



The Extremes of Virginia

*Southwest, Southside and the Eastern Shore
Two Separated and Unequal Commonwealths
Rural, Poor and Largely Forgotten*

August Wallmeyer

The 2/3s Premise

- That 2/3s of legislators and Administration officials don't 'know' or know much about, The Extremes

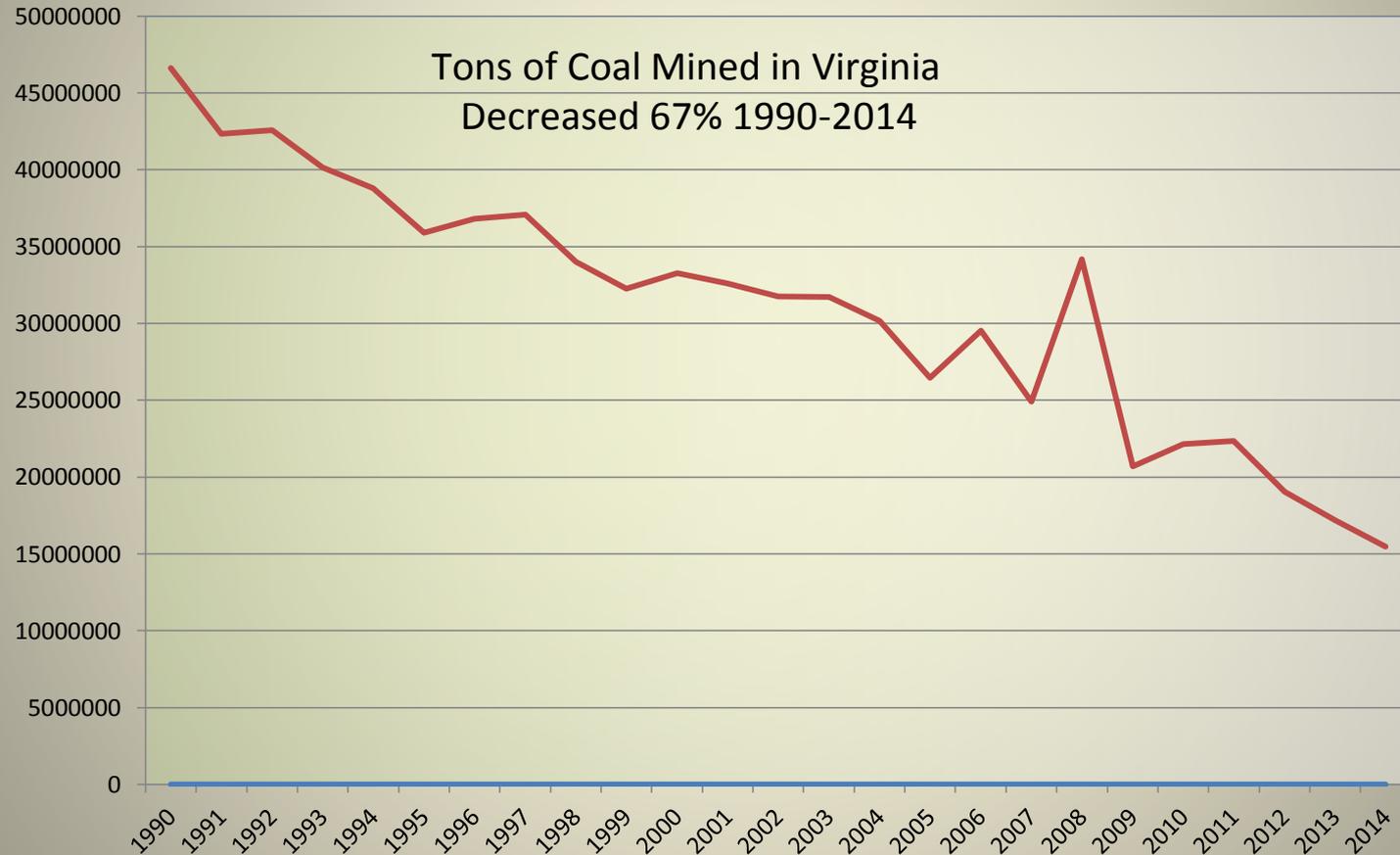
Southwest Virginia



Coal Operations



Virginia Coal Industry Decline



Southwest by the Numbers

	Southwest	Virginia
Population change 2010-2014	-2.3%	+4.1%
Without health insurance (age 65 or less)	16.1%	12.5%
In Civilian Labor Force	52.3%	64.9%
Persons in Poverty	18.2%	11.8%
Suicide rate/100,000	19.6	13.8
Fatal Opioid Overdoses, 2014, per 100,000	16.4	6.4

