

INAUGURAL ADDRESS
OF
GERALD L. BALILES

GOVERNOR

TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AND

THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA

NORTH LAWN, STATE CAPITOL

SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 1986



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GERALD LEE BALILES
GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA

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Today we celebrate not merely the Inauguration of a new Administration, but the renewal of our association as a people which spans the centuries and memories of Virginia. A few moments ago, I took an oath of office which was sworn on other days, in earlier times, by Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry.

Yet we are here as more than heirs of history, or agents of an unchanging heritage. We also know that we, in our generation, who have been given the chance, have the responsibility to make our own history. With pride in our people, who made the decision on election day, we stand at a happy passage in the life of this Commonwealth. Douglas Wilder is more than our new Lieutenant Governor; Mary Sue Terry is more than our new Attorney General. Their presence on this platform signifies and ratifies our long, sometimes painful, but morally imperative journey from the darkness of subjugation and discrimination into the sunlight of a fuller liberty.

We have not finished that journey; but here and now, we may be permitted to pause and say, with a sense of satisfaction and resolve: Virginia is leading the nation again.

For that, we also owe a special debt of gratitude to my predecessor, whose rare combination of leadership and stewardship will rank him among our greatest Governors. On behalf of all our citizens, let me express our admiration and affection for Governor Charles S. Robb.

Now we begin a new term and time with a belief about the events which brought us here: Our victory meant more than the triumph of party or a slate of individuals; it represents the success of a set of ideas.

Virginians rejected the call to retreat from public endeavor -- the counsel that involvement is ineffective and caring is futile. You declined the temptation to misuse conservatism as an excuse for indifference. Rather you certified that there are worthy purposes which should command the energy and effort of our whole Commonwealth. You reaffirmed that government exists for more than cutting taxes and shunting aside problems.

We pledged to keep taxes down -- and we will.

But we also said that an efficient government can be a concerned government -- that while we cannot afford or accomplish everything, there is much that we can and must do to keep Virginia on the move.

We believe in fiscal responsibility with a social conscience -- and a human face.

We can keep taxes down without holding people down.

We can control spending without sapping the spirit of change and progress.

We can contain the size of government without diminishing the scope of opportunity or the horizons of hope.

We prevailed in 1985 because this was our vision; now we must follow it in 1986 and the years ahead. And in setting our course, we are conscious that we may also be mapping out a road for other states and for the nation to travel. This has been the role of Virginia, at its best, across the generations. For our own sake, and for those who are watching what we do, let us set out guideposts clearer than the conventional labels of politics and the old assumptions of the past.

We are a new Dominion, rooted in abiding values, ready to enter an era when a decade will end, a century will turn, and a new economy will be born. We intend to lead the way.

The new Dominion will lead in education. We will fully fund standards of quality in our public schools. We must seek and recruit the best teachers for our children. We will strengthen our colleges and universities, for the most important investment we can make is in the human capital of intellect and invention.

Thomas Jefferson asked that his monument record only three achievements -- that he penned the Declaration of Independence, wrote the Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty, and founded the University of Virginia. And of these three, his personal pride was the University.

In that spirit, education will be the greatest public endeavor of our term -- because it is the key to all our other progress. I want the students and graduates of Virginia to be in the first rank of the science, technology and telecommunications of tomorrow -- as well as the traditional disciplines of Jefferson's day which are still powerfully relevant to our own.

As we foster our intellectual growth, so too we must preserve and protect our natural inheritance.

We serve as trustees of our resources of air, land and water. They are ours to use - and enjoy - while we are here on earth, but we must recognize certain limits, respect the conservation ethic and resolve that the legacy we leave to future generations is not one of despoiled air, toxic wastes, contaminated lands and polluted waters. Our laws must be shaped and enforced to preserve and protect the natural treasures of Virginia. From Virginia Beach to the Cumberland Gap, from the Mayo River to the Great Falls of the Potomac, we have been given a rich and wondrous land. Let us leave our state a healