

**From:** [Turnage, Wayne \(DHCF\)](#)  
**To:** [DHCFEMT](#)  
**Bcc:** [Melder, Jay \(EOM\)](#); [Stutz, Ben \(EOM\)](#)  
**Subject:** Governance Change Coming In Virginia - My Thoughts  
**Date:** Sunday, February 3, 2019 12:57:56 PM

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## My Final Thoughts On Governor Northam

I had a very difficult time watching Governor Northam's press conference yesterday, but not for the reasons that have subjected him to a torrent of trenchant criticism, and, as is always the case on social media, massive public ridicule.

With a difficult, almost impossible set of facts to negotiate, I saw a contrite, humble, and devoted public servant, struggle valiantly to bridge the growing gap between his understanding of his past and efforts to explain it, and the caustic views that were now emerging from the mouths and keyboards of those who were choosing to speak publicly about a precipitant and most shocking development in Virginia state government.

There is no question that from the moment this news exploded in the social media, Governor Northam had a very difficult -- nearly impossible -- set of facts to manage. Without warning, he instantly became as a pilot, trying to suddenly land a commercial airliner that had blown an engine. And frankly, in his efforts to self-correct and safely land the now crippled plane, he inflicted even greater damage, in the process blowing the only remaining engine that could save him -- his credibility.

If the Governor had any doubt about whether he was party to that poor and racist attempt at humor 34 years ago, his decision to speak about the matter without equivocation on Friday night was a tragic mistake and an equal failing of those who advised him of such.

Once he so personally tied himself to those events, the Governor walked into the eye of a national hurricane from which he could never be safely evacuated.

Thus, by the time he stepped up to the podium in a hastily arranged press room at the historic Governor's mansion, his fate was sealed, affording him the unwelcomed opportunity to preside over his own funeral in front of a transfixed national audience.

My thinking on this sad story has evolved. I do not believe that was him in black face or that despicable (and always buffoonish) KKK outfit. However difficult, I take him at his word on this matter.

Nonetheless, I do believe he knew how those pictures came to be on his page, but perhaps, given the arc of his life afterwards, never saw the actual book or those pictures again - until Friday.

I am also of the mind that given his upbringing in surroundings that were not heavily diverse, he may have evolved as many whites under like circumstances - a person insensitive on the question of race, maybe even finding humor in the racially charged jokes of his friends, but hardly a fire breathing racist.

The question at the end of the day is whether the events over the last few days, should cost Northam the Governorship to which he was duly elected. There is no question that it will. But when I think back to the behaviors of others who have held that office -- not the least of which was that family of grifters who hid behind the political protective hedge of Republicans -- my thinking on this matter is hopelessly infected with a viral-like dissonance.

Against the now public calls for his resignation by two of my former bosses, I have a visceral sense that he is being unjustly undone and partly wish that he could survive to both redeem his name and continue the

very impressive work for the people of Virginia, most especially for the least of those among us.

This to me is crystal clear, however; when Northam eventually steps down, acquiescing to foes that were once his friends, people of color in the Commonwealth will have lost a friend in the Executive Mansion.

That he will be replaced by another friend -- who will also appoint the next Lieutenant Governor by the way -- the potential for incalculable political damage will be palliated.

Yet, this hardly assuages my sorrow and genuine pain for Governor Northam, his wonderful staff, and, of course, his family.

Wayne Turnage  
Director, Department of Health Care Finance  
Interim Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services  
202-821-9673 – cell  
202-442-5995 – office

**From:** [Turnage, Wayne \(DHCF\)](#)  
**To:** [Schewel, M. J. \(Michael\)](#); [Wayne Turnage](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Governor Northam - Final Thoughts  
**Date:** Sunday, February 3, 2019 10:18:40 PM

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I appreciate the high praise.

And you are correct – he is done.

Hope you and the family are all enjoying life.

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**From:** Schewel, M. J. (Michael) <michael.schewel@tredegar.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 3, 2019 8:12 PM  
**To:** Turnage, Wayne (DHCF) <wayne.turnage@dc.gov>; Wayne Turnage <wturn1958@aol.com>  
**Subject:** Re: Governor Northam - Final Thoughts

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You need to be a columnist! You are the best and most sensitive and nuanced observer and writer I regularly read. Beautiful prose and thought-provoking ideas.

Terribly sad situation. He's toast.

Hope you are good.  
Mike

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**From:** Turnage, Wayne (DHCF) <[wayne.turnage@dc.gov](mailto:wayne.turnage@dc.gov)>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 3, 2019 1:06 PM  
**To:** Wayne Turnage  
**Subject:** Governor Northam - Final Thoughts

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