

2
EXPLORING UNEQUAL
PHARMACY ACCESS
FOR VIRGINIANS

3
WILDER GRADUATE SCHOLARS
FELLOWSHIP LAUNCHES
STUDENT EXPERIENCES

7
ALUMNA JOY BOGESE
TRANSCENDS ADDICTION
BY HELPING OTHERS

Wilder School *in Action*

Spring 2024

ILLUMINATING A LEGACY



**"A National Ovation" honors
GOVERNOR L. DOUGLAS WILDER
and invests in new scholarships
for public service**

Wilder School *in Action*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

▲ Letter from the Dean	1	▲ Alumni spotlight: Joy Bogese	5
▲ Unequal distribution of pharmacies in Virginia	2	▲ Public service in action	6
▲ Wilder Graduate Scholars Fellow Tarnika Edmunds.....	3	▲ A National Ovation to L. Douglas Wilder	8
▲ Governor's voice.....	4	▲ Ph.D. student Jeff Thomas authors factory farming book	16



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No. 1 in Virginia

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- Social Policy
- Urban Policy



Letter from the Dean

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

With the arrival of spring, a time of renewal and growth, I am delighted to present the Spring 2024 edition of the Wilder School in Action magazine. This edition is a vibrant mosaic of impactful endeavors and inspirational stories from the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at VCU.

Our cover story celebrates “A National Ovation to L. Douglas Wilder Gala,” a resplendent tribute to Governor Wilder’s groundbreaking legacy as the nation’s first elected African American governor. This gala, marked by historical enactments and moving speeches from a bevy of dignitaries, not only commemorated his pioneering tenure but also deepened our sense of community and shared heritage. A highlight of the tribute was the documentary premiere “L. Douglas Wilder: Beyond Wilder Dreams,” offering an intimate glimpse into Governor Wilder’s life and legacy. The film, a compelling narrative of resilience and leadership, underscores the values we cherish at the Wilder School.

Integral to the gala was the announcement of our new Wilder National Ovation Scholarship Fund. This scholarship, funded by gala proceeds, is designed to support students attending Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Union University, and Howard University. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we have raised nearly \$1 million in support for the extraordinary gala and new student scholarships.

These scholarships support the critical financial aid needs of our students and open doors for aspiring public servants from diverse backgrounds. This success demonstrates our collective commitment to help cultivate the next generation of public service leaders.

In addition to this inspiring story, we feature the Wilder Graduate Scholars Fellowship, highlighting Tarnika Edmunds’ work with Housing Opportunities



Made Equal (HOME) of Virginia. This fellowship exemplifies our approach to blending academic rigor with real-world experience, preparing students like Tarnika to confront and address significant societal issues.

Our students’ innovative project on Richmond’s Barton Heights and Woodland cemeteries through online story maps is another testament to their commitment to sustainable community development and historic preservation.

Moreover, the study by Professors Chen and Suen on pharmacy accessibility in Virginia underscores the challenges faced by vulnerable populations and emphasizes the need for inclusive policy-making.

Our latest Commonwealth Poll offers insights into Virginians’ perspectives on crucial issues as we approach the Presidential election, reflecting the diverse views of our community.

Alongside these insights, we share the resilience and transformative journey of Joy Bogese (M.S.’06). Her path from battling addiction and incarceration to becoming a peer recovery specialist exemplifies the transformative power of hope and the human capacity for change, further illustrating our dedication to public service and community impact.

As you delve into these stories of resilience, innovation, and service, I invite you to join us in celebrating the achievements and aspirations that define the Wilder School. Your support is pivotal in our journey to shape a more equitable and just society through public service and leadership. 🏠

Warm regards,

Susan T. Gooden, Ph.D.

Dean

L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

Stay up to date with the Wilder School at our news page at: bit.ly/wilderschoolnews



@VCUWilderSchool



Unequal distribution of pharmacies in Virginia leaves vulnerable populations at risk, study shows

“Pharmacy deserts” in parts of the state are inadequate for those older than 65; racial inequity of access to pharmacies is ubiquitous in Virginia

BY TIFFANY MURRAY-ROBERTSON



When was the last time you had to fill a prescription? For many people, accessing a pharmacy is as easy as taking a short drive or a quick walk, but for others, the nearest pharmacy might be miles away, making it difficult to obtain necessary medications.

This is particularly true for vulnerable populations, including minorities, older adults, individuals with disabilities and those without access to a car. The lack of access to pharmacies creates serious health consequences for these groups, including interruptions in medication schedules and increased hospitalization rates.

A recent study, “An Analysis of Spatial Disparity of Pharmacies, in Virginia, USA,” published in the *Journal of Urban and Regional Analysis*, sheds light on prescription access in Virginia. Conducted by Xueming “Jimmy” Chen and I-Shian “Ivan” Suen, both professors of urban and regional planning at the Wilder School, the study examined the accessibility of pharmacies in the state, with a focus on vulnerable populations.

