

WGTH ISSUES & PROGRAMS

FIRST QUARTER 2021

JANUARY – MARCH

ELECTION LAW & PROCEDURAL CHANGES

Due to the untimely death of Virginia State Senator Ben Chafin, a special election was set for March 23, 2021, in order to fill his seat. (Senator Chafin died of COVID-related causes on January 1st in a Richmond area hospital... having fallen ill while serving in the General Assembly.) Prior to the special election, numerous election law changes had taken place... some immediately effective, while others were scheduled to go into effect on various dates in the future. Many of the changes were linked to COVID-related safety precautions. Other laws were changed for other reasons. In any event, there was a great deal of confusion among the electorate as to the process established for this special election.

Program: Prerecorded news byte

Date, Times, and Duration: February 5, 2021, @ 7:35 am and 8:36 am, 49 seconds

Guest: Brian Earls, General Registrar and Director of Elections for Tazewell County

Brian Earls recorded a news byte in which he informed voters that on that date, February 5, 2021, early voting started. Early voting with “no excuse” is still a, relatively, new way of voting in Virginia. Earls explained that, in Virginia, early in-person voting begins 45 days prior to an election. He gave the office location and the hours and days that in-person voting would be available in Tazewell County and encouraged

listeners from other counties to check with their county's Voter Registration office for the hours they are open. Earls, also, stated the candidates' names as they would appear on the ballot.

Program: Prerecorded Interview

Dates, Times, and Duration: February 19, 2021, @ 11:30 am, for 17 minutes/20 seconds

February 23, 2021, @ 7:05 pm, for 17 minutes/7 seconds

Guest: Brian Earls, General Registrar and Director of Elections for Tazewell County

The November 2020 Presidential Election gave most Virginia voters an opportunity to experience some changes in the voting process for the first time. Several of the most significant changes had already been made in other states... allowing voters to have some familiarity with what they could expect. Some proposed election law changes had been enacted earlier than planned in order to make voting easier and safer for avoidance of COVID-19 spread. It was uncertain if they would remain, be dropped, or be postponed to a later date with regard to the special election.

Some confusion had occurred, because the "firehouse primary" that was held for the purpose of choosing the Republican candidate was held at one central location in each county. Some voters were anticipating a similar situation in the special election. However, the special election was to be held at the individual precincts. In addition, there was much suspicion from some voters regarding the entire process following all the allegations of voter fraud. This was, especially, true regarding absentee ballots.

Brian Earls, General Registrar and Director of Elections for Tazewell County, participated an interview in which he explained the various aspects of the voting process, told what remained and what was tossed of the changes related to COVID, tried to dispel as many

misunderstandings and misconceptions as he was aware existed (including the aforementioned in the prior paragraphs), and attempted to put voters' minds and emotions at ease about the possibility of any lack of integrity at the local level. Earls made it a point to state that "for now" these laws and procedures were part of the process... indicating that it was possible that further changes could occur. In fact, the two airings of the interview are a different length, because a change was made regarding the witness signature requirement on the absentee mail-in ballots. The change was noted in the second airing.

By the time the first interview was aired, early voting in-person had been underway for two weeks. Earls gave the office location; the hours designated for "no excuse," early in-person voting; and reviewed the details of the process. Changes in absentee voting were discussed at length, as well. The somewhat recent changes in ID requirements were discussed, including the striking of the law that had required a photo ID. The addition of the use of documents containing the voter's address on current utility bills, government documents, and pay stubs as ID's was reviewed... along with the addition of the acceptance of student ID's from colleges and universities outside Virginia.

COVID-related voting law changes that were and were not being used for the special election were delineated. For instance, the envelopes used to mail in absentee ballots would not have prepaid postage this time and drop boxes would not be used even though they will be used in elections in the future. COVID precautions that would be taken at the office and at the precincts on March 23rd were reviewed. There would be social distancing measures and disinfecting ongoing throughout the times that voters would be present to vote. The usage of masks would be encouraged but could not be required.

THE REPORTING OF FIREHOUSE PRIMARY AND SPECIAL ELECTION RESULTS

Interest was intense in the choosing of the candidate to represent the Republican Party and, subsequently, in the special election to fill the 38th Senate District of Virginia seat that had been vacated by the untimely passing of State Senator Ben Chafin. A majority of Southwest Virginians appear to be, increasingly, discontent with the views of the majority of Richmond legislators when it comes to the use of coal for energy production, Second Amendment rights, support for police and other law enforcement personnel, creating a healthy economic environment for small and large businesses and farmers, and a whole host of social issues. Senator Chafin's absence left a large portion of Southwest Virginia without a significant voice of representation at the regular session of the Virginia General Assembly. The fact that the date for the special election was set for March 23, 2021, after the adjournment of the regular session, did not set well with many voters in the 38th Senate District.

