

Greetings:

My name is Tom Dickinson from Arlington, VA. Thank you for your consideration of these bills to amend state laws for the purpose of amending and enhancing current State historic preservation laws.

I am an academically educated historian, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Beloit College. I have been a member of the Arlington Historical Society for 41 years. I served as VP for 6 years, President for 3 years, and am currently in my 15th year on the Board of Directors. I also served for 9 years on the Board of the Arlington Heritage Alliance, Arlington's only private historic preservation advocacy group. Recently, I founded a new local preservation organization called "Save Historic Arlington."

The changes we ask for are not radical; they are in fact quite simple and straightforward, and approving these two simple elements will go a long way to ensuring preservation of significant and economically important historic resources all over the State, while placing no additional burden on local government bodies, property owners, or developers.

I urge you to vote in favor of two simple amendments to current law, which would, if enacted:

1. Stop demolition of nominated historic sites until the local government, with input from local residents and historians, has completed its review and decision whether to designate a nominated site as historic; and
2. Allow potentially aggrieved local residents who would be negatively impacted by demolition of a nominated site, and historians who nominate a historic site, to have access to court review of locality decision to ensure that the state law is followed.

We believe that important historic houses, sites, buildings, landmarks and areas in Virginia, which add so much to our State's economic vitality, should be preserved throughout the State. Under current law, bulldozers are allowed to move in to demolish nominated sites *before* the local historic review process is completed. Local residents and historic advocates have no access to ask for court review; only the property owner has such rights, creating an unfair system of justice.

Your approval of these two simple amendments would give local governments the time to consider and approve (or disapprove) historic designation of a site, during which time no demolition or destruction of the nominated site, building, location, or landmark would be allowed. Further, your approval would give a select and very limited core of petitioners and advocates for historic preservation, the right to seek court review of a locality decision to deny historic protection.

We are requesting that you approve these simple changes to the state law which, if enacted, would allow petitioners for local historic protection the same access to the courts as only the property owner has today.

Historic properties have been nominated for historic protection, and under current law, the owner is allowed to completely destroy the property before the locality can complete its historic review, and before the public in the locality can have its input on the process and the final decision, as has actually recently occurred in high profile situations.

I thank you for your time and attention. I urge you to approve these 2 slight amendments, which will in fact, go a long way to preserving historically significant and economically important historic resources throughout the entire State of Virginia.