The researchers found that while most Virginians have relatively easy access to pharmacies, vulnerable populations face significant barriers due to uneven distribution both geographically and socially. The concentration and distribution of citizens aged 65 or older are most significantly associated with pharmacy locations at the statewide level. But at a localized level, complex spatial patterns along different social dimensions revealed the existence of social inequities in addition to spatial equity.

“In the western and southwestern parts of Virginia, pharmacies are inadequate for people aged 65 or older,” said Chen, the study’s lead author. “Pharmacies are inadequate to varying degrees in relation to non-white persons overall, revealing that racial inequity of access to pharmacies is ubiquitous in Virginia.”

The study identified that pharmacy locations in Virginia are unevenly distributed, with most commercial pharmacies concentrated in three major

urban areas: Northern Virginia, Central Virginia and the Hampton Roads urban areas. As a result, there are “pharmacy deserts” in more rural areas of Virginia, particularly in the western and southern parts of the state.

“Access to health care is just one piece of the puzzle,” Suen said. “We need to consider how different amenities and services interact with each other and with the built environment to create opportunities and barriers for people.”

The authors recommend creating financial incentives or subsidies for pharmacies in food deserts, expanded telehealth options and increased transportation services.

“Currently, the pharmacy industry operates on a purely market-driven model, with most commercial pharmacies clustered at busy intersections,” Suen said. “But what if we could refine our thinking to include equitable service distribution? This could be a game-changer for improving the quality of life for those who need it most.” 🏠

Wilder Graduate Scholars Fellow Tarnika Edmunds builds a better Richmond

BY TIFFANY MURRAY-ROBERTSON

The Wilder Graduate Scholars Fellowship represents a convergence of academic scholarship and immersive public sector experience. It's empowering graduate students like Tarnika Edmunds, who is studying urban and regional planning.

Edmunds has worked with Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) of Virginia to redefine the contours of housing policy and community development in Richmond. The fellowship provides professional work experience, in-state tuition and a generous stipend, placing fellows in crucial roles with regional employers.

Edmunds' journey to address housing inequities is deeply personal, shaped by her upbringing in subsidized housing in Richmond's Southside community. "Growing up, I wasn't even aware we were living in Section 8 housing. This realization drove me toward housing and community development, seeking solutions for issues I've lived through."

At HOME, Edmunds is part of a pivotal project analyzing the historic devaluation of Black properties in Richmond and exploring its role in current trends of gentrification and displacement. This research is integral to understanding and addressing long-standing inequities in the housing sector.



From left to right, HOME of VA Executive Director Tom Okuda Fitzpatrick, Tarnika Edmunds and Wilder School Dean Susan T. Gooden.

Her work resonates with the enduring legacy of Dr. Velma J. Ballard, a Wilder School alumna known for her staunch advocacy against housing discrimination. Dr. Ballard, who passed away in 2020, spent her career fighting against housing discrimination and equitable housing policies. Proceeds from the Dr. Velma J. Ballard Fair Housing Fund, established by HOME, supported this year's fellowship.

Tom Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of HOME, underscores the value of this collaboration. "Our partnership with the Wilder School brings us dynamic and insightful students like Tarnika. Their contributions significantly boost our capacity to undertake critical research and advocacy projects."

In Edmunds' case, the fellowship is a stepping stone to her ultimate goal: building a youth and community development center focusing on community engagement. "My experiences, both personal and through the Wilder Fellowship, are shaping my vision for a future where housing is equitable and communities are empowered."

The 2023-2024 Wilder Graduate Scholar Fellows

Thank you to our host agency partners: Capital Region Airport Commission, Dinwiddie County, HOME of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Corrections, VCU Center for Public Policy, VCU Wilder School RVA Eviction Lab and Greater Richmond Transit Company.

Capital Region Airport Commission

Sofia Tortolero
Derrick Watkins, Jr.
Morgan D. Williamson

Dinwiddie County Planning Department

Matthew Snow

Greater Richmond Transit Corporation (GRTC)

Nathan Joyner

Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME)

Tarnika Edmunds

VCU Wilder School Center for Public Policy

Adelaide Alexander
Destiny Brown

VCU Wilder School RVA Eviction Lab

Callie Houghland

Virginia Department of Corrections Correctional Education, Career and Technical Education Unit

Tucker Keener

Health Services Unit

Morgan Deckert

Operations Unit

Hayley Keene

Research Unit, Data Collection and Analytical Support

Emma Tilley

Research Unit - Fidelity Initiatives & Data Operations

Giulia Austin



Learn more about each of our Wilder Graduate Scholar Fellows

Governor's voice

In search of leadership



We sat down with Governor L. Douglas Wilder to discuss the Wilder School Commonwealth Poll and analyze the key issues impacting Virginians and Americans this election year. This fall's Wilder Symposium, entitled "Elections Can Make a Difference," will explore the need for leadership and accountability in determining who will become the next President of the United States.

Q We are in a critical presidential election year. What do you see as the key motivators, needs, and demands of the people?