Program: Special Coverage of the Firehouse Primary Results

Dates, Times, and Duration: January 22, 2021 @ 7:35 a.m. and 8:35 a.m. approximately 60 seconds

WGTH's Ron Brown reported the Firehouse Primary results from the previous day. Each one of the counties in the 38th Senate District of Virginia had a centralized polling location in which voters, pledging their allegiance to the Republican Party, could choose one of six candidates to run as the Republican candidate for the open Senate seat.

Program: Special (live) Coverage of the Special Election to elect a Virginia State Senator for the 38th Senate District

Dates, Times, and Duration: March 23, 2021 @ and March 24, 2021 @ ; approximately 5 – 12 minutes each

WGTH's Ron Brown reported special election results beginning shortly after the closing of the polls at 7 p.m. In addition to the totals, the returns for each precinct in Tazewell, Russell and Buchanan counties were reported. The compilation and organization of election results, especially in an election that generated such interest, is appreciated by the listeners... even though the totals are most important to them.

ISSUES FACING TAZEWELL COUNTY AND SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

Southwest Virginia's underground treasure is bituminous coal. Although it is a tremendous resource for producing energy, heating buildings, and offering other benefits, many politicians and most strict environmentalists oppose its use. That is problematic for a whole region of the Commonwealth of Virginia, since the coal industry supplies a sizable number of jobs to coal miners and a much greater number of coal dependent jobs to other workers in Southwest Virginia.

Other threats to the local economy and disagreements in conscience between the regional electorate and the increasingly liberal legislature have local legislators working hard to find fixes. Laws and ordinances – for everything from taxes to healthcare – affecting area businesses and organizations are constantly in need of review to see what can be changed or adjusted for survival.

Program: Prerecorded interview

Dates, Times, and Duration: March 10, 2021 @ 7:06 pm, and March 12, 2021 @ 11:31 am; 27 minutes

Guest: Travis Hackworth, Supervisor from the Northwestern District on the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors, Republican Candidate for the 38th Senate District of Virginia, and local businessman

Travis Hackworth participated in his first interview dealing with Tazewell County governmental and business issues since the pandemic

hit Southwest Virginia in earnest. He discussed the importance of coal tax money returning to Southwest Virginia and why he had written a letter regarding the coal tax to the Virginia General Assembly prior to his winning the firehouse primary to become the Republican candidate for the 38th Senate District.

When asked about how and why he decided to run for the State Senate seat, Hackworth explained that he had been approached by various leaders in the Republican Party to run very soon after Ben Chafin's passing. He and Senator Chafin had become good friends and shared a lot of common concerns for the future of Southwest Virginia. As a successful businessman with integrity and experience in county governmental affairs, the Republican Party wanted him to represent the region at the state level. After discussing the possibility with his wife and praying with her about the matter, they both believed it was the right thing to do.

The remainder of the interview focused on differences between Conservative Christian values and those of Hackworth's opponent. For example: prolife vs. pro-abortion, Second Amendment rights vs. strict gun control, and religious liberty vs. liberal culture restrictions were among the topics discussed.

HONORING THE PASSING OF A COMMUNITY ICON

Certain exceptional people make indelible imprints on the heart of a community. Because such a sizable portion of their life is spent serving others, the impact of that life cannot be measured. At the point in time when that individual's earthly life is over, there seems to be a void. Honoring the memory of such an extraordinary person seems to be a compelling privilege of the community that received the blessings.

Program: Live interview at halftime during a Richlands High School football game versus their chief rivals... the Tazewell Bulldogs

Date, Time, and Duration: March 13, 2021 @ 2:10 pm; about 5 minutes

Guest: Mary Ann Strong, Member of the Richlands Town Council and close personal friend of Bob Nassif

Bob Nassif and his wife, Nona, had moved to Alpharetta, Georgia a few years ago so that their son, Greg, could help Bob care for Nona. Even though they were miles away in physical distance, Bob's heart was still in Richlands. He made that clear in his many communications with so many of the folks in the community. His physical absence from the community caused so many to miss him, but his death due to COVID on January 27, 2021, caused great sorrow among his many friends in Richlands.

