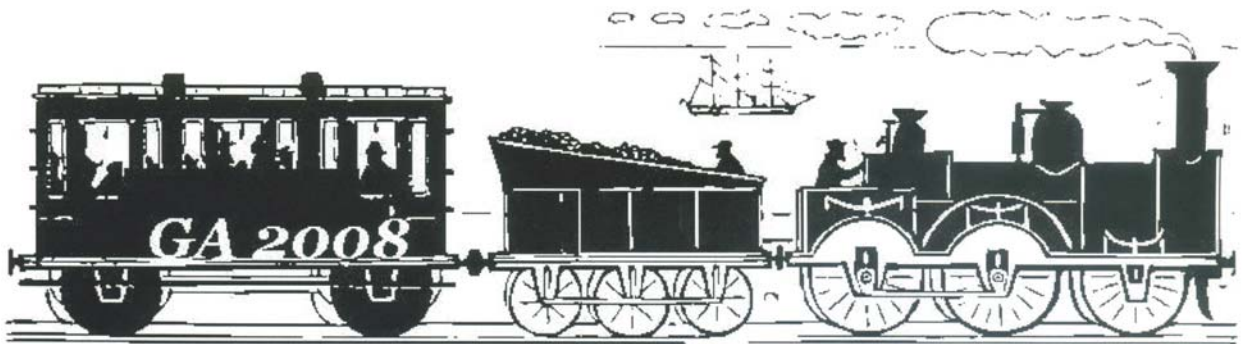
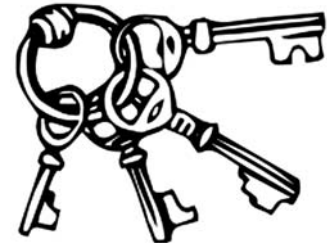


Virginia General Assembly Owner's Manual

Congratulations! You are now one of the owners of the 2008 Model Virginia General Assembly!!

You and about seven and a half million other Virginians can count on this 2008 model to pass laws and set a budget that will have a big impact on your life.

Please read this manual and follow its recommendations to get the best experience possible from your 2008 GA!



Maintenance

Since the General Assembly is a real classic, almost 400 years old, it does need conscientious and careful attention from its owners. Without this attention, the **2008 General Assembly** will not provide the satisfactory service that you and its other owners deserve.



When the General Assembly first went into operation, Virginia was a small agricultural colony and most people in Virginia were Indians, slaves or servants. Its designers never intended for it to provide services and benefits to millions of Virginians, all equal under the law.

Therefore, we recommend that as an owner, you follow this Maintenance Schedule:



- To get access to your **2008 Model General Assembly**, you must have contact information for your Delegate and your State Senator. If you don't have this information, you can get it from <http://legis.state.va.us>. Keep the information in a place where it will be easily available. You never know when you will need it!

- TIP: You can cut your phone bill by calling 1-800-889-0229, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays, once your 2008 Model General Assembly is up and running, or "in session," to leave a short opinion on a specific bill or legislative issue.



- Many **2008 Model General Assembly** owners find it helpful to join with other owners in a statewide group like the VOP®. If your **2008 GA** breaks down at an inconvenient time, it can make a big difference to know you are part of a big statewide family. For more information, go to www.virginia-organizing.org.

- Many owners participate in preventive maintenance by having a pre-General Assembly meeting with their Delegate and Senator. The Virginia Organizing Project (VOP®) has many of these meetings around Virginia, as do other groups. You also may want to attend Candidates' Nights or similar events. This will give you an attempt to head off possible problems before they even develop. For example, don't let your Delegate or Senator go to Richmond thinking that payday lending is just a concern for some activist groups, even though most faith groups and concerned citizens of all stripes oppose it!



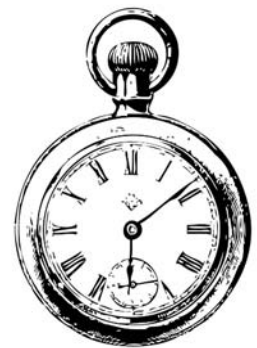
- Once the 2008 General Assembly gets going, identify the results you are expecting from it. For example, you may be eager to see funding for a person working against racial profiling in the Department of Criminal Justice Services.

