

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS**  
**OF**  
**CHARLES S. ROBB**

**GOVERNOR**

**TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**AND**

**THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA**

**NORTH LAWN, STATE CAPITOL**

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Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, members of the General Assembly, distinguished guests, my fellow Virginians.

I am acutely aware at this hour of the other Virginians throughout our history who have also sworn to give the last measure of their courage, their wisdom, their faith, and their devotion to this Commonwealth and her people. Their example, and the expectations of the people of Virginia, are at once an inspiration and an awesome personal challenge to be worthy of the public trust that is every Governor's constant companion.

I am also acutely conscious of the weather, and I recall all too well that another Virginian, in another time, at another location, chose to ignore the weather and reportedly spoke for several hours during his inaugural in Washington. You will remember from your history that William Henry Harrison died of pneumonia thirty days later -- so it is not only for your sake, but for mine as well, that I will limit my remarks.

This is a great occasion, however, and the oath I have just taken places upon me responsibilities, as steeped in honor and tradition, as those assumed by any other Governor in America.

Virginia is unique: a Commonwealth which is more than a state, Virginia is a way of life, a land of incomparable beauty and abundant human and natural resources.

Virginia embraces values at once immutable and organic, timeless and unchanging; progressive and ever-changing. The men who created this Commonwealth were the founding fathers of our Nation. What they gave to Virginia, we still preserve as the best of the original American spirit.

The Virginia which built the foundation of America, and led the young Republic so ably and so long is now ready to reclaim the leadership in national affairs she once had. Virginia defined the original qualities of excellence in American public service; we must now be willing to establish and demonstrate, rather than follow and imitate, new standards of excellence, standards upon which the future of State government, and its proper limits in a free society, may be modeled.

A future Virginia will measure us against the standards of the extraordinary past we have inherited.

And the reminders of that past are close around us.

Albertis Harrison warned a generation ago against "attempting to fit twentieth century problems to the procrustean bed of Eighteenth Century solutions." The transcendent wisdom in that axiom is worthy of George Mason's observation, in Virginia's first Declaration of Rights, that freedom and the blessings of liberty are best preserved by the frequent recurrence -- not to specific or transient programs -- but to "fundamental principles."

Lindsay Almond, Mills Godwin, Linwood Holton, and John Dalton each sought guidance in recurrence to those principles, and by example and design, manifested the traditions and character of leadership that have become the hallmarks of successful representative government in Virginia.

Of the men who have preceded me in this charge, I would like to pay special tribute to one -- the late Colgate Darden. My relationship with him was, and always will be, very special to me. His generous offer to interrupt a long retirement to nominate me to run for this office was a gracious gesture whose importance to me is exceeded only by the immense influence he had upon me in the time I was privileged to have his friendship and counsel.

His spirit still radiates the reassuring warmth we all treasure, and the distinctive, unmistakable outline of his shadow crosses the entire landscape of modern Virginia history.

Colgate Darden came to this office at a time when this country faced grave problems. Today our Country and our Commonwealth again face grave problems -- some similar and some quite different from those of forty years ago.

In Poland, a Communist government too inept even to feed its own people has crushed the freedom born of their discontent and misery with an act of treachery that indelibly stamps the mark of Cain upon the helmets of the Polish Army. In Northern Ireland, in Italy, and in the Middle East, the rapacious brutality of religious and political fanatics has prompted men and women to murder each other in the name of religion, snuffed out the inspired life of the Third World's greatest statesman, violated the sanctity and the person of an incomparable Pope, and threatened us with the political warfare of terrorism aimed at assassinating our national leaders.

Our domestic problems include a deepening recession, growing unemployment, increasing federal deficits, nagging inflation, and a lack of confidence in our economic system. The Federal Government is attempting vastly different solutions to these problems. To the extent that these solutions both reduce the flow of federal money to the States and relax the grip of federal control and regulation, we stand ready to accept the fiscal challenge, and to cooperate with the President, the Congress, and with our neighboring Governors in this region.

To the extent these solutions only seek to relieve the Federal Government of its financial problems at the expense of the States -- while retaining, and thus strengthening -- Federal controls, we reserve the right to differ honestly and vigorously.

We have the spirit, the energy, and the resourcefulness, working together, to find innovative ways to meet these problems. In common resolution, the native vigor of the people of this great Commonwealth is equal to any challenge.

Government must now decide how to do more with less.

From this day forward we can only grow in dedication to our mission, and in our determination to find new ways to solve persistent problems. Within the hour I will sign an Executive Order which will bring to a halt the continued expansion in the size of State government. I am confident the General Assembly shares this goal, and together we will honor this pledge to the people of Virginia.

In taking this step to limit our number, we must maintain a limitless commitment to the standards of public service. Those standards of performance were set by remarkable people of remarkable ability many of whom paid a high price for their contribution to our Commonwealth. No less is expected of us today, and no less will be accepted.

The measure of any government's soul is its integrity -- or lack of it; the basis of its character is its pride and spirit -- the pride with which it serves the people and the spirit in which it discharges its obligations. I pledge to you that I will brook no compromise, tolerate no dilution, countenance no weakening of the integrity, the pride and the spirit that the citizens of this Commonwealth have come to expect.