Southside Virginia



Southside Virginia



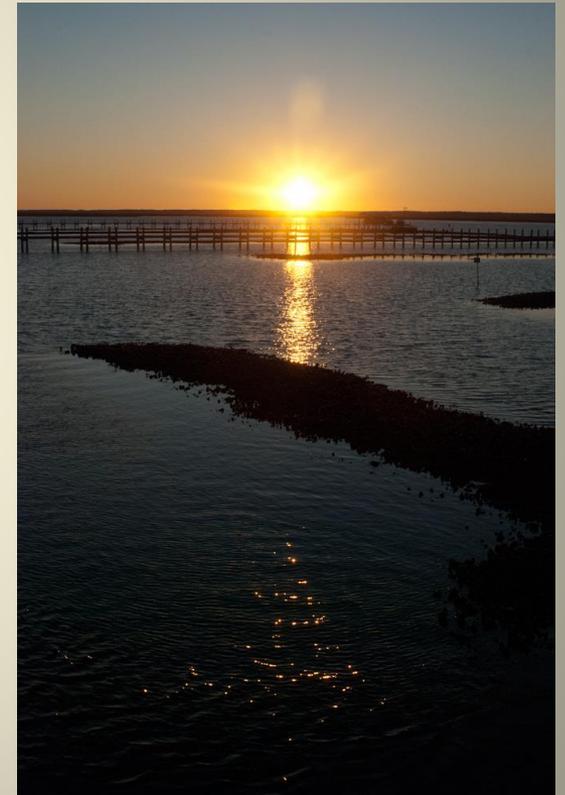
Southside VA by the Numbers

	Southside	Virginia
Population change 2010-2014	-1.23%	+4.1%
Without health insurance (age 65 or less)	15.6%	12.5%
In Civilian Labor Force	53.6%	64.9%
Persons in Poverty	20.2%	11.8%
Suicide rate/100,000	9.6	13.8
Fatal Opioid Overdoses, 2014, per 100,000	1.8	6.4

