to that promise has been consistent and unyielding.

[01:11:16] Some of you may know that at times, Tony can use colorful language. In fact, the supervisor Buffington sits by me on the dais.

[01:11:32] I sometimes have to turn off my mic when he leans over to me to share a private word, which you may not know about Tony. He can't dance. He can't. He cannot dance.

[01:11:51] We were at the Habitat for Humanity Raise the Roof fundraiser, and the DJ played the Cupid Shuffle. It's not even a hard line dance. Everyone on the floor is facing one direction.

[01:12:07] But Tony is having an equally good time, but he's the only one facing the other direction. But the most memorable story about Tony happened during our first term. We were on the dais during a finance committee meeting, and suddenly my throat felt itchy and my mouth felt scratchy and itchy.

[01:12:32] And Tony is my friend and a good man. So I turned to Tony, and I said, Tony, does my face look funny? Tony looked at me for a long time. He, like, looked at me and then said, nope, you look fine to me.

[01:12:52] Tony's a first responder, so I believed him. So I turned back around, and I sat a little longer, but my throat felt more itchy, and my mouth felt more itchy. And after a while, I could start seeing my eye out of my eye.

[01:13:09] So I got up and I went to the bathroom and I looked in the mirror and my face was absolutely enormous. I came back to the dais because I was trying to get my stuff and quietly walk off the dais.

[01:13:27] Mr. Hamstreet saw me and he said, Chair Randall, let's get you off this dais. It just happened to be that on that day, Chief Johnson was in the room. Chief Johnson was called to the back. They met me in the back, and they were like, yeah, this is bad.

[01:13:45] And they put oxygen on my face. Now, again, Tony is a good person. So he gets up to come check on me. He walks to the back. I'm sitting in the back with an enormous face and oxygen on my face, and Tony looks at me very closely, and he goes, oh, yeah, I see it now.

[01:14:08] Two days later, I came back to work, and I see Tony, and I said, Tony, how did you not see my enormous face? And Tony looked at me and very seriously said, Phyllis, I'm a cop.

[01:14:26] I'm not a first responder. He goes, I'm not fire and rescue. Unless you're bleeding, I'm not going to notice. Tony said to me, I'm a cop. On January 6th, 2021, Tony was being just that, a cop, a Capitol Police officer.

[01:14:50] So many of us in Loudoun County watched in horror as January 6 unfolded. And as we watched, so many of us had one question. Is Tony okay? Almost every email, every phone call, every text I received that day asked, is Tony okay?

[01:15:11] Sometime later that day, I received a very quick phone call from Tony. And of course, I asked him, Tony, are you okay? It was a very quick call. And I will always remember what he said because he said, for right now, I'm safe. That was his words, for right now I'm safe, and he hung up.

[01:15:29] I hung up, and I said a prayer for my country, but first I said a prayer for my friend. One thing was clear that day. Loudon, your concern for Tony transcended political party or ideology.

[01:15:46] Everyone from across the political spectrum in Loudon simply wanted Tony Buffington to come home safe. As he ends his service on our board, I will say to Tony the exact same thing I said to him during our first installation.

[01:16:03] Tony, we are friends forever. We are stuck with one another. We are in each other's lives for the rest of our lives. I love and appreciate our friendship, and I will really miss you leaning over to me, turning off my microphone, saying something to me that I should not laugh at while I'm on the dais.

[01:16:26] Thank you for being my friend, and thank you for being Tony. The work of these three men is backed up and supported by the work of more than 4,000 full-time county employees.

[01:17:00] I've said many times before, and I will say it again today, I believe Loudoun has the best county staff in the country. It is for this reason that I, along with the majority of the board, agreed to allow our public sector employees to have the option to unionize.

[01:17:17] Unions are today, and have been for many decades, the voice of workers. They advocate not just for fair wages and benefits, but also for reasonable working conditions. Loudoun at this time, the Loudoun County Career Firefighters Association, IAFF, Local 3756, led by President John Myers, has begun the process of collective bargaining.

[01:17:42] Our Service Employees International Union, SEIU, Virginia 512, led by Dr. Julius Reynolds, have also now gathered enough signatures to file for certification, which we expect will lead to collective bargaining discussions within the next year.

[01:17:59] At this time, I'd like the President of IAFF, John Myers, and SEIU, Virginia 512, Julius Reynolds, and any member of any union with us tonight to please stand and be recognized for your service. Thank you. The work of the Board of Supervisors, county administration, and staff is in service

[01:18:36] to the people of Loudoun. However, county government does not work alone. So many others are equally committed in service to Loudoun residents. I'm speaking, of course, of our faith-based community and our nonprofits. Our nonprofits are a force multiplier to county government. They offer services the county government does not, and some might say should not provide. They meet people at

their most vulnerable times in their lives when they are stressed, depressed, and sometimes hopeless. As a mental health therapist, I've talked many times

[01:19:15] about the danger of hopelessness. Today in our society, we've seen a rise in anxiety and depression, most notably in our youth, but I'm more concerned when anxiety and depression leads to hopelessness.

