

# Northern Virginia News

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Chapter of  
The American Society for Public Administration

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## Government Sites Struggle with Disability Compatibility

By Kenneth Hunter, ASPA Northern Virginia Chapter Board Member

As state and local governments continue to expand their online services and website options, they face the specific issue of making sure their sites are accessible to all residents, including those with disabilities. While compliance is improving, according to a recent survey, much need for improvement remains.

The 2004 results of an annual website review survey conducted by Darrell West of the Center for Public Policy at Brown University found that 42% of federal websites, 37% of state websites, and 21% of local websites in metropolitan areas conform to standards established by the World Wide Web consortium (W3C). These standards are similar to those enforced upon Federal websites by Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The low rating among local governments indicates that jurisdictions as a whole are not making a concerted effort to ensure that their websites can be effectively used by people with disabilities, lacking additional features that help with site comprehension for those who visual, hearing, or other issues.

The project, which evaluates government websites on a wide variety of features and capabilities, did indicate that overall compliance with the W3C standard is improving. Federal adherence increased 5% over 2003, while state sites saw a 4% improvement and local governments experienced a minor 1% improvement.

As a state government, the survey found that 22% of Virginia websites complied with the W3C standard, putting it at 42nd of the states in the disability access category. The best performing states were North Dakota (91%), Kansas (74%), Texas (64%), and New Hampshire (61%)

Overall, Virginia ranked 24th in the survey, which examined a variety of accessibility features, including foreign language translation, e-commerce, readability, and presence of site problems that included broken links and redirects. The best states rated were Tennessee, Maine, Utah, New York, and Illinois.

The closest local government evaluated was Washington, DC, which responded a positive 70% compliance rating with the W3C standard. Compliance was tested using the Bobby approval site, [bobby.watchfire.com](http://bobby.watchfire.com). An internal check of Northern Virginia jurisdictions with the Bobby test found that none of the local site main pages complied with the standard. Several jurisdictions, including Manassas Park and Arlington, did come close and only displayed minor problems.

Along with lacking resources and knowledge essential to developing sites friendly to those with disabilities, another factor in the low local government compliance is the lack of requirement to comply with certain standards. Local government websites, as well as state sites, are not susceptible to Section 508 adherence.



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## ***Disability Compatibility (Continued)***

The e-government reports featured in this article are available online through Brown University. Links to these reports are available below, along with information on improving disability access to government websites. Report data was also featured in a recent article, "Barrier-Free IT," in *Governing Magazine*, which is available online at [governing.com/articles/3web.htm](http://governing.com/articles/3web.htm). The article can also be found in the March 2005 issue.

### **Resources on Disability Site Compliance**

#### ***Reports***

State and Federal E-Government in the United States, 2004. [www.insidepolitics.org/egovt04us.pdf](http://www.insidepolitics.org/egovt04us.pdf)  
Urban E-Government, 2004, [www.insidepolitics.org/egovt04city.pdf](http://www.insidepolitics.org/egovt04city.pdf).

#### ***Section 508 Standard***

[www.section508.gov](http://www.section508.gov)  
[www.webaim.org/standards/508/checklist](http://www.webaim.org/standards/508/checklist)

#### ***World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Standard***

[www.w3.org/wai/](http://www.w3.org/wai/)  
[www.w3.org/wcag10/full-checklist.html](http://www.w3.org/wcag10/full-checklist.html)  
[www.w3.org/wai/references/quicktips/](http://www.w3.org/wai/references/quicktips/)

## **Banquet features Former Fairfax Chair**

Jack Herrity, former Chair of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, will be the guest speaker at this year's Northern Virginia Chapter Awards Banquet, scheduled for Thursday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, at the Alpine Restaurant in Arlington. Herrity will speak on the nature of relationships between elected officials and professional staff in positions of public administration.

The annual banquet will also feature the presentation of winner's of Chapter awards for 2005. This is a must-attend event for public administrators throughout Northern Virginia, and we hope that as many of you as possible are able to make it out for this enjoyable evening and networking opportunity.

Additional information on the banquet will be made available in May. To inquire about the banquet and the Chapter Awards, email our President, Gene Bacher, at [aspanova@gmail.com](mailto:aspanova@gmail.com).

### **Northern Virginia News**

Is a bi-monthly publication of the Northern Virginia Chapter of The American Society for Public Administration

*Mission: To advance the theory and practice of public administration in Northern Virginia.*

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#### **Newsletter Editor**

Kenneth Hunter

#### **Board Meetings**

Unless otherwise noted, the second Wednesday of each month at:

Beacon Street Café  
Greenbriar Shopping Center, Route 50  
Chantilly, VA

*The American Society for Public Administration was formed in 1939 and is the premier professional association for public administrators in the United States. Our chapter is a voluntary association of individuals from government, nonprofit, academia, and private sector organizations dedicated to promoting recognition for public service, providing professional opportunities, and offering technical assistance to area public administrators.*

## Maryland's Marital Privilege Option Detrimental to Victims

*By Karen L. Bune, Immediate Past President*

I recently had the privilege to testify before the Maryland legislature for repeal of the marital privilege option in domestic violence cases. Under Maryland law, marital privilege allows a victim of domestic violence to have a one time option to elect not to testify against the abusing spouse, and the charges are dismissed. This option needs to be eliminated because it enables the cycle of violence for victims and sends the wrong message to the defendant. Abusers must be held accountable for their actions and recognize that when they make a choice to harm a victim, there are consequences for their actions.

