

On Volunteering in State Government

The Volunteer Leader Interview with H. L. ("Ted") Baynes, Richmond, Virginia

HL. ("TED") BAYNES IS A BANKER by profession. After three years of commissioned service in the U.S. Navy, he began his banking career in 1959. Today he is an executive vice president of United Virginia Bank in Richmond, Virginia. Over the years he has been an active member of various banking groups, including the American Bankers Association and the American Institute of Banking.

Baynes always has balanced his job-related activities, however, with a variety of community service positions. They include participation on the advisory council to the Virginia Voice for the Print Handicapped, the Richmond Committee of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, the Youth Emergency Service, the Virginia Council on Social Welfare, the Richmond Community Action Program, the Richmond Volunteer Bureau/Voluntary Action Center, the Citizens' Coalition for Criminal Justice.

He also was involved in the creation of the Virginia State Office on Volunteerism in the early '70s. When asked to be interviewed for VAL, he was startled to hear that many people are skeptical of the idea as well as the extent of citizen volunteering in state government.

When told that his work with the State Office on Volunteerism was outside the experience of most volunteers, he said, "I don't find it very remarkable. However, if the recounting of the modest efforts of one citizen volunteer in state government will motivate other readers to share their talents with state or local government, I can promise they will

share with me the pride in what a relatively small group of dedicated people can accomplish if they care enough to try."



Except for your military service, you have always worked in private industry. And as a citizen activist, you have a long history of involvement in a variety of private-sector organizations. How did you get involved in state government activities?

Several years ago, I was asked to be on the advisory committee of what was to become our local Voluntary Action Center. A year or so after I joined that group, the friend who had invited me to join the committee decided that she wanted to step down and, as it happened, I was appointed to a subcommittee charged with advising on the selection of a new director.

We interviewed a number of candidates, but I was most impressed with a young woman who had spent the previous ten years in social work and who also happened to be a stunning blue-eyed blonde. Based on her professional

qualifications, she was hired. Her personal qualifications were of even more interest to me and within twelve months, she was also my wife.

More by accident than good planning, we ended up agreeing to explore each other's worlds: hers the social welfare/volunteer field and mine the management and commercial banking arena. We attended the business sessions of each other's conferences and often worked together on the many speeches that she was called upon to make.

Somewhere around 1973 (the year we were married), it dawned on me that I had been a volunteer for several years (which reminds me of Marcia Penn's marvelous story about the man who was asked if he was a volunteer and replied that he did not have time to volunteer because he was so busy coaching a little league baseball team!). Not too long after that, Marcia and a visionary young state legislator began to develop proposals for a State Office on Volunteerism. Its primary emphasis would be to increase the use of volunteers in state government. Their legislative proposals for the establishment of such an office failed two years in a row, but they were able to convince our governor that the need was there and that funding for the first few years could be obtained from ACTION. The funds were obtained and the office was established by executive order.

During its birthing, an informal advisory group was formed to assist in the effort. Because of her expertise, my wife was asked to be a part of that group and I was allowed to tag along. Once the office was established, it seemed important to us that the advisory group be given some status and a request was made to the governor

to appoint fifteen people to an advisory committee. He was willing to do so and the committee held its organizational meeting which I was unable to attend. That "slip" resulted in my being chairman of the group for two years.

What did the advisory committee do?

I find it difficult, even today, to describe exactly how things worked. On a formal basis, the committee usually met only once each quarter and, technically, the coordinator of the office had no real responsibility either to ask our advice or, if advice was given, to follow it; however, we didn't spend a lot of time on defining roles and responsibilities. We just rolled up our sleeves and decided that some things needed doing.

Early on, we saw our role as catalytic and agreed that we did not want to have a large staff nor spend a great deal of money, but we did want to find ways in which volunteers could be used more effectively in state government. Whether it was the annual conference, which has grown each year in terms of both attendance and effectiveness of the training, or other kinds of technical assistance provided around the state, no one made much distinction between who was staff and who was volunteer. The objective was clear and we set about to achieve it together.

