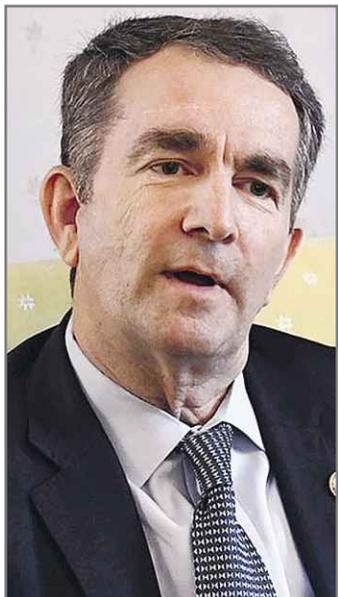


Northam: 'I'm not going anywhere'



Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam during an interview Saturday

The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Virginia's Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam considered resigning amid a scandal that he once wore blackface, but the pediatric neurologist said Sunday that he's "not going anywhere" because the state "needs someone that can heal" it.

Northam made the comments on CBS' "Face the Nation," saying it's been a difficult week since a racist photo in his 1984 medical school yearbook surfaced, showing a person wearing blackface next to a second person wearing a Ku Klux Klan hood and robe. Northam initially said he had appeared in the photo — although he didn't say which costume he was wearing — and apologized. The next day, however, he denied being in the photo, while

acknowledging that he had worn blackface to a dance party that same year.

"Virginia needs someone that can heal. There's no better person to do that than a doctor," Northam said. "Virginia also needs someone who is strong, who has empathy, who has courage and who has a moral compass. And that's why I'm not going anywhere."

Northam's political turmoil comes as the two other top Democrats in the state face their own potentially career-ending scandals, with allegations of sexual assault against Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax — Northam's successor if the governor were to resign — and Attorney General Mark Herring acknowledging that he wore blackface at a party in 1980. Herring would become governor if both Northam and Fairfax resigned.

The scandals have become a full-blown crisis for Virginia Democrats. Although the party has taken an almost zero-tolerance approach to misconduct among its members in this #MeToo era, a housecleaning in Virginia could be costly: If all three Democrats resigned, Republican state House Speaker Kirk Cox would become governor.

Two women allege Fairfax sexually assaulted them, and both have offered to testify if an impeachment hearing were called against him. The lieutenant governor issued a statement Saturday again denying he ever sexually assaulted anyone and making clear he does not intend to immediately step down. Instead, he urged authorities to investigate the allegations against him.

Herring has apologized for appearing in blackface — an admission he made after rumors

began circulating at the Capitol — but has not indicated he would resign either, despite his initially forceful call for Northam to step down.

Asked Sunday for his opinion on his subordinates, Northam said in the CBS interview that it's up to Fairfax and Herring to decide whether they want to remain in office. He said he supports Fairfax's call for an investigation into the sexual assault allegations. Of Herring, he said that "just like me, he has grown."

Democratic Del. Patrick Hope said he wants to introduce articles of impeachment against Fairfax on Monday, but Hope is not a powerful figure in the House and there's a little sign there's a broad appetite for impeachment with lawmakers set to finish this year's legislative session by the end of the month.

Parents fear shooting drills traumatize kids

The Associated Press

Long before an ex-student opened fire on his former classmates in Parkland, Florida, a year ago, many school districts conducted regular shooting drills — exercises that sometimes included simulated gunfire and blood and often happened with no warning that the attack wasn't real.

The drills began taking shape after the Columbine High School shooting in 1999. But 20 years later, parents are increasingly questioning elements of the practice, including whether the drills traumatize kids.

April Sullivan was pleasantly surprised by an "I love you, Mom" text from her daughter last May, even though she knew the eighth-grader wasn't supposed to be using her cellphone during school in Short Pump, Virginia. But she did not know that her child sent it while supposedly hiding from an intruder. The girl didn't know the "code blue" alert was a drill.

"To find out later she sent that text because she was in fear for her life did not sit well with me," Sullivan said.

Henrico County Public Schools have since changed the way they conduct drills, making clear at the start that the events are not real and notifying parents as the drill begins



Law enforcement officials use unloaded guns to take part in an emergency drill at Hudson Falls (N.Y.) Primary School in 2013.

or right after, district spokesman Andy Jenks said.

The backlash underlines the challenges administrators face in deciding how far to go in the name of preparedness.

Thirty-nine states require lockdown, active-shooter or similar safety drills. Other states have less explicit requirements or leave it to districts, according to the Education Commission of the States. A Mississippi task force has proposed twice-yearly

active-shooter drills.

Even as the drills become routine for many of the nation's 51 million elementary and secondary public school students, there is no consensus on how they should be conducted, experts said. No data exist, for example, to show whether a drill with simulated gunfire is more effective or whether an exercise that's been announced in advance is taken less seriously.

"Some hard data on each ques-

tion are needed with urgency," said University at Buffalo professor Jeremy Finn, who gathered experts from around the country to evaluate school security measures at a conference in Washington, D.C., in October.

After Columbine, lockdowns that involved bolting the door and crouching quietly out of sight became the norm. In 2013, the Department of Education recommended giving staff latitude to evacuate, barricade classroom doors or, as a last resort, fight back by throwing things or rushing the attacker.

"Do you really want it to be your kid who's the one who takes the bullet and winds up with a plaque in the lobby of the school saying he went down as a hero?" asked Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, parent Nanette Adams, who disagreed with the decision to adopt a widely used safety protocol during a September drill at her 15-year-old son's high school. The protocol is known as ALICE, which stands for alert, lockdown, inform, counter and evacuate.

"To me, this just seems like an indirect admission on the part of the schools that they really have no control over who gets into the building, and the school security officer isn't enough to keep the place safe so we need to hold the kids accountable for doing it," she said.

In 2014, the National Association of School Psychologists and the National Association of School Resource Officers issued joint guidance that cautioned that while drills have the potential to save lives, those "not conducted appropriately" can cause "physical and psychological harm to students, staff and the overall learning environment."

After public criticism of the unannounced Short Pump drill and others, the Virginia House of Delegates last month considered, but defeated, legislation requiring schools to give parents advance notification.

When her son's school fired blanks during a drill, Adams questioned whether it was really necessary to expose children to the sound of gunfire. Others complained that such realistic exercises can take a toll on classroom learning even after the drills are done.

Mo Canady, executive director of the school resource officers' group, recommends districts save the most intense exercises for staff only. As the decision-makers, he said, "they need to know a little more what that's going to feel like."

For students, lower-stress drills that have them listening to instructions and running through the motions, like traditional fire drills, should be the focus, he said.