The idea is conveyed that abusers can beat up their spouses and get away with it. Marital privilege does not serve to preserve the family unit as some may argue. Instead, this option serves as a catalyst for further violence allowing the victim to return to an abusive situation that will likely escalate to the point the victim can be further harmed or even killed. Secondary victimization can occur for children who often witness the violence; therefore, children are placed at additional risk with this option. Thus, the marital privilege option serves to reinforce the power and control the abuser retains over the victim, creates a victim fearful to testify, and returns the vulnerable victim to a dangerous situation.

A great deal of time and effort are expended by law enforcement, judiciary personnel, and victim services from initiation of the incident to the court appearance. When the victim exercises marital privilege and the charges are immediately dismissed, all those efforts are futile and the criminal justice system has been utilized unproductively.

It is imperative that Maryland legislators be proactive by removing this option from the law. Such action may potentially avoid further harm to victims and may even save lives.

*Karen serves as a Victim Specialist/Legal Assistant in the State's Attorney's Office for Prince George's County, Maryland.*

### **Group started for Individuals Interested in Civil Service Change**

A recent headline, "Civil Service System on Way Out at DHS; White House Wants All Agencies to Have Option of Setting Own Personnel Policies," on the front page of the Washington Post (January 27, 2005) signals fundamental changes to Civil Service in the federal government. As part of the initiative, major changes also are planned for Civil Service in the Department of Defense. DoD and the Department of Homeland Security, together, have about 850,000 civilian employees, half the total in the federal government not counting the Postal Service. Civil Service is of concern to many current and retired federal employees and others who teach or work in public administration and who are ASPA members. At one time, the federal Civil Service served as a model for many public and private personnel systems. As we know, another important change in public personnel systems is that Civil Service in a number of states and municipalities also has also been dramatically revised and in some cases abolished.

If you would be interested in participating in an effort to share thoughts, insights, and/or research ideas or participate in an effort to gather information and respond to the current changes in Civil Service, please let us know.

Sincerely,  
Ray C. Oman, 202-274-5270, roman@udc.edu  
Jacqueline J. Garrett

## Nominate People for Chapter Awards

The Northern Virginia Chapter is currently accepting nominations for its annual awards program. These honors are designed to recognize public administrators in the area for their ongoing commitment to the profession, public service, and research. The deadline is May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Awards will be presented at our annual awards banquet this spring, and they include the following:

- The Hodding Carter Outstanding Journalism Award
- Public Service Award
- Public Administrator / New Professional Award
- The Kathy Hensley Award for Distinguished Chapter Service
- Special Achievement Award
- Outstanding Service Award

A nomination form is included with this newsletter, and it is also available online at [www.aspaonline.org/nova/awards.htm](http://www.aspaonline.org/nova/awards.htm).

## Calendar of Events

Events	Day & Time	Location
Panel Discussion <i>Evidence-Based Performance Measurement</i>	Wednesday, Apr. 13 <sup>th</sup> 3:00 p.m.	Pennino Building 12011 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax
April Meeting	Wednesday Apr. 13 <sup>th</sup> 5:00 p.m.	Pennino Building 12011 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax
Public Service Recognition Week	May 2-8	More information available at <a href="http://www.theroundtable.org/psrw.html">www.theroundtable.org/psrw.html</a>
May Meeting	Wednesday May 11 <sup>th</sup> 6:00 p.m.	Beacon Street Café
Chapter Public Service Awards Banquet	Thursday June 16 <sup>th</sup>	Alpine Restaurant Arlington
July Meeting	Wednesday July 13 <sup>th</sup> 6:00 p.m.	Beacon Street Café
September Meeting	Wednesday Sept. 14 <sup>th</sup> 6:00 p.m.	Beacon Street Café
October Meeting	Wednesday Oct. 12 <sup>th</sup> 6:00 p.m.	Beacon Street Café
November Meeting	Wednesday Nov. 9 <sup>th</sup> 6:00 p.m.	Beacon Street Café
Association for Budget and Financial Mgmt. Conference	November 9 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup>	Washington Marriott 1221 22 <sup>nd</sup> St. NW
December Meeting	Wednesday Dec. 14 <sup>th</sup> 6:00 p.m.	Beacon Street Café



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