A The essential needs of the people are perennial. You've got to consider what's going on in our nation today with the cost of living and the absence of job opportunities for those on the lower rungs of the economic ladder. The issues facing America today are the same issues that we had 100 years ago. Education, transportation, housing, public health, and the rights of women — all potential leaders must acknowledge and address how to meet these critical needs.

Q Approval ratings are cited as key metrics in how poll respondents view candidates. Do these ratings give the full picture of candidates holding and seeking office?

A Any candidate must go beyond the extent of satisfying the people or creating a perception of satisfaction. They must provide a wholesale discussion of key issues. These concerns must not be discussed in a partisan vacuum but addressed relative to how they affect the lives of all citizens. More importantly, how do we make people become more interested in voting? We don't take the time to do that. We end up with circumstances that beg, "How did we get here?"

Q What type of leadership is required of those in office or seeking office?

A Candidates seeking office come to me on a regular basis. I asked them quite frankly: Tell me,

“

Candidates seeking office come to me on a regular basis. I asked them quite frankly: Tell me, what have you done? And, more importantly, what are you going to do?

”

what have you done? And, more importantly, what are you going to do? Is what you have done in the past indicative of what you're going to do in the future? Have you supported the people's voices to be heard, and how? Have you decried? Have you opposed? Have you demanded? Have you insisted? And if not, why? What reasons have you provided for me to believe that you can do that better than your opponent?

Q The Commonwealth Poll is a critical bellwether to influence informed policymaking. How do respondents' insights inform other areas of public service, such as mission-driven nonprofits and non-governmental organizations?

A I have said it before, you do not have to be an elected official to be a public service leader. Our poll gives the opportunity for these industry professionals to see the perspectives of their fellow citizens and to make their own informed decisions about how these perspectives shape their areas of influence, as well as the services they provide in their communities. 🇺🇸

From chains to change

Joy Bogese's transformation from addiction to advocacy

BY TIFFANY MURRAY-ROBERTSON

Joy Bogese's (MS) path to redemption was not traced in the lecture halls of the Wilder School, where she earned a master's degree in Criminal Justice. It wasn't charted within the comfort of her middle-class upbringing, the security of a flourishing career, or in the comfortable home she once shared with her husband and three lovely daughters. Rather, it emerged from an arduous battle waged in a location no one would desire – a jail cell. This is where Bogese's struggle against drug addiction took a transformative turn toward recovery.

From adolescence, Bogese encountered the relentless pain of endometriosis – a medical challenge that presented a powerful temptation: prescription drugs. At first, her usage was essential for managing her condition, but over time, it spiraled out of control. By her 20s, she was ensnared by a full-blown opioid addiction.

Her tipping point arrived in 2015, when following several arrest warrants and an overdose, she was sentenced to a five-year term in jail. But, in that seemingly desolate place, she found her pivot. The confines of her cell became a mirror for introspection, and she recalls, "In a strange twist of fate, my incarceration became my liberation."

Within the Helping Addicts Recover Progressively (HARP) program at Chesterfield County Jail, conceived by Wilder alumnus Sheriff Karl Leonard, Bogese found the means to confront her past and forge strategies to navigate it. In doing so, she began untangling the web of addiction that had held her captive for years.

Today, as a peer recovery specialist



at Project Recover, Bogese partners directly with the Chesterfield Police Department, assisting community members struggling with addiction. She helps individuals access resources for detox or residential treatment. For those not yet ready, she shares her story, extending a hand of empathy and hope. She also conducts training and works to reduce stigma within the police department, leveraging her past as a catalyst for change.

Bogese's daily work is both challenging and rewarding. Her unlikely collaboration with law enforcement ensures individuals entangled in substance abuse are met with compassion and understanding. Bogese has played a key role in reshaping the department's perception of addiction, humanizing those battling substance abuse, and reminding law enforcement that the potential for recovery always exists.

Bogese's master's degree in Criminal

Justice has also proven invaluable in her role at Project Recover. She says it has granted her a comprehensive understanding of the justice system and its role in addressing substance abuse. 🙌

“

The beauty of life is in transforming negatives into positives,” says Bogese. “Every day, I utilize my past to help construct a better future for someone else. That, for me, is the true essence of redemption.”

”

Public service in action

The Wilder School creates transformative impacts through leadership and service — locally and nationally

▲ **VCU Alumni's 10 Under 10** awards program, recognizing achievements made by alumni who earned their first VCU degree within the past 10 years, honored three standouts from the Wilder School. From left: Wilder School Dean Susan Gooden poses with 10 Under 10 recipients **Gilbert Michaud**, **Axana Soltan** and **Arzu Moosvi**.



PHOTO: STEVAN DOZIER

▲ Entrepreneurship in the United States has dramatically increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Applications for new businesses have reached historical numbers and remain higher than those filed pre-pandemic. An exploratory report released by the RAND Corporation reveals that while the contributions of entrepreneurs are widely recognized, the local government's role in fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems needs to be more understood.

Wilder School associate professor of urban and regional planning and report co-author **Elsie Harper-Anderson** shared, "Local governments play essential roles in nurturing the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Understanding and appreciating the multifaceted contributions of local governments is crucial in fostering stronger and more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystems."