Mary Ann Strong was a very close friend of Bob Nassif. He was like a second father to her. Upon hearing of his passing, she determined to head up a number of opportunities to memorialize this man who had been such a servant and lover of the community that he was nicknamed, "Mr. Richlands." Because his dedicated service to the community was multifaceted, there would be numerous times and places where his wonderful contributions could be remembered.

The Richlands High School football game was a perfect place to remember Bob's dedication to local high school sports. He was a very vocal fan, who had played on the football team in Richlands as a youth. One of the many ways he showed his care for the team, even after he moved to Georgia, was that he bought white practice socks for all the boys. Prior to his leaving the community, he was honored by the team and they gave him a football they all had signed. Mary Ann was able to obtain video clips of his final address to the team and the game ball presentation to play on the big screen at the stadium.

In the interview, Mary Ann recounted the aforementioned memories of Bob during "Bob Nassif's Special Day." It took place on the day Richlands played their archrivals, the neighboring Tazewell Bulldogs. Mary Ann recapped numerous ways Bob served the community in addition to those listed. She, also, mentioned the lawn

chair she had placed in the corner near the field where Bob used to sit in his last years in Richlands. On the chair, she had placed two special items. She described his Richlands High School football jersey, bearing the number 75, and the very ball that the team had signed for him upon his departure. Also on his day, she noted, stickers were placed on all the team helmets that had a drawing of a football with Bob's number 75.

ADVICE FOR MARRIAGE, PARENTING AND OTHER FAMILY MATTERS

Most couples find marriage difficult to navigate even when they are fiercely committed to each other. Parenting is difficult even with fairly compliant children. Getting through the various stages in life is challenging for parents and children alike. The teen years are often the hardest. Everyone can benefit from some advice on a variety of topics from a psychologist, marriage and family counselor, author, radio broadcaster, and podcaster.

Program: James Dobson Family Commentary

Dates, Times, and Duration: Weekdays around 5:09 p.m.; 90 seconds

Guest: Dr. James Dobson, well-known and respected Christian psychologist, author, podcaster, radio broadcaster, and Founder of "Focus on the Family," and other Christian syndicated radio programs

Weekday afternoons after the 5 p.m. news block, WGTH airs "James Dobson Family Commentary." The 90 second broadcast is full of golden nuggets of excellent quality advice from one of America's foremost experts in marriage and family matters. Covering a vast array of topics, Dr. Dobson takes a wise and commonsense approach to advising people of all ages, circumstances, and stages in life how best to handle what life throws at them. Improving relationships between couples, dealing with divorce, encouraging integrity in children, boosting self-esteem in an appropriate way, and many other topics are addressed in these brief, but impacting, messages.

Examples from some of the January through March broadcasts include:

“Decent Wholesome Families” (1/29/21) – Dr. Dobson decried the effects of today’s culture on young people, particularly speaking about abusive language and crude sayings and gestures. He blames parents for allowing this to happen by becoming apathetic to what they and their families see and hear on screens and in music. The answer, he claims, lies in good parental guidance.

“Failing on the Road to Success” (2/22/21) – Tenacity and confidence are necessary as people move toward success. Thomas Edison, Abraham Lincoln, and others failed many times, but would not quit. Young people need to be encouraged to do likewise.

“After the Wedding” (2/23/21) – Parents of a son or daughter that is planning to get married can head off some potential emotional and relational problems for the couple and themselves by expressing to the couple – especially the in-law – their desire to be supportive and available when their advice is desired. Promising to pray for the marriage, to let the couple cultivate their own marriage and household, and to never cause conflict are helpful suggestions for good relationships.

“Anticipating Problems in Marriage” (3/3/21) – Before it snows, fir trees retract their branches so the weight of the snow they will have to bear is reduced. Likewise, problems that will arise in marriage cannot all be avoided, but their impact can be reduced by anticipating their coming. Many marital stress points are predictable. For example... knowing that “empty nest” can be such a traumatic time in parents’ lives, one couple prepared for it by talking to each other about it, talking to others who had been through it, and by reading books about it and applying what they thought would work for them. It went very smoothly for them.

“Balls and Strikes” (3/4/21) – Umpire Bill Clem was known for taking his time calling a pitch a “ball” or a “strike.” A young pitcher was getting very impatient about the situation and, finally, asked him, “Well, Bill. Which is it, a ball or a strike?” Clem removed his mask, looked the pitcher in the eyes and said, “It ain’t nothin’ till I call it somethin’!” Similarly, we all have the opportunity to determine the way we will react to the curve balls that life throws at us. It is not easy; but, if we learn to cope well with life’s problems, our children will most likely learn to cope well, too.