

February 8:

In light of the most recent sexual assault allegations against Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax, the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus believes it is best for Lt. Governor Fairfax to step down from his position.

We remain steadfast in our conviction that every allegation of sexual assault or misconduct be treated with the utmost seriousness. While we believe that anyone accused of such a grievous and harmful act must receive the due process prescribed by the Constitution, we can't see it in the best interest of the Commonwealth of Virginia for the Lieutenant Governor to remain in his role.

February 7:

The events of the past week in the Commonwealth of Virginia have disturbed us all, and recall a time when bigotry, intolerance, and lack of respect for all our residents were accepted in the corridors of power. We recognize that these recent findings and allegations have ripped open wounds for the African American community and sexual assault survivors across the country and we empathize with them all. We want to emphasize that the members of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus stand with constituents of our great Commonwealth in declaring that bigotry and mistreatment of any of our residents are unacceptable.

The issues in our current political leadership are not partisan issues. They are issues of basic decency, civil rights and justice for all parties involved. The Caucus recognizes that the admitted past use of blackface by Governor Ralph Northam and Attorney General Mark Herring, and the sexual assault allegations regarding Lt. Governor Justin Fairfax are all weighted equally in matter of importance to our Commonwealth and its leadership. Our responses to each, however, must be based on their individual facts and circumstances.

We called for Governor Northam's resignation sharply and swiftly because all of the facts were before us immediately. This is still our position.

It's been said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. The flipside of that coin is that mockery is the greatest form of insult. Blackface is mockery, and therefore it is an insult. An insult used for entertainment, by those who aspire to political leadership is dangerous because it betrays a lack of compassion and a temperament of untrustworthiness where black lives are concerned. This was as true in 1984 as it was in 1904, 1924 or 1954.

Every member of the Caucus and many of our colleagues in the Capitol were pained by the revelations of Gov. Northam's and Attorney General Herring's past behavior. Those actions showed a tremendous lack of judgement and compassion for Virginia's black residents and unacceptable ignorance of some of our Commonwealth's most historically painful chapters. While we appreciate the candor of Attorney General Herring's

disclosure, we await further action on his part to reassure the citizens of the Commonwealth of his fitness for leadership.

The Caucus also recognizes the need to address the troubling allegations leveled against Lt. Gov. Fairfax. Sexual assault is a very serious offense, and we believe that all allegations of sexual assault must be fully and thoroughly investigated by the appropriate agencies. We believe that victims deserve to have their claims taken seriously. And we believe that anyone accused of such a grievous act must receive the due process prescribed by the Constitution. We support, and we expect, justice to be meted out fairly for all involved in this situation and will continue to monitor it closely and act accordingly.

As we move forward, let us not forget the Commonwealth commemorates its 400th Anniversary this year. We are mindful that Virginia is the birthplace of this country's painful history that still haunts us today. The legacy of slavery, racism and the Jim Crow era remains an albatross around the necks of African Americans. We can no longer hide behind a façade of unity, we must fiercely and intentionally combat the