2023 Wilder School Doctoral Lecture Series



The Wilder School welcomed alumnus **Ekrem Mus ('10 PPAD, '06 CJ)**, Cmelikova Visiting International Scholar, University of Richmond Jepson School of Leadership Studies for its annual doctoral lecture series. Through his presentation, "State of Democracy & Human Rights in Turkey," Mus explored contemporary human rights, criminal justice and public policy implications across the Turkish nation, delivering a comprehensive understanding of complex global security issues and governance dynamics. A distinguished scholar and practitioner, Mus has held leadership roles with the Turkish National Police, culminating in his appointment as a police chief across different departments. He has actively engaged in international missions with entities such as the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the United Nations in countries including Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

▲ **The Association for Public Policy & Management Analysis (APPAM)**, a professional organization



dedicated to advancing public policy and management through research and education, named three 2023 Equity & Inclusion Fellowship Wilder School recipients: **Dr. Chelsie Dunn**, Senior Research Associate at the Research Institute for Social Equity (RISE), as well as graduate students **Zehra Sahin Ilkorkor** and **Isaac Yeboah**.



▲ Criminal justice students and local police partners from the Wilder School course "**Bridging Perspectives: Critical Conversations for Students and Police**," ventured to Washington, D.C. to visit the National Law Enforcement Museum with course instructor and former police officer **Brad Lehmann, Ph.D.**, and



criminal justice faculty. Members of the Richmond City Police Department, the Hanover County Sheriff's Department and the Chesterfield County Police Department, who are also course participants, accompanied the students. "Take the Case," a forensic lab simulator, allowed students to match weapons to injuries and object impact

patterns. Immersive exhibits like the L3Harris Patrol Simulator explored the real-time driving and response environment law enforcement officers face, and the InVeris Decision Simulator, a "use-of-force" and de-escalation scenario-based simulation. Other exhibits focused on real-life criminal investigations, the role of dispatch, and the role of diversity and inclusion in law enforcement.

▲ In January **Steph Vennetti** joined the Wilder School as director of academic advising and student services for the Office of Student Success. She previously served as the associate director of discovery advising at VCU and has worked in the advising realm at VCU since 2014. "I am so grateful to be a part of the Wilder School RAMily! It is obvious to me that our



students truly care about the impact they are making on society, illustrated by all of the amazing things they are doing everyday,” Vennetti said. In her free time, she spends time with her three cats and two dogs. She enjoys live music, traveling, hiking, running and board games. “I keep a chess board in my office if anyone is up for a match!”



▲ A delegation of more than **25 Stanford University students** and their professor joined the Wilder School as part of a special session of their course, “Inside Modern Campaigns: How Elections Are Won and Lost.” Governor Wilder shared his expansive experiences about the state of leadership, both local and national, as well as his perspectives and observations of the changes and challenges facing good governance. Governor Wilder fielded questions from the undergraduate students, exploring a range of topics, from his historic campaign strategies to the continued need to stand for people through critiquing current issues critical to Virginians. He discussed his gubernatorial campaign, where he traveled across the state, building relationships and identifying the needs of the people through grassroots democracy. He shared that most concerns of citizens are perennial and that effecting change is essential as a leader. Governor Wilder highlighted the significance of democracy in action and charged the students to make impacts in their communities. He shared, “You guys have got a lot of work to do, a whole lot of work to do. And you can make yourselves felt, wherever you are.”

▲ Students in the **Master of Urban and Regional Planning course “Sustainable Community Development”** created online story map resources about Richmond’s Woodland Cemetery and the Cemeteries of Barton Heights to provide information about the historic African American cemeteries drawn from archival research, mapping technology and interviews with descendants.



The project was developed with community groups, including the Descendants Council of Greater Richmond Virginia, the Woodland Restoration Foundation and Friends of East End.

“We wanted to use the story maps as a tool to share the history and importance of Richmond’s African American cemeteries, and by working alongside descendants, we were able to learn about and honor people who lived, worked and contributed to this city,” said Meghan Gough, Ph.D., associate professor of urban and regional studies, who taught the class.



Championing equity: The 2023 Wilder Symposium tackles HBCU funding disparities

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are well known for punching above their weight in the impacts they create for their students. HBCUs are responsible for producing 40 percent of all Black engineers, 50 percent of all Black teachers, 70 percent of all Black doctors and dentists, and 80 percent of all Black judges, according to the U.S. Department of Education. However, they have collectively been underfunded by more than \$2.1 billion compared to predominantly white institutions.

The 2023 Wilder Symposium, “HBCUs and the Absence of Support,” addressed this disparity in funding during a panel discussion held on Thursday, September 28, at the VCU Singleton Center for Performing Arts. Nearly 300 guests attended, and an additional 170 joined virtually. The esteemed panelists included President Emeritus **Dr. Wayne A.I. Frederick**, 17th President of Howard University, **Dr. Nakeina E. Douglas-Glenn**, director of the Wilder School Research Institute for Social Equity, the **Honorable Roger L. Gregory**, Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, and the **Honorable Jason Miyares**, Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The event was moderated by **Bob Holsworth**, political analyst and managing partner of the consulting firm DecideSmart.