As chairman of the advisory committee, was your role any different?

There were some ceremonial aspects that I had to tend to, such as presiding at the annual conference and occasional calls on the governor to talk about our progress. In addition, it was also necessary to begin to seek financial support from the state for the office. At one point it appeared that one position was not going to be funded by the legislature. I was asked to testify at a committee hearing on this position and was able to talk successfully about the cost of the position and the quantifiable benefits which could be achieved if the position were funded. At least in that instance, a businessman's "bottom line" perspective seemed to be persuasive to our legislators.

On another occasion, ACTION was having some difficulty in mustering Congressional support and I was asked to give a citizen's point of view on the use of taxpayer's funds for volunteer-type activities. One of our continuing

problems has been to explain why any funding is necessary for an activity associated with volunteerism. A point we have made over and over again is that while volunteers are "free," their activities need to be managed by professionals (just as does the utilization of any other resource) and that it is appropriate and cost effective for a government organization to allocate funds for the management of these resources.

Did you encounter any other problems related to state government volunteerism?

Towards the end of my two-year stint as chairman, our coordinator decided it was time for her to move on and we were faced with the problem of choosing a successor. The authority to hire the successor rested completely with a division head in the state government. He was not required to consult the Advisory Committee, but when I volunteered to work with him in interviewing candidates and to be a part of the selection process, he readily agreed. Together, we interviewed several candidates and, as I recall, some thirteen of the "normal" working hours in a week during that hectic period were devoted to that particular effort. As it happened, we were able to easily reach a consensus on the "right" candidate and he was hired and is performing superbly. I am told that this is one of the few occasions in the history of the state government where a citizen was directly involved in the hiring of a state employee.

After serving as chairman of the advisory committee, what was your role in the operation of the State Office on Volunteerism?

With the election of a new governor in 1978, attention was focused on the organizational structure of state government. The State Office, having been created by executive order, had been placed in what we call in Virginia the Finance and Administration Secretariat. This secretariat was responsible for "rations and quarters," but our policy direction had come directly from the previous governor through one of his assistants. The new governor thought this was a less than appropriate organizational structure and asked us to examine it and to make a recommendation to him as to how it might be improved.

I chaired a subcommittee of the advisory committee which determined that we should report administratively to the Secretary for Human Resources and that it was time for us to seek the blessing of the legislature as to the need for this function in state government. I'm happy to report that the bill we drafted was passed and that the State Office on Volunteerism of Virginia is now almost totally funded out of state tax revenues.

Was that the highlight of the bill?

There is one aspect of "our" bill about which I am particularly proud and that is that we built into it a five-year "sunset" provision mandating a legislative review of our performance before the funding of the office could be continued. We believe that volunteers can be used effectively in state government, that the benefits can be quantified and that there is a real case for the expenditure of tax funds for this purpose. Our belief is that the case is so strong that we were willing to subject the State Office on Volunteerism to the perils of the political process in an attempt to demonstrate our unwillingness to create a bureaucracy with an unlimited life.

And today, the State Office is still going strong?

By all indications, Virginia's State Office—which is now the Division of Volunteerism—is one of the leading organizations of its kind in the country. Our success is the result of a demonstrated need and of the dedication of countless volunteers and our small, but most effective, paid staff.

There are thousands of volunteers today in Virginia's state government, but there are enormous opportunities yet to be exploited. The more citizens we can encourage to volunteer, the more opportunities we have for an informed electorate who can support the many dedicated professionals in state government.

We have met resistance from some of those professionals who are unwilling to have citizens be privy to how state government works, but they are in the minority. The majority welcome the expertise and additional perspectives which volunteers bring to bear on their problems and appreciate, perhaps more than anything else, in the era of Proposition 13, the value they add at little or no cost.