Eastern Shore of Virginia



Eastern Shore of Virginia



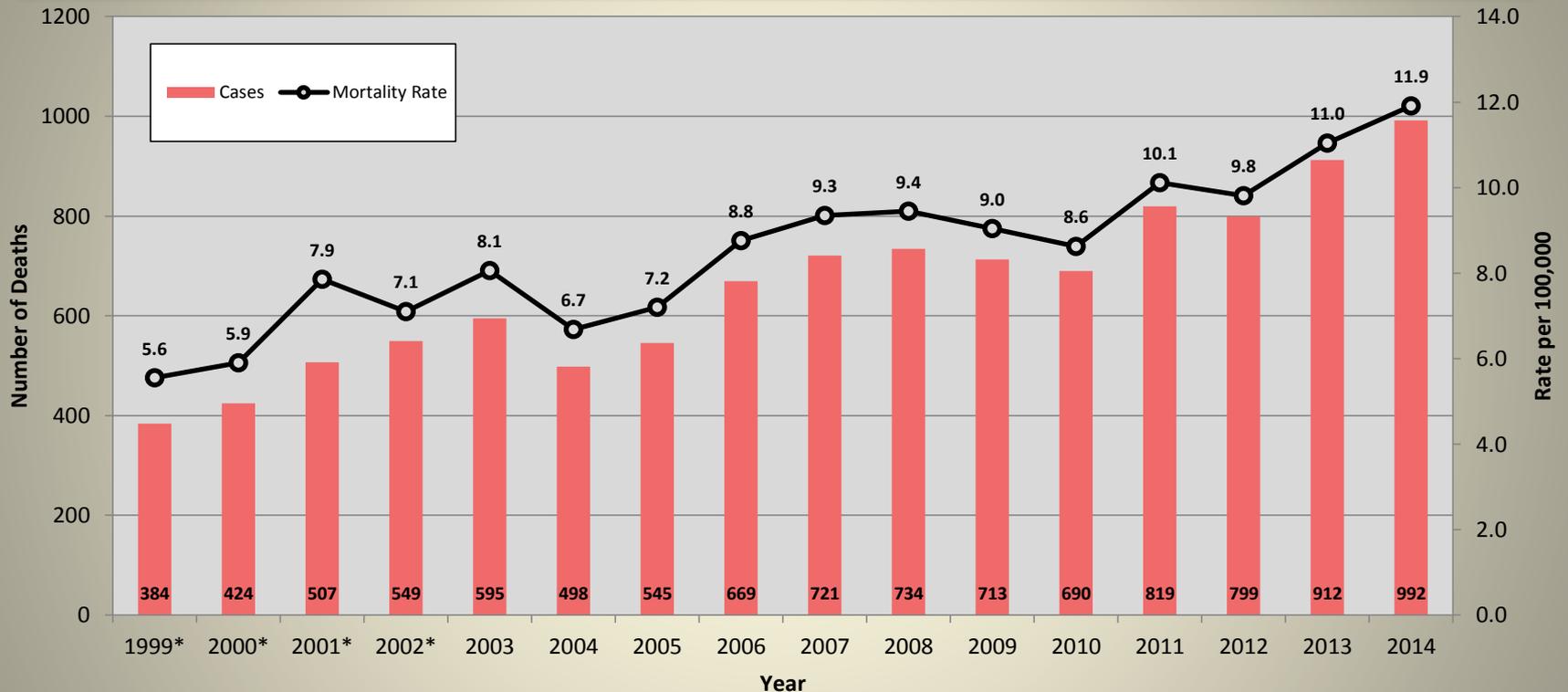
Eastern Shore by the Numbers

	Eastern Shore	Virginia
Population Change 2010-2014	-1.3%	+4.1%
Without health insurance (age 65 or less)	20.7%	12.5%
In Civilian Labor Force	56.6%	64.9%
Persons in Poverty	20.9%	11.8%
Suicide rate/100,000	20.0	13.8
Fatal Opioid Overdoses, 2014, per 100,000	11.7	6.4

There are many other 'Extreme' Areas and "Extreme" Problems

- Areas
 - Urban poor areas
 - Suburbia
 - Pockets of crime, poverty, etc.
- Problems
 - Unemployment
 - Poverty
 - Illegal drug use
 - Education
 - Healthcare
 - Workforce training