[01:19:30] Susie Bartell knows all too well what it means to have a young person who felt hopeless enough to take his own life. In the face of unspeakable tragedy, Susie Bartell did a hard thing. Knowing she never wanted any other parent or family to feel the pain she and her family experienced after her 17-year-old son Ryan died by suicide, Susie started the Ryan Bartell Foundation.

[01:20:02] The foundation is based on the basic principle that everyone deserves acceptance and that society needs to provide resources and hope and hope for youth who struggle with self-esteem and a motivation to live.

[01:20:20] In memory of Ryan, a scholarship of \$2,500 was created for graduating high school seniors who have gone out of their way to support their peers struggling with mental health and hopelessness. This evening, I have the immense pleasure of introducing the first two winners of the Ryan Bartell Heart of Humanity Award from Dominion High School, Gabby Guambo, and from Loudoun County High School, Caitlin Lanham, who is represented today by Val Walters.

[01:20:54] On November 18, 2019, the Dominion High School community was shattered by the sudden loss of its beloved freshman, Lane Burrows. He was a lineman on the freshman football team and a wonderful friend to many.

[01:21:11] However, he secretly fought a battle with mental health and ultimately took his own life. Understandably, this had a huge impact on many students in the community, particularly his closest friends, one of which was Gabby Guambo.

[01:21:29] As one of the last people to speak to Lane before his death, Gabby said she carried an immense amount of guilt, and she couldn't comprehend why Lane didn't understand his own worth and how loved he was by so many. Believing that no other young person should feel alone and hopeless, and channeling her grief into a cause Gabby felt was bigger than herself, she started the Live for Lane Club at Dominion.

[01:21:57] According to Gabby, she founded the club to remember and honor Lane's legacy of kindness and to ensure that students understood the importance of mental health so that no one else struggles in silence. The club is a place where people can connect with their peers, they can receive support, and hopefully end the stigma for people who suffer with mental illness.

[01:22:24] Now let me tell you about Caitlin Lanham. How many people can actually say they saved the life of another? Well, Loudon, 18-year-old Caitlin Lanham, can say just that. Caitlin was nominated for the Heart of Humanity Award by a peer who has chosen to remain anonymous, but who described her own declining mental health condition that ultimately resulted in a night when she, that peer, was seriously contemplating suicide.

[01:22:54] That peer sent Caitlin a text. Caitlin responded immediately and asked her peer for her location. Caitlin then left a party to come to the aid of her friend. That selfless act changed the life of Caitlin's friend, who now says, and this is a direct quote, that was the night everything changed for me.

[01:23:17] Ever since that night and the conversation Caitlin had with me, my life has felt like it has more significance. Caitlin helped me find a therapist, made sure that I was going to my weekly meetings, and she still does.

[01:23:34] I truly know in my heart that if Caitlin wasn't there that night, I would have done some things I would forever regret. I cannot be more grateful for her because she is a blessing to me and all those whose lives she touches, unquote.

[01:23:50] Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce you to the first two winners of the Ryan Bartell Heart of Humanity Award, Gabby Guambeau and Caitlin Lanham, represented today by Val Warkers. Young women represent the finest among us.

[01:24:29] They embody the care, compassion, patience, and love that make hard things, seemingly impossible things possible. They are strong. They are smart. They are visionary. They are a shining example of who we are, what we stand for, and what together we can achieve as one united county.

[01:24:55] Loudon, over the past eight years, I've had the distinct honor to serve as your chair. As a Loudon resident and your chair, I know this county is worth fighting for. I have seen time and time again how we do the hard things. This county government, with its thousands of employees, work hard every day on your behalf.

[01:25:16] Our nonprofit and faith communities work hard to ensure that those in need find the help they deserve. And as illustrated tonight, we have our youth, Loudoun's future, doing the hard things that make a difference to our community.

[01:25:34] So, what is the state of Loudoun County? After successfully navigating the past three and a half years, I don't think that's a one-word answer. So allow me to review. Because I know the vast, vast majority of Loudouners demonstrate love, compassion, and respect for others, the same love shown by Gabby and Caitlin, I can say the state of Loudoun County is caring and supportive.

[01:26:05] Because Loudoun came through the pandemic maintaining our triple AAA bond rating and with one of the strongest economies in the country, it is clear the state of Loudoun's economy is stable and robust. Because we are about to welcome two new international sister county relationships and look forward to the businesses and cultural exchanges that will undoubtedly result from those partnerships, I believe the state of our county is globally engaged.

[01:26:36] Because Loudoun is fortunate enough to have hard-working county staff who are responsive, committed, and accountable, I know that the state of our county is superbly managed. And as three remarkable men, Roger Zern, Charles Judd, and Tony Buffington, step off the stage, and two equally remarkable young ladies step up to follow their example, I believe the state of Loudoun County shines with hope.

[01:27:07] Ladies and gentlemen, for all these reasons and so many more, the people of Loudoun County can be immensely proud of who we are, all we've accomplished, and together, what we can achieve. We are Loudoun. We do hard things.

[01:27:27] And because of that, the state of Loudoun County is not just strong, the state of Loudoun County is exceptional. Thank you, and I'll see you next year.



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