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## Tribute to A.L. Philpott

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## TRIBUTE TO A.L. PHILPOTT

### *The Honorable Mary Sue Terry\**

It is well known that for more than three decades, A.L. Philpott was an enduring political force in the General Assembly and a powerful influence in many aspects of life in Southside Virginia and beyond.

A.L. Philpott was also a personal friend, a political guide, and a mentor to me. I can recall working the polls in Patrick County for A.L. long before I was even old enough to vote. And in 1977 I had the honor of being his running mate in what was then a multi-member House of Delegates District.

While I was always impressed with his political acumen, his integrity, and the stature he brought to the many issues he felt were important, it wasn't until I was in the General Assembly that I fully appreciated the depth of his commitment and vision in forging public policy in the Commonwealth.

His knowledge of Virginia's criminal code was legendary and his mastery of the legislative process was a key to the respect and influence that he earned to become Speaker of the House in 1980.

How influential was he?

In 1974, Senator Stanley Walker from Norfolk was asked about the prospects of the State Crime Commission backing a piece of legislation it then had under study. Said Senator Walker: "Well, there are thirteen members on the Commission and there are twelve in favor of it. But I just talked to Mr. Philpott and he doesn't like the bill. So you ought to be able to count by now. It's twelve to one, the bill is dead."

While A.L.'s trademark scowl often spelled the demise of legislation before the House of Delegates, A.L. worked hard to bring people to his way of thinking and he sought to ensure that the workings of government were marked by civility, respect, and sometimes a little humor.

I remember in 1981, a resolution was introduced in the House commending the University of Virginia's basketball team for earning the number one national ranking. The Senate amended the bill to read the "first men's basketball team," noting that Old Domin-

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ion University's women's team had also earned the top ranking. "The Senate," said Speaker Philpott, "would amend the Lord's Prayer."

Those of us in the political and legislative arena miss A.L. Philpott. But his service and contributions to the Commonwealth will live on for many years. Those of us in the legal profession can see his enduring impact on the Commonwealth every time we open the Virginia Code — a standing tribute to his love of the law and the rights of his fellow Virginians.

And yet there are other tangible signs of A.L.'s presence that are, in many respects, even more meaningful. This summer I had the honor of being part of a celebration which marked the opening of a refurbished and upgraded facility at the Smith Mountain Lake 4-H Center. The upgrade will help the camp accommodate handicapped and disabled children who have previously not been able to be part of the 4-H experience.

The guiding hand behind the new facility was A.L. Philpott.