Number and Rate of Fatal Drug/Poison Overdoses by Year of Death, 1999-2014

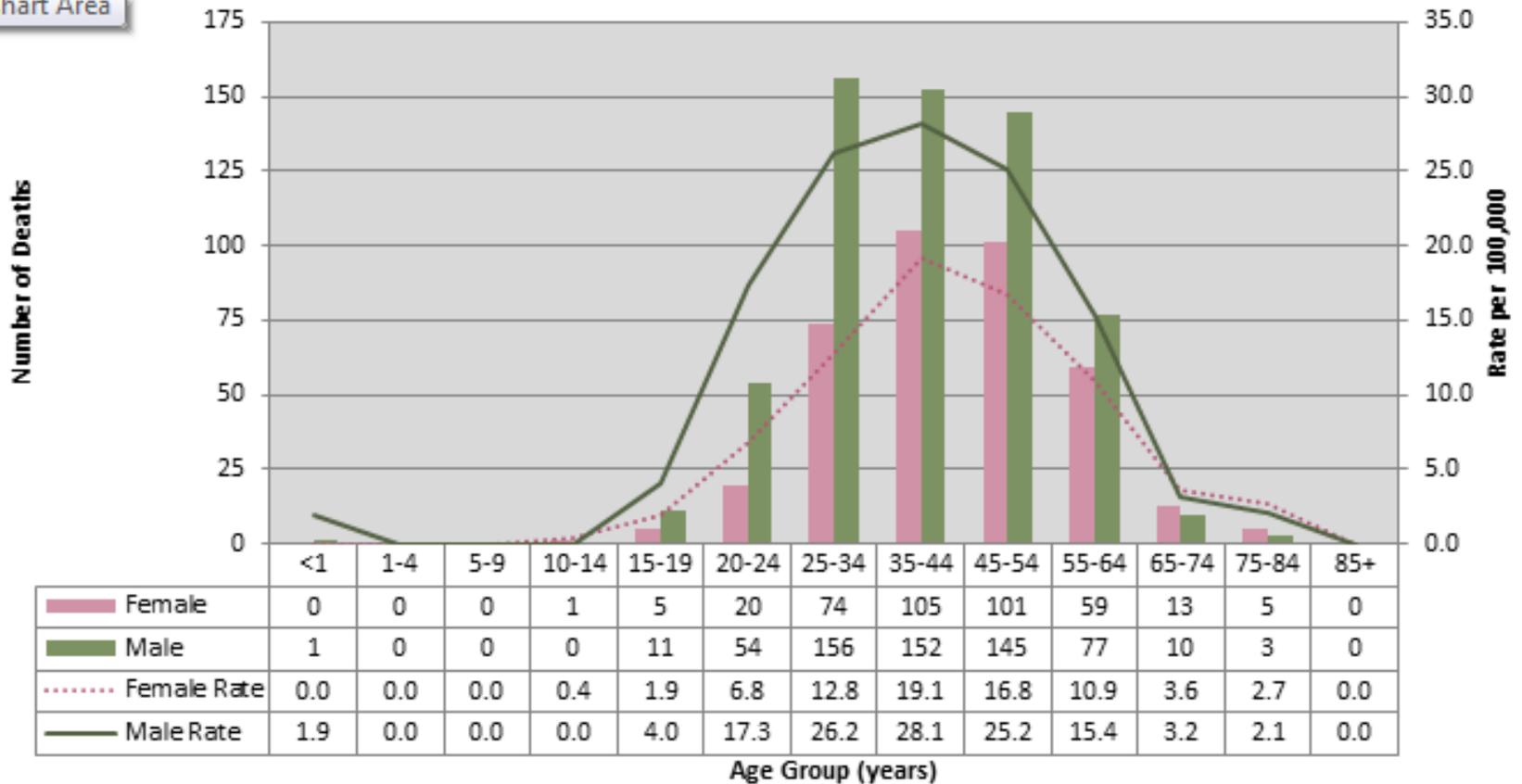


*Rate calculations for years 2003-2011 were recalculated using updated annual Virginia population totals. These population estimates came from the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Health Statistics (<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/healthstats/stats.htm#pop>); stars on years 1999-2002 indicate that a different Virginia population source was used for the rate calculation as determined by previous OCME Annual Reports

Number and Rate of Fatal Drug/Poison Overdoses by Age Group and Gender, 2014

Figure 5.3 Number and Rate of Fatal Drug/Poison Overdoses by Age Group and Gender, 2014

Chart Area



Opioids, Illegal Drug use

- Fatalities up 40% from last year
- Equal to a Virginia Tech massacre (33 lives lost) every week
- 1400+ Virginia deaths expected this year

Street Use of Heroin, Fentanyl

- Fentanyl is being mixed with heroin for economic reasons. It is cheaper to produce from chemicals imported from China and other places.
- Street addicts are buying “heroin” mixed with fentanyl, which is much stronger, and accidentally overdosing and dying.

Unforeseen Consequences

- Rise of Hepatitis C due to needle sharing
 - 2014 = 6,675
 - 2015 = 8,193
 - 2016 10,600
- Richmond 830 cases (highest in VA)
- CDC report: HIV outbreaks related to needle sharing likely in Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, Lee, Wise, Tazewell, Patrick, Wythe.

Methamphetamine Use

The recidivism rate for meth users is an astounding 93 percent!

“There’s no way we could lock up all the meth users...we’d have a lot of orphaned kids.”

“Spreading like a cancer...”

