

## In Memoriam: Frank O'Leary

Frank O'Leary, who served as Arlington County Treasurer for more than 30 years before retiring in July 2014, passed June 7, 2024, after a six-month battle with leukemia. When Frank was first elected Treasurer in 1983, the tax delinquency rate was approximately 9%. Throughout his tenure, he worked to bring the delinquency rate to historic lows, with relentless innovation and by establishing numerous cutting-edge policies that made it easier to pay taxes, and easier to pay them on time.



Many payment methods considered commonplace today began with Frank's innovations, including:

- Helping to pioneer Payments by Credit Card in Arlington,
- Providing taxpayers with the option of Automatic Bank Debits,
- Giving taxpayers the option of paying over the phone by credit card – a program so successful that it was adopted two years later by the IRS – and
- Setting up a lockbox where all mailed payments could be more efficiently processed.

Frank also introduced the Taxpayer Assistance Program (TAP), which provided short-term loans to taxpayers struggling to meet their tax obligations on time. With TAP, taxpayers could avoid late payment penalties by establishing a repayment program before the due date.

With all these enhancements to receiving and collecting taxes in Arlington, Frank was continuously chipping away at the tax delinquency rate. He famously brought it to a historic low of less than ½ of 1% (0.333% to be exact) at the time of his retirement.

Frank also worked hard to level the playing field for all Treasurers across the Commonwealth, no matter the size, population or location of their jurisdiction. To that end, he was very involved in the Treasurers' Association of Virginia and served as its President 1991-1992. He was the driving force behind the State Non-Arbitrage Program, and he was instrumental in developing the Virginia Investment Pool. He also made presentations extolling the innovations of Virginia Treasurers at national meetings of such organizations as the Government Finance Officers Association and the Association of Public Treasurers of the United States and Canada.

Frank was also very involved with charitable work, both during his career and in retirement, with:

- the Warren G. Stambaugh Memorial Foundation, formed to support individuals with disabilities across Arlington,
- the USS Arlington Community Alliance, created to remember and honor the victims of, and first responders to, the September 11 attack on the Pentagon,
- the Optimist Club of Arlington, a volunteer organization serving Arlington's youth, and
- the Arlington Historical Society, improving the Arlington community by building knowledge of its diverse history.

Frank received numerous awards throughout his career, for leadership, excellence, service, and innovation. On June 18, 2024, the Virginia State Senate passed a resolution paying homage to Frank, as a “pillar of the Arlington community who touched countless lives over the course of his distinguished career in public service.” And on June 25, 2024, at the Treasurers’ Association of Virginia’s annual conference, he was awarded posthumously the L. Gene Harding Lifetime Achievement Award, for his service to the Treasurers’ Association of Virginia, making significant and meaningful contributions to the Association over his lifetime. Current Arlington County Treasurer, Carla de la Pava, said, “Frank promised Arlington voters that he would create a more fair, efficient, and professional Treasurer’s Office. He was my mentor, and I am proud and honored that he trusted me to continue this vision.”

The legacy Frank left behind is unmistakable. His dedication to the improvement of the Treasurer’s Office and his commitment to the Arlington community will be remembered by all who knew him. Frank’s advancements changed the way the County operated and will continue to have a lasting impact for years to come.