While this ceremony signals the continuity in Virginia's leadership and commitment to principle, it can mark the beginning of a new era in the history of Virginia -- a time in which the character and quality of government do justice -- in the fullest measure -- to the brilliance of our unique heritage.

The beckoning hand of destiny that once called Virginia to the achievements that made her world renowned -- is still raised to us in summons. The spirit of Virginia -- the values and qualities derived from the land, and those who loved it -- nurtured the greatness of Washington and Madison, bestowed upon us the matchless legacy of Jefferson, conceived the idealism of Woodrow Wilson, animated the curiosity of Booker T. Washington, and quickened the genius of George Marshall. Those priceless qualities still live in the people of Virginia. They live in vibrant abundance, and await only the call of those who would inspire, to serve us again in greatness.

The journey upon which we now embark, to answer the summons to the great tasks ahead demands that we aspire to nothing less than the best that we have been, if we are to create for our children and their children, the kind of Virginia our parents and grandparents dreamed of making for us.

The most difficult phase of our journey, and the greatest and most important of our tasks, is the requirement to strengthen the means for the education of our people. Nothing we do will be more important; no other effort will have as profound and lasting an impact upon our future.

The men and women who created this Commonwealth, and guided it into modern times, were leaders and citizens whose gifts of judgment and ability, character and intellect, and integrity and courage, were honed and refined in a society whose enlightened learning was -- and once again must be -- its most distinguished characteristic. The most important principle upon which Virginia was founded is the notion that education through free inquiry is at once the strongest guardian of liberty and the surest path to enlightened citizenship. I have not taken the Oath as your Chief Executive to diminish the importance of that principle or to accede in its erosion.

The hour has come, the urgency is acute, for us to do whatever we must to reclaim for Virginia national pre-eminence in education.

We must honor and reward as venerated professionals those whose inspiration and dedication impel them to the mission of teaching -- in our primary and secondary schools; in our community colleges and in our colleges and universities. Unless we accord those who teach, and teach well, the esteem and livelihood they merit, we cannot hope to attract and retain in this most crucial profession those whose energies and abilities are so vital to the cultivation of our children's minds -- and hence to the development of our future.

Our concern with the critical requirements in education, however, must not distract us from the other great issue equally vital to the future -- Virginia's economic development.

As government does less and people expect more, Virginia must move quickly and surely to create a fresh, original strategy to stimulate economic and commercial development. We must have permanent, predictable, and consistent economic growth if we are to have a secure future because to stand still is to retreat. Virginia has never accepted a secondary position and we must not accept it now.

Preoccupied with the problems of the present, Virginia has lost its pre-eminent position in the recruitment of new industry, and we must strike at this problem forcefully and quickly.

We must also build new bridges between government, business, labor, creating a climate of cooperation and a new era of prosperity. And we must set free the spirit of free enterprise to encourage industrial innovation and to increase economic productivity.

At the same time, we recognize that a healthy economy cannot grow in a stagnant environment.

We must do nothing to jeopardize, and take every step to preserve, Virginia's most precious natural resource -- her environment. I believe that a sound economy and a healthy environment are compatible, and are capable of simultaneous achievement. It is my intention to listen to any proposal, examine any idea, and study any approach that rationally and sensibly promises to assist Virginia in stimulating the pace of its economic development.

The stark realities of our time call out for those with the courage to dream. If ours is not the time for the fulfilment of dreams, it can and must be the time of their birth.

The politics of progress is the politics of dreams; our greatest Presidents have known that; so have Virginia's greatest Governors. Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison were dreamers. Heirs of the Enlightenment, they were among American's first modern men. They dreamed of making their lives more abundant, their knowledge more complete, their posterity more secure. They dreamed that the power of human reason, in the limitless capacity of the human mind, could unlock the secrets of nature, of human affairs, and of the Universe. Man, they mused, with his own mind and the laws of science, could accomplish anything -- even change the world and make it better: And they were right.

The common sense born of their reason, leavened their dreams into vision; and vision, more than any other quality, can enable us to transcend problems and transform events. My dream-- my vision-- for Virginia, is not greatly different from that of our first Governors. I believe that government constitutes opportunity, that power entails responsibility, and that trust compels commitment.

To govern effectively is to govern with reasoned common sense; to govern well is to govern with a rational vision for a better future; to govern with the excellence worthy of posterity's admiration is to govern by combining all these qualities in a spirit of generosity and good will.

The essence of Thomas Jefferson's greatness, his most authoritative biographer has written, lies in the fact that he consistently applied to the shifting problems of his age an enlightened and humane philosophy. That, Jefferson knew, was the surest prescription for excellence in government in his time--and it still is now.

It also follows that in societies whose governments are freely elected and truly representative, the two things that reveal the most about the character, the style, and the nature of those governing, is the way in which they assume power, and the manner by which they relinquish it. It is my hope that these proceedings, both an end and a beginning, dignify our traditions of government, bring honor to our fellow citizens, and point to the pride and spirit of our stewardship, as a time in which Virginia's future will indeed be worthy of her past.

Thank you.

