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Willey Urges Alternatives for Law Unit

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By Wilford Kale

WILLIAMSBURG: The College of William and Mary should make temporary plans about its law school space problems because it is doubtful that the next General Assembly session will appropriate nearly $1.5 million necessary to construct a building next year.

That was the suggestion of State Sen. Edward E. Willey, D-Richmond, chairman of the powerful Senate Finance Committee, who would write to Dr. Thomas A. Graves Jr., William and Mary president.

Willey, who had already told the "unanimously supportive" law school officials "to expect trouble" if there will be any funds available next year, was speaking from the American Bar Association's recommendation on law school accreditation because of its poor facilities.

In a letter to William and Mary, made public by college officials last month, the ABA said that the Marshall-Wythe School of Law building is the "most inadequate physical plant of any ABA-approved law school in the country." Willey was on vacation when the letter was released and returned to Richmond only late last week. He said he had not seen any of the financial reports that are the basis of the ABA's statement about the college's law school problems.

However, Willey expressed concern that William and Mary, the other state college, is planning and "making plans," as well as other state agencies, for new facilities, yet does not offer any suggestions as to where additional money will come from.

"I know what Tom Graves wants," Willey said. "He wants a new law school building. but a lot of other people want something, too ..."

Willey said he does not consider the release of the ABA report to the press to be an attempt to blacken the name of the college.

"Sure I want the best medical school and the best law school we can have, but we've got money problems now. You tell Tom Graves that he should make some kind of accommodation of where we can get this money, but not to tell the General Assembly how to spend the money."

Willey said, "my suggestion to him is that he better start thinking (meant by them) so that means that reports in the weeks ahead will be presented to the senate. Willey indicated that the senate's Finance Committee will receive a report from the ABA in a few weeks and that it will be presented to the senate."

"I am sure that if there is better thoughts and a new, temporary plan for the near future. Willey said. Willey indicated that the senate and the General Assembly would be available to construct the law school building."

There is planning money out now for about $200 million in capital outlay projects. Willey said, and "we've got pressure from all over the state. The University of Virginia is"
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As known to William and Mary about the construction of a new law school building, especially since the line item in the current budget that is expected to be the center of debate in the State of the Commonwealth of Virginia, said Governor Linwood W. Lomax.

Wiley said that neither of the governor nor the governor's executive assistants, "I'm not an expert on the law school, but I can tell you that the ABA has recommended that the law school be expanded. They have looked at the current budget and the need for additional space, and they have recommended that the law school be expanded." Wiley also said that he was not aware of any plans to expand the law school.

The law school is currently housed in a building that was constructed in the early 1970s, and it has been noted that the building is in need of modernization.

The governor's statement came the same day that the Virginia General Assembly began its regular session. The law school is one of several agencies that are likely to be affected by budget cuts in the upcoming session.

In a related development, the Virginia Board of Bar Examiners announced that it would begin to require applicants for the bar exam to demonstrate proficiency in legal writing.

The Board of Bar Examiners said that the new requirement would be in effect for the January 2008 exam.

The announcement came as the Virginia bar association called for increased funding for legal aid programs.

The VABA said that the funding levels for legal aid programs had remained flat for several years, and it called for an increase in funding to meet the needs of low-income clients.

The VABA said that it was working with lawmakers to secure increased funding for legal aid programs in the upcoming session.

The VABA said that it appreciated the governor's statement, but it noted that the funding levels for legal aid programs had remained flat for several years."