Governor Wilder set the tone for the importance of closing the funding gap so that all people have access to equal and affordable education. In 2022, he challenged the Virginia General Assembly’s decision that the state’s constitution did not allow for state funding of Virginia’s private HBCUs. This advocacy led to a legal opinion by Virginia’s Attorney General Jason Miyares, which declared that “the Constitution and Virginia code does provide several exceptions that permit the General Assembly to provide funding to the private HBCUs.” Attorney General Miyares reiterated to the audience that Virginia has a long way to go to make up for decades of inequities and improper funding imbalances.

Watch the 2023 Wilder Symposium



ILLUMINATING A LEGACY

The National Ovation Gala Honors **Governor L. Douglas Wilder**

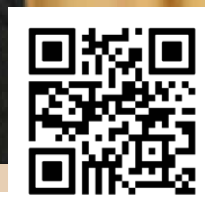
BY TIFFANY MURRAY-ROBERTSON & DAVID SLIPHER

The evening at the Washington Hilton Hotel unfolds like a tableau from a storied era, yet it's imbued with the promise of tomorrow.

The grand ballroom doors part to reveal a gathering that could only be described as a testament to the enduring spirit of public leadership. Here, amidst the warm glow of anticipation, the architects of Virginia's future join with luminaries and elected officials from across the nation, their elegant attire a backdrop to the gravitas they carry.

Members of Virginia's congressional delegation mix with distinguished U.S. senators, ambassadors, and influential figures from the House. They converse alongside presidents of Virginia's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Their collective presence — every seat taken — pays a powerful homage to Governor L. Douglas Wilder's monumental legacy, which is the focus of the evening's celebration.





Watch the evening's highlights

Together, these guests pledge to nurture the seeds of future public service through scholarships. It's a commitment that, rooted in Virginia, resonates across the United States. It's a collective endeavor to honor and carry forth a legacy that has shaped not just a state but also our nation.

Before the last whispers of greeting dissolve into the air, a figure emerges from the stage curtains, swathed in an iconic grey suit and matching gloves. The audience witnesses not the elder statesman they know today but his youthful echo. He stands poised to revisit a watershed moment in history — the inauguration of the nation's first elected African American governor.

This actor bears an uncanny

resemblance to a young L. Douglas Wilder. His demeanor embodies the essence of January 13, 1990, and through his words, the past coalesces into the present. He delivers a rendition of Wilder's historic inauguration speech with a conviction that rekindles the spirit of that frosty morning at Virginia Capitol Square Park.

"Today, because of your faith in our efforts, I stand before you as chief executive of this state ... I am a son of Virginia," he declares.

In his final words, this young actor's voice mirrors Wilder's heartfelt proclamation of Virginian pride, evoking introspection and admiration. As the performance culminates, the atmosphere is electrified to recapture

and elevate a moment in history.

In a symbolic passing of the torch, the actor portraying Governor Wilder steps down from the stage to be met by none other than Governor L. Douglas Wilder himself. With a smile that bridges generations, Governor Wilder extends his congratulations to Keighton Bell, the promising theater student from Norfolk State University. "You captured the essence even better than I did," Wilder remarks.

Passing a torch into the future

Thus, was the scene set for A National Ovation to L. Douglas Wilder Gala, an evening of celebration and collective homage to a trailblazer's impact on American public service. To date, the

Supporting the future of public service

Governor Wilder serves as a poignant reminder of the change that visionary leadership can inspire. The National Ovation stands as a symbol of hope and a call to action to support new scholarships for students.