Find out what component of your 2008 GA can do this for you. In this case, it would be the Senate Finance and House Appropriations Committees. Make sure you keep track of what happens, for example by reading VOP® legislative alerts. If you are not getting these alerts, go to www.virginia-organizing.org to sign up for them.

- Keep a firm and steady hand on the controls while the 2008 General Assembly is in motion. Let your Delegate and Senator know regularly what you are expecting from him and her. You may want to go to Richmond and actually test the controls. Or you may prefer to organize a few fellow owners, and contact your Delegate or Senator together to multiply your impact. For best results, remember to work through VOP® or other statewide groups.



TIP! Be prepared! The *2008 General Assembly* accelerates quickly to full speed, and will stay at full throttle until March 8. Unless you are fully prepared when you visit Richmond, your trip may be wasted. Have a checklist of items that you want. On the day of your appointment, bring what you need, from bottled water to comfortable shoes to a good friend. Be sure to set up an appointment in advance. However, once the *2008 General Assembly* is in motion, no appointment can be guaranteed.



Sometimes, unfortunately, your 2008 General Assembly will not perform up to your expectations. Here are some common questions that owners ask:

How do I know I have correct and up to date information on the operations of my 2008 GA?

Sometimes news media don't provide enough details. Use approved VOP® contacts or a contact of similar quality. This is especially important when the problem you are concerned about involves the difficult to reach components of your

2008 GA, such as Subcommittee Voting and the thousands of almost invisible Parliamentary Technicalities.

What should I do when I identify a potential problem with my Delegate or Senator?

Let them know right away about your concerns. However, no matter how disturbing the problem may be, do not overcorrect. Rudeness, anger, etc. may be counter productive. Work closely with other owners to correct the problem. Often, as few as a dozen owner phone calls or a similar corrective action can take care of the problem.

What if lobbying by well-funded groups, like the payday lenders or the highway construction lobby, is negatively affecting the operations of my 2008 GA?

This kind of lobbying may cause the 2008 GA to veer off in the wrong direction. Just apply pressure in the opposite direction to straighten it out. Sometimes you will need to apply a lot of pressure. Make sure you work with your other 2008 GA owners.

Tip! Check www.vpap.org, the website of the Virginia Public Access Project. This website, which shows financial contributions made to Virginia elected officials, can help you evaluate how much pressure you may need to apply to counteract lobbying problems.

What if my 2008 GA gets caught in a Media Storm, like the Illegal Immigrant Media Storms of the last few years?

The 2008 GA is vulnerable to these storms, which reduce visibility and increase heat and glare at the same time. While continuing to apply pressure along with your co-owners, you should also do what you can to clear up the storm. Letters to the editor can help, especially if sent out statewide by VOP®. But sometimes you may need to hold a media conference, or talk to your local editors and news producers.

What if one of the components of my 2008 GA, such as my Delegate or Senator, just seems to have gone totally haywire?

This can be a problem. Replacement components are not going to be available until 2009 at the earliest. And remember, your **2008 GA** has **no warranty or guarantees of any kind!** So please use the tips in this manual to keep your Delegate or Senator functioning as well as possible for the time being.

What if my problem with the 2008 GA is not with my local components, but with Delegates or Senators from another district?

In this situation, it is critical to rely on VOP® or an organization of comparable quality. Statewide organizations and networks can apply pressure in other parts of Virginia that are not accessible to you. This provides you with a kind of Remote Control of your 2008 GA!

Of course, when you are asked to support someone else by contacting your Delegate and Senator, it's important to cooperate with them, just like you would like them to do for you. We are all out here together, and we all own the 2008 Model General Assembly!



Remember, your **2008 GA** can add a lot to your life, as long as you are an active and engaged owner. However, neglect of your ownership responsibilities will certainly lead to breakdowns and other problems that may take years to fix. So be a responsible owner of YOUR 2008 MODEL GENERAL ASSEMBLY!!