Virginia's Unemployment Rate

Jan. 24, 2017

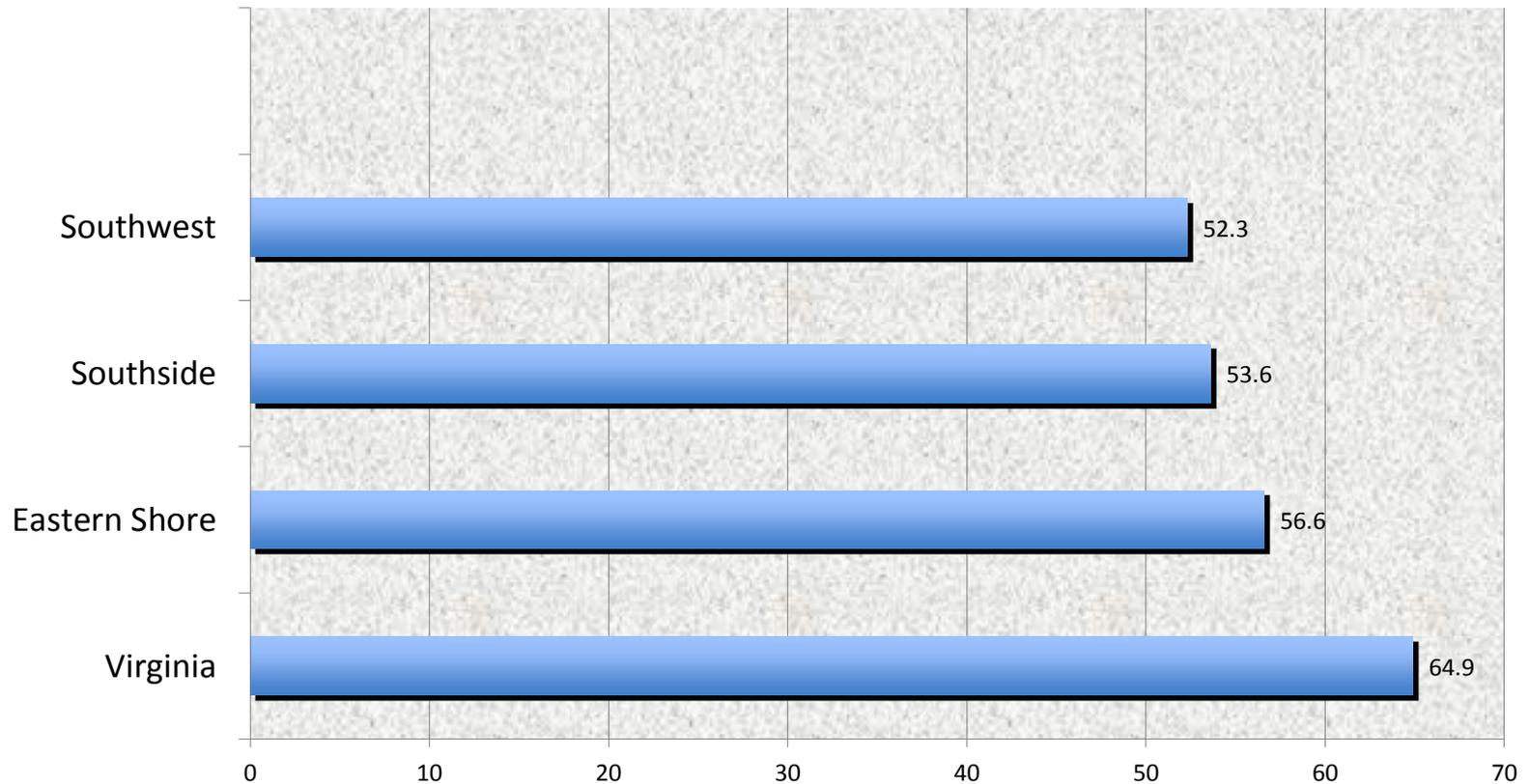
Governor McAuliffe Announces Decrease in Commonwealth's Unemployment Rate

*~ Initial unemployment claims hit 43 year low;
Labor force increases for fifth consecutive month
~*

“Official” rate now less than 4 percent

Unemployment vs. Actually Working

% of population in civilian labor force 2009-2013



Education, Economic Development, Workforce Training

“If it were its own state—in educational attainment—[the rural areas] would be dead last in the nation. And the other Virginia—the Golden Crescent—would be number two.”

--Glenn DuBois, Chancellor, Virginia Community Colleges

Percentages of Population that was Graduated From:

	Southwest	Southside	Eastern Shore	Extremes	Virginia
High School	77	77	78	77	88
College	13	15	19	16	35

Workforce Training

How many clients were successful in obtaining jobs?

“We don’t track that.”