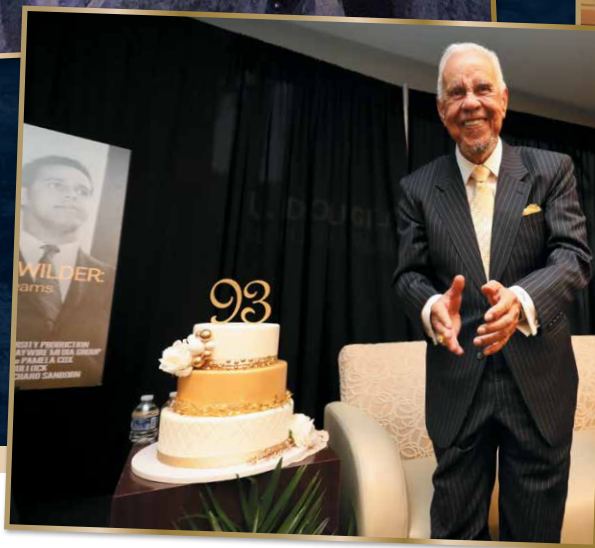
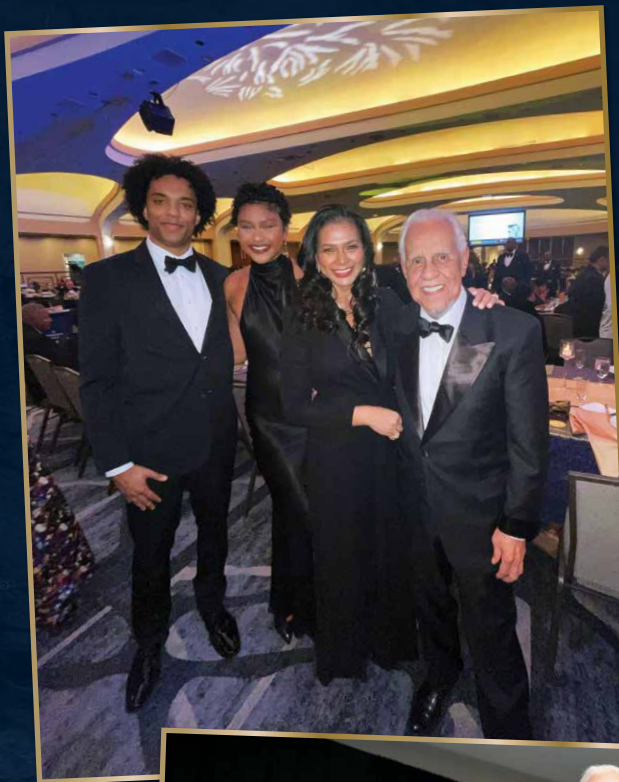
Our nearly \$1 million in proceeds supporting the extraordinary “National Ovation” gala will further the Wilder School public service mission by establishing new scholarships for Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Union University, and Howard University students who enroll at and attend the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs for undergraduate or graduate studies. The scholarships represent a bridge of support to the Wilder School’s graduate programs for students from Governor Wilder’s alma maters, Virginia Union University and Howard University.

The scholarships will help relieve students’ financial burdens while cultivating a diverse pool of qualified and passionate individuals who can bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and dedication to their professions.

“Through ‘A National Ovation,’ we honor Governor Wilder’s legacy while paving the way for a diverse next generation of leaders,” said Susan T. Gooden, Dean of the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs. “These scholarships aren’t just financial support; they’re investments in the diverse voices and perspectives essential for the future of public service. We’re committed to nurturing Governor Wilder’s vision of inclusive leadership and civic engagement.”



Support our student scholarships
bit.ly/natova



event has generated nearly \$1 million in support. Proceeds are earmarked to support scholarships to advance Governor Wilder’s legacy of public service, leadership, and educational empowerment.

“It was great seeing all of my friends and family who joined me for the National Ovation Gala,” said Governor L. Douglas Wilder. “I am profoundly touched by the excitement of the event to support educational opportunities for our students. I am grateful for the outpouring of support from all of the attendees, even those who could not join us.”

The gala saw the attendance of more than 700 guests that weave the diverse threads of Virginia’s political, academic, and social fabric. The event was hosted by the VCU L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs in

collaboration with Virginia Union University and Howard University.

Notable speakers joined the stage for remarks, including Governor Wes Moore of Maryland, U.S. Senator Tim Kaine, U.S. Representative Bobby Scott, Virginia Union University President Dr. Hakim Lucas, Wilder School Dean Susan T. Gooden, Virginia Union University Board of Trustees Chairman Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, and Wilder’s children, Larry Wilder and Loren Wilder. Emmy-winning broadcast journalist and media personality Ed Gordon served as the master of ceremonies.

Governor Moore proclaimed, “We stand on the shoulders of Governor Doug Wilder! I feel those shoulders under my feet every single day.” U.S. Senator Tim Kaine echoed, “Doug Wilder was

"IT WAS GREAT SEEING ALL OF MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY WHO JOINED ME FOR THE NATIONAL OVATION GALA. I AM PROFOUNDLY TOUCHED BY THE EXCITEMENT OF THE EVENT TO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR STUDENTS. I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT FROM ALL OF THE ATTENDEES, EVEN THOSE WHO COULD NOT JOIN US." — GOVERNOR L. DOUGLAS WILDER



"L. Douglas Wilder: Beyond Wilder Dreams," a fitting 93rd birthday present

On January 17, we marked the celebration of Governor Wilder's 93rd birthday with a film premiere offering deeply personal insight into Governor Wilder's life, revealing memories, passions, and the experiences that forged the man

behind the legend. The feature-length documentary "L. Douglas Wilder: Beyond Wilder Dreams" premiered at the Virginia Union University Claude G. Perkins Living and Learning Center.

The film was directed by Brian Bullock and produced by Ameta Cartwright and Pam Cox,

with cinematography by Ryan Pace.

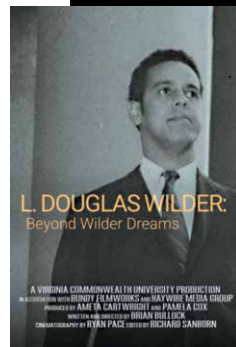
"The Governor's message of true and authentic leadership is very timely today," said Bullock, founder of Bundy Filmworks. "We'll be making the festival circuit and coordinating distribution strategies with major

broadcast and streaming channels. The Governor's story and message is not just for Virginia or the U.S. — the world should hear it as well."

