

BACON'S REBELLION

The Op/Ed Page for Virginia's New Economy

The Rebellion Will Be Blogged

Bacon's Rebellion is extending its digital reach to the blogosphere. May heresies prosper and dangerous ideas proliferate.

By James A. Bacon

When I launched *Bacon's Rebellion* two-and-a-half years ago as a website/electronic newsletter, the technology was fairly edgy. Although websites were old hat, electronic newsletters had that fresh, new-car smell. Certainly, no one else had launched an opinion newsletter with an exclusive focus on Virginia politics, public policy and economic development. But the Internet kept evolving, and I soon found myself eating ether.

Blogs, or web logs, were a curiosity when I'd started the Rebellion. I honestly didn't see much value in them at the time. But as the 2004 presidential elections unfolded, the blog phenomenon came into its own. Blogs helped dethrone Howard Raines, the executive editor of the *New York Times*, and they unmasked the forged documents broadcast by Dan Rather on CBS. Like talk radio, they provided viewpoints that couldn't get through the filter of the Mainstream Media. But unlike the talk shows, where the interaction with listeners was inherently rushed and superficial, blogs

allowed people to reflect upon their written words before committing them to the public domain.

The best blogs also offered something that *Bacon's Rebellion* could not. Blog editorials were short and pithy--only a few paragraphs at



most. They were published daily, usually commenting on news that broke the same day, making them even more timely than newspaper editorials. But best of all, readers could talk back. There was no waiting a month or more, as is typically the case with *Bacon's Rebellion*, to see one's prose in (digital) print.

As publisher of *Bacon's Rebellion*, my goal is to combine the best of both media. We will continue to e-mail a biweekly newsletter with in-depth, well-written, magazine-style commentary in electronic format. We will continue to archive all of our back columns on the Web. But now, beginning with this issue, when news hits, our columnists don't have to wait two weeks to talk about it. If

so moved, they can post their spin on the blog and start hashing it out with readers within a matter of minutes.

Ideally, Bacon's Rebellion columns provide depth while the blog delivers speed. As a bonus, blogging technology allows readers to respond to the authors--and to each other--in a way not possible with a newsletter. *Readers, please note: Every column published in Bacon's Rebellion now links you to a "comments" page on the blog where you can respond not only to the author but to the world at large.*

Digital media is democratizing the flow of information. No longer can a handful of editors and political reporters employed by four or five daily newspapers decide what constitutes news in Virginia. *Bacon's Rebellion* and an increasing number of other electronic outlets--the *Augusta Free Press*, *Virginia News Source*, and scads of blogs--have a small but growing say.

I am particularly proud of how Bacon's Rebellion columnists have dissected the transportation funding "crisis" in Virginia with a thoroughness and insight that far surpasses the coverage of Virginia's big daily newspapers. Likewise, no one else in Virginia comes

close to covering technology policy like our columnist Doug Koelemay. No one has plumbed the intricacies of land use like Ed Risse. No one serves up insider's political analysis any better than our house Democrat Bernie Day and house Republican Pat McSweeney.

But *Bacon's Rebellion* doesn't just spout opinion and theory. We conduct citizen journalism. Take a look at this week's edition. [Michael Thompson](#) reports on several efficiency-in-government bills working their way through the General Assembly. [Steven Sisson](#) interviews the two Democratic candidates for Lieutenant Governor. And [Phil Rodokanakis](#) puts the magnifying glass to the budget-busting voting record of state Sen. Russell Potts, R-Winchester.

Mike, a retired entrepreneur, runs the Jefferson Institute, a Virginia-focused think tank in Northern Virginia. Steve works for Coors Brewery in Rockingham County. Phil runs his own forensic accounting practice, also in Northern Virginia. We have attorneys, urban planners, bankers, consultants, university professors and government employees contributing to the Rebellion. No one pays them a dime for their writing. They work out of passion, conviction and love for the Commonwealth.

The diversity of our columnists' viewpoints pales in comparison, however, to what's possible with a blog.

Any reader can partake of the *Bacon's Rebellion* blog as long as he or she obeys two cardinal rules.

1. The subject matter must have a bearing on politics, public policy or economic development in Virginia.
2. Participants must always address one another with civility.

(I reserve the right to add more cardinal rules as experience dictates.)

Like all other contributors, I have my own partisan and ideological leanings. And, if you haven't noticed, I'm also really opinionated. But I don't pretend to hold a monopoly on the truth. Yes, I believe in fiscal conservatism, limited government, free markets and an aristocracy of merit. But even more fundamentally, I believe in the power of reason and the necessity of subjecting one's ideas to the scrutiny of others.

Bacon's Rebellion is not a place where you can count on finding views that comfortably and reliably resemble your own. *Bacon's Rebellion* is a cock pit where you bring your ideas, take off their hoods and set them loose to do battle with others.

Bacon's Rebellion-The Blog is experimental. To ensure a diversity of perspectives and interests, I have enabled several Bacon's Rebellion columnists--those who submit one or more columns each

edition--to post news and commentary to the blog. Any reader can comment on those original posts. We will entertain the widest possible range of ideas, short of promoting civil insurrection. (Nathaniel Bacon would be disappointed, I suppose, at the wussiness of the rebellion being conducted in his name.)

We will not tolerate ad hominem attacks on participants who post messages or respond to them. We ask all participants to respond to the substance of the argument. Those who refuse to treat others with courtesy and respect do not warrant courtesy or respect in return. Offenders will be banished from this small corner of the blogosphere.

May the blogging begin.

-- January 31, 2005

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by Jim Bacon at
www.baconsrebellion.com.**