“There are 24 different programs, eight or nine state agencies, four different secretariats involved. ... If the world were mine or yours, we wouldn’t structure it this way.”

--Maurice Jones

GO Virginia

- Created by VA Legislature in 2016, allotted \$35.5 Million state funding (since reduced slightly)
- *Regional* economic development initiative

GO Virginia

- Focused on
 - Attracting highly-paid professionals **from elsewhere** to Virginia
 - Attracting technology-driven, other white collar industries from elsewhere to Virginia
- Reaction to federal defense cutbacks, other events
- Why? Because such high wage professionals have a greater impact on state revenues

GO Virginia

- What about Virginia citizens *who already live here?*
 - *Unemployed or underemployed*
- What about Virginia businesses and industries are already here?
- Some are confident regional boards will address people already living here

The Extremes of Virginia

- The population is shrinking and people, especially the young, are moving away
- The high school graduation rate is significantly lower
- The college graduation rate is less than half
- Significantly more people lack any health insurance
- The civilian labor participation rate is fully ten percent lower
- Household income is 40 percent less
- The poverty rate is 67 percent higher
- The suicide rate is 18.8 percent higher
- Opioid death rates are 56 percent higher
- Health rankings are in the bottom one-third

What to do, if anything?

- One view:
 - “They would have gone somewhere long ago if they wanted something else.”
- Others:
 - Want access to more access to better education, healthcare, jobs and opportunity.
 - Ron Wolff of the Eastern Shore: Don’t treat us as second-class citizens. We want parity with the rest of Virginia

My Conclusion

One large recommendation

We Need Expert Help!

- Good intentions notwithstanding, the data don't lie. *The Extremes*—rural Virginia—lags far behind.
- We need an infusion of more *expert, outside, unbiased* help to tackle some of our most persistent, long-term, lingering problems. We need help from people with more and more varied experience, global knowledge, familiarity with similar problems in other places and other cultures.

Take the Long View

- Apply 'band-aids' but reject 'quick fixes'
- Need to understand the "why" of our problems and long-term strategies
- Plant seeds now that will grow and mature in the next several decades.

VA Economic Development Partnership

- Plans to spur growth and attract jobs
 - Expand computer science programs
 - More workforce training to match business needs
 - Reduce taxes on advanced manufacturing
 - Offer higher incentives to companies going to rural Virginia
 - Create mixed-use developments to attract young
 - Spend money to market rural Virginia

Virginia Has the Resources

- We're spending, on average, **every week**

\$1,028,846,153

Are these long-term situations
Intractable or Insoluble ???



Intractable vs. Insoluble ???



Can my book, or any book, solve these problems? NO.

- 33% of High School grads never read another book
- 42% of college grads never read another book
- 70% of US adults haven't been in a bookstore in the last five years
- 80% of US families didn't buy or read a book last year

Source: Vintage Books & Anchor Books

But We (legislature, business, civic, religious, others) Can Start to

- Energize government
- Involve academics
- Motivate business
- Involve civic leaders
- Strengthen education
- Share success and failures
- Listen more than talk
- _____

Specifically, what do we do?

- Develop allies
 - Legislative leaders
 - Business leaders
 - Education leaders
 - Civic leaders
 - Religious leaders
 - Others

Specifically, what do we do (2)?

- Pick the brains of knowledgeable people who care... a 'listening and discussion' tour
- Encourage an independent study effort of the core problems, not just economic ones
- Distill ideas and concepts, both short- and long-term
- Formulate a comprehensive long-term strategy
- Organize and fund a sustaining effort

Specifically, what do we do (3)?

- “Sell” the need for a plan
 - To statewide office-seekers
 - This summer and fall, to gain “buy-in” for the next administration
 - To educational, business, civic, others...
 - **Progress will require constant, lasting emphasis and reinforcement; an organization, a movement...**

My Goals for the book

- To Start a Conversation
Partially Successful so far.....
- Engage Others to Think, Suggest, Act
Partially Successful so far.....

The Ultimate Goal

- A Common Wealth where every man, woman and child has the opportunity to gain the food, shelter, work, education and health care they need to live lives of dignity, justice and hope.

How can we work together?

- Talk
- Coordinate
- Strategize
- Other?

Comments, Books

I welcome your comments:

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Books:

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