

## **TOM DAVIS AS NIMBY? SAY IT AIN'T SO!**

By William Nicoson

I've always liked Tom Davis. In 1991, I was jubilant when he defeated Audrey Moore, then Chair of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Three years later I was pleased to see him vault into the House of Representatives with a constituency which included Restonians. By 1998 Davis had been promoted into the 5-man Republican leadership of the House. That year the GOP held 220 House seats. And that year no Democrat could be found to run against him.

1998 was also the year that Davis raised \$160,000 for the National Republican Congressional Committee. In 1997 Davis had raised \$150,000 for Republican candidates running for state legislative seats.

While initially close to Tom DeLay, Davis has also displayed independence from hardcore conservatives within his party. In 1996, he worked to assure the renomination of Senator John W. Warner (R-Va) and the primary defeat of Oliver North.

On April 18, 2001, Tom Davis came to Reston for a lunch at Il Cigno with Reston's founder, Robert E. Simon, Jr. Though a Democrat, Simon had taken no position in the race for Davis' seat, and Davis may have viewed the lunch as a way to show gratitude. Simon invited several board members of the Reston Historic Trust, including myself, to attend the lunch.

Davis seemed genuinely interested as we described the work and ambitions of the Trust. He leaned forward over the table and asked, "What would you be able to do with a million dollars?" None of the trustees gasped, but we were clearly startled. Davis was annoyed that his legislative assistant had failed to appear, but promised we would hear from him and that the Trust would be listed for the million in one or another appropriations bill.

As our meeting broke up I asked Davis how he thought the soon-to-be-announced redistricting would affect Reston. He said there were two options: either Reston would be divided between districts served by him and Representative Frank R. Wolf (R) or Reston would be added to the district of Representative James P. Moran (D).

I met several times with the wayward legislative assistant, and he indicated that the appropriations bill of the Department of Interior was the most suitable for the Trust's activities. Inserting the appropriate line item would be routine.

Then the redistricting details were announced. Jim Moran inherited all but a sliver of Reston. That's when the legislative assistant stopped returning my phone calls. Somehow Reston Historic Trust's million dollar line item never showed up in an appropriations bill.

We all took our dashed hopes philosophically. I couldn't blame Tom Davis for the vagaries of redistricting.

But I will blame him if he insists on using federal legislation to redesign and down-size development approved by Fairfax County at the Vienna rail station, as reported by The Washington Post on April 21. He lives not far from the station and obviously knows what he doesn't want in his back yard, notably Democrats who will appreciate the value of high densities in the proposed development. Republicans are thought to appreciate the value of sweeping private lawns.

It is ironic that a former chair of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors should, as a federal legislator, seek to trash the work of professional planners and elected leaders of that same county and impose federal dictates to trump county responsibilities.

That sounds outrageous but all too familiar: Tom DeLay is being outdone.

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