After the screening, renowned analyst and political scientist Bob Holsworth hosted a Q&A discussion with Governor Wilder and Bullock.

The Virginia Union University First Thursday Jazz Ensemble and band director Fayesha Cole provided captivating live music, culminating with a happy birthday song during the governor's birthday cake presentation.

Stay tuned! Additional screenings of "L. Douglas Wilder: Beyond Wilder Dreams" are coming to a theater near you!



a history maker ... he stood head and shoulders above it all and made history."

Through echoes of applause and heartfelt stories of resilience and breakthrough, Governor Wilder reaffirmed his legacy as a harbinger of progress, inclusivity, and excellence.

The program was a resounding testament to the enduring power of representation and a clarion call to inspire all generations to weave their own legacies within the rich tapestry of governance and civic engagement. New support for future generations of diverse public servants promises to extend Wilder's vision forward, empowering a new generation to carry forward the mantle of leadership and service.



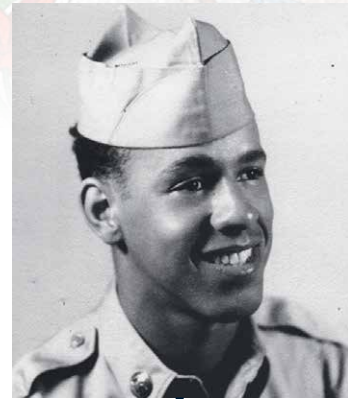
View an extended preview of "L. Douglas Wilder: Beyond Wilder Dreams" bit.ly/beyondwd



Celebrating a life of public service

BORN JANUARY 17 in the Church Hill neighborhood of Richmond, Virginia, Lawrence Douglas Wilder is named after poet Paul Laurence Dunbar and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. His parents, Beulah and Robert, encourage him to succeed through educational attainment.

1931



1947



Wilder enrolls at **Virginia Union University**, a private, historically black university. He continues to forge his identity through the brotherhood of the Zeta Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. He graduates in 1951 with a degree in chemistry.

1951

He is **drafted to Army service during the Korean War**. Wilder serves as a squad leader in basic training and becomes an advocate for fair treatment of his fellow Black soldiers during the early days of the integration of the U.S. Armed Forces.

With one other soldier, he leads the capture of 19 enemy troops. Advancing rank from private to sergeant, Wilder is awarded a Bronze Star for heroism in ground combat in the Battle of Pork Chop Hill.





Wilder takes office as Lieutenant Governor, becoming the first African-American to win a statewide election in Virginia.

He builds his constituency, establishing himself as a leading political figure statewide.

This prominence, along with his aspirations to create greater opportunities for all citizens of the commonwealth, drives

him to **enter the 1989 Virginia gubernatorial election.**

During his statewide tour, he visits each locality and lodges with residents in their homes.

1986-1989



Wilder becomes Virginia's first African-American State Senator.

He goes on to serve five terms in the Senate of Virginia.

Wilder's legislative successes stoke his passion for ever greater political impacts.

1969

1956

A decorated war veteran, Wilder attends **Howard University School of Law** through the GI Bill.

In 1959, he establishes a successful law practice, and soon becomes father to three children, Lynn Diana, Lawrence Douglas Jr.; and Loren Deane.



1983


After a crusade of nearly a decade by Wilder, Virginia officially **recognizes Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day** as a state holiday. Marked January 15, King's birthday falls two days before that of Wilder.



1990-1994

On the frosty morning of January 13, 1990, tens of thousands gather as L. Douglas Wilder is sworn in as the 66th Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia. As the nation's first elected African-American governor, he is commended for sound fiscal management to balance the state budget during difficult economic times. Governor Wilder establishes a "rainy day" surplus fund for public emergencies and Financial World magazine ranks Virginia as the best-managed state in the U.S. for two consecutive years.

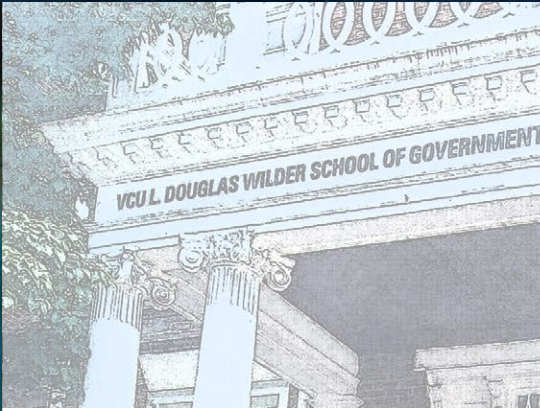
He drives key investments in K-12 and college education, toughens penalties for capital murder and prison escapees, and expands low-and moderate-income housing.



Governor Wilder expands historic judicial appointments for Black judges and institutes unprecedented opportunities to advance state-level careers for women and minority groups. He directs state agencies to immediately begin the divestment of resources linked to apartheid-ruled South Africa.

