



# CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

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## Phil Duncan Council Member

First as a Washington, D.C., journalist covering Congress and elections, next as a national promoter of civic education and citizen engagement, and now as a local government practitioner serving on the Falls Church, Va., City Council, Phil Duncan has dedicated his 40-year career to strengthening democracy in America by nurturing a more informed and engaged electorate.

Duncan was born in Knoxville, Tenn., in 1957. He took to journalism early, as a student at the Webb School of Knoxville, where he was sports editor of the yearbook and editor of the student newspaper. At Davidson College, he majored in political science and edited the campus weekly, *The Davidsonian*. In his summers as a college student he covered Knoxville-area government, business and human-interest stories for the *Halls-Fountain City Shopper* and for the five-paper *Community Newspaper Group* chain, and he did news reporting internships at *The Charlotte Observer* and *The Knoxville News Sentinel*.



In 1979 Duncan left Knoxville for Washington and landed a job with Congressional Quarterly, Inc., a non-partisan publisher of information on legislative action and national politics. He was a politics reporter and then politics editor for CQ's *Weekly Report* magazine, then from 1989-99 edited CQ's authoritative book and online reference, "Politics in America," which analyzed the work of each member of the U.S. Congress.

While at CQ, Duncan appeared on public affairs television programs aired by C-SPAN, CNBC, MTV, A&E and NET, and on programs broadcast by National Public Radio, Bloomberg Business Radio, the BBC and a host of local radio stations across the country. He wrote columns for the *Weekly Report's* "Roundtable" and spoke before groups of journalists, government officials and students from many states and foreign lands.

After retiring from CQ, Duncan founded Civicatalyst Communications to pursue his interests in promoting civic education and spurring citizens to take responsibility for revitalizing representative government. For 15 years, he did communications and outreach work for the Center

on Congress at Indiana University, a non-partisan educational institution directed by former U.S. Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.) with a mission to improve the public's understanding of Congress and teach citizens how to make their voices heard.

Since 2003 Duncan has been a board member of the National Conference on Citizenship, a non-profit chartered by Congress in 1953 to "contribute concretely to the development of a more active, alert, enlightened, conscientious and progressive citizenry." He is President of the Duncan Educational Fund, Inc., a family philanthropy that assists exceptional middle school and high school students in Scott County, Tenn., encouraging them toward learning, service and leadership. Scott County, in the Cumberland Mountains along the Tennessee-Kentucky border, is where Phil's father Joe D. Duncan and his mother Lou Etta Phillips Duncan were born and raised.

In 2012, Duncan sought election to the City Council in Falls Church, a Northern Virginia suburb of Washington, D.C. where for many years he had been deeply involved in an array of efforts to improve the community, support the public schools, help businesses thrive, and draw more people into the City's political life. Pledging to practice positive politics and encourage civil, constructive dialogue, he won election in a field of seven candidate competing for three seats. He was re-elected to Council in competitive races in 2015 and 2019. His current Council term runs through Dec. 31, 2023.

On Council, Duncan serves as chair of the Economic Development Committee, where he advocates for existing businesses in the City, welcomes new investments and supports a development review process that is inclusive and delivers results in a reasonable time frame. His top priority is for Falls Church to build a broader revenue base that will keep the City's schools great, its municipal services and facilities top-notch, and its taxes on citizens and businesses reasonable.

Duncan's time on Council has coincided with a blossoming of business investment that is unprecedented in Falls Church's 72 years as an independent City. Three new grocery stores, an urban-format Target, and a new hotel have opened, as have dozens of restaurants, cafes and other businesses providing an array of goods and professional services, including medical care, legal and financial services, fitness training and therapy, home improvement, child care, education, tutoring and recreation. Now under construction and scheduled to open in 2021 is a development with the City's first movie theatres in 40 years. And currently under Council review is a proposed large-scale development adjacent to the West Falls Church Metro that promises many new opportunities for shopping, dining and entertainment. New residences approved by Council in the past decade have helped the City's population grow to nearly 15,000.

Duncan also has pushed successfully for modernization of civic infrastructure, including construction of a new high school due to open in 2021. He strongly advocated for renovation and

expansion of three elementary schools, City Hall, and the City Library, and supported additions and upgrades to the City's park lands. He has voted for improvements in stormwater management, sidewalks and bicycling amenities, and neighborhood traffic-calming measures.

Prior to his time on Council, Duncan served on the City's Economic Development Authority and was chairman of the City Schools' Business in Education Partnership. He was chairman of the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Transportation, and was a founding Board member of the Falls Church Education Foundation. He served on the Falls Church Chamber of Commerce Board, including a term as vice chairman, and in 2001 he received the Chamber's "Pillar of the Community" award. He was a Board member and publicity chairman for the Falls Church Kiwanis Little League, and for four years he coordinated the George Mason High School Athletic Boosters' mulch sale fund-raiser. He has been active with Citizens for a Better City, Falls Church Arts, and the City Democratic Committee, and he is a member of the Village Preservation and Improvement Society and a supporter of the Friends of the Falls Church Homeless Shelter.

Duncan met his future wife, Leslie De Long, while both were employed at Congressional Quarterly and playing on the company softball team. They were married at the Falls Church Presbyterian Church in 1985 and bought a home in Falls Church that year. Leslie is the daughter of Chet and Carol De Long, whose record of involvement in the City goes back to the early 1960s. Carol served on the Planning Commission, City Council and as Mayor; Chet's volunteer work includes more than 25 years on the Library Board. Leslie grew up in the City, is a George Mason High School and Swarthmore College alum, worked in journalism and on Capitol Hill, and now works for a national conservation organization.

Phil and Leslie's children attended City schools K-12. Daughter Meredyth graduated from Swarthmore and is pursuing a master's degree in marine science at San Francisco State University. Son Tyler graduated from West Virginia University, earned a master's degree in criminology from Florida State University and now is an officer with a Northern Virginia police department.

Duncan comes from a family with a long tradition of involvement in civic and political activities. His father was Knox County Criminal Court Judge, then served for 15 years on the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals. He is 96 and still lives in West Knoxville. Phil's mother was the first secretary of the homeowners' association in the community where Phil grew up. (She died in 2017 at age 92.) Phil's uncle was mayor of Knoxville and served in Congress; one cousin also served in Congress, and another is in the Tennessee Senate.

Philip David Duncan  
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Term: January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2023

First seated on Council – July 12, 2012 (continuously served)

Memberships:

Economic Development Committee

Government Operations Committee

Legislative Committee

Liaison to:

Planning Commission

(Civic) Greater Falls Church Chamber of Commerce

Regional Organizations:

NVTA – Northern Virginia Transportation Authority PCAC (Planning Coordination Advisory Committee) (Member)

NVTC – Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (Alternate)