

## Back to the Future

By Tommy Herbert, VAMA Manager of Government Affairs

Did you know that in Back to the Future Part II, Doc and Marty traveled to what is now the past? The year 2015, where Marty and Doc supposedly go, in reality gave us a lot of developments; China built islands in the South China Sea, and the President of FIFA stepped down amidst a gargantuan corruption scandal. But while Nike did give us [a version of those fly kicks seen in the movie](#), actual hover boards were nowhere to be found.

Conversely, housing providers in Virginia we will soon be traveling back to that most enticing and elusive of times, before the pandemic, at least in terms of the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (VRLTA). This July 1, the law will largely return to its state pre-pandemic. We will be transitioning back to 5-day pay-or-quit notices, applications to RRP will be on a voluntary basis only, and payment plans (while still recommended) will no longer be mandatory in the VRLTA.

That means that the time to start communicating to your residents about their obligations, your expectations, and the resumption of regular business is now. It is difficult to get our arms around the concept of a debt falling into our laps unexpectedly that makes up 30% of our income in the best of times. But for some residents who have been utilizing RRP in the long-term, that is what is ahead of them. There is still time now for communication and arrangements to be made that keep people in their homes, provide them a way to re-qualify for their units if they still meet screening criteria, or to recognize a vulnerable situation before it actually comes to pass.

For so many of you, you already know the residents that I am talking about. While it can be awkward, and even combative sometimes to confront these issues with your residents, it can make a big difference for both you and them to start addressing these questions head-on and with lead time. One solution I have heard of offering to residents who have been benefiting from RRP long-term and need to re-establish a good payment history at the end of a lease is to offer a short-term 3-month renewal. This allows the resident a good faith opportunity to requalify themselves and limits the risk a housing provider faces if the situation proves unsustainable.

As of July 1, the future is the past. The multifamily industry in Virginia has truly gone above and beyond their duties by orders of magnitude during this pandemic for their residents and for society's safety at-large. While we look forward to the return of sustainable business, we have and will continue to earn that laurel of striving to be part of the solution when it comes to housing stability for our residents.