Wilder's tenure and historic accomplishments reshape local, state, and national political precedents and continue to inspire generations of public servants to reinvision and aspire toward a greater future of equality, opportunity, and possibilities.





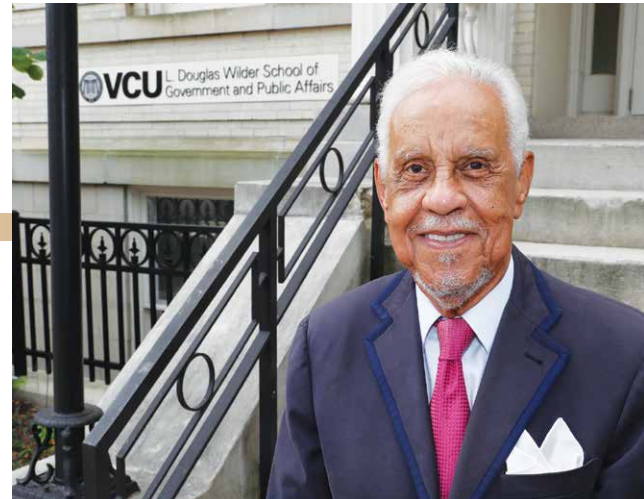
Virginia Commonwealth University establishes the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs.

As a distinguished professor, Wilder lectures at annual symposia, shares his experiences with students, and cultivates and advances the reputation of the school that bears his name.

2004

2005 - 2009

After decades of managing a successful law practice, Wilder returns to office as Mayor of Richmond. Achieving a landslide victory, he wins eighty percent of the vote, carrying every district to become the city's first directly elected mayor in over 50 years.



2024

His living legacy of historic firsts continues to demonstrate the strength of commitment, non-partisan politics, and resilience to redefine what is possible in America.

With more than 70 years of public service, as the consummate "Son of Virginia," Wilder stands as a beacon of leadership and people-first governance, today and for all the future.

Ph.D. student hopes his book on factory farming will inspire animal advocates

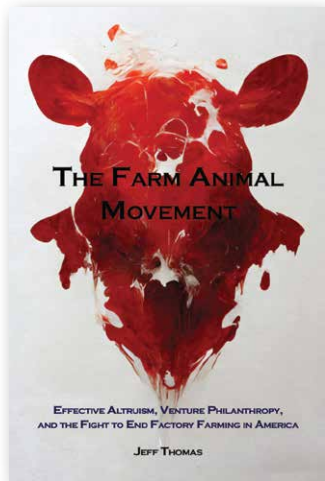
Jeff Thomas says his latest book was “written at an exciting time for American animal advocates,” and he credits his Wilder School professors as invaluable assets to his creative process.

BY JOAN TUPPONCE

Thomas, a doctoral candidate in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, came to VCU in fall 2021 after earning a master’s degree at Tulane University School of Public Health and a bachelor’s degree at Duke University School of Engineering. He also has more than a decade of experience in federal, state and local political campaigns, and national farm animal welfare policy.

The Richmond native decided to focus several of his final course projects on aspects of, and potential solutions to, factory farming – a system of raising animals, especially cattle, chickens and pigs, in industrial conditions in America. This complementary coursework later morphed into “The Farm Animal Movement,” released in December 2023 by Lantern Publishing. Thomas previously had written two books about Virginia politics, most recently “The Virginia Way: Democracy and Power After 2016.”

“After college I became aware of the problems of factory farming. I saw an



undercover video of a slaughterhouse where the animals were treated horribly,” he said. “All of my classwork at VCU has been focused on the political problem of farm animal welfare.”

Thomas is particularly grateful to three Wilder School professors – Sarah Jane Brubaker, Ph.D., assistant chair of criminal justice programs; Richard Huff, Ph.D., assistant chair of the Master of Public Administration program, and Sarah Raskin, Ph.D. – for their support and knowledge.

“Professor Brubaker cares very much about her students’ success. My topic was not in her wheelhouse, but she not only believed in me, but she also believed in all of us as a cohort. She helped me think incisively and focus on this topic,” Thomas said.

He added that Huff offered insight on how to analyze the political system in the U.S. while Raskin helped him understand the difference between informed journalism and rigorous social science.

“The skills and analytical tools that I learned in seminars with Wilder School professors helped me in my scholarship – and ultimately benefited my readers, who want to learn how to get involved in helping animals in a more effective



way,” Thomas said.

“Without them, I would never have been able to put together this book, one that I hope will make a difference for people and animals ... VCU gave me the freedom and the tools to explore creatively wherever the work took me. Professors believed in me, and that goes a heck of a long way,” Thomas said. “People who believe in you can help change your world. With the Wilder School, I feel like I hit the jackpot.” 🏠

“

The skills and analytical tools that I learned in seminars with Wilder School professors helped me in my scholarship – and ultimately benefited my readers, who want to learn how to get involved in helping animals in a more effective way.

”

– Jeff Thomas

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For more information, please visit us at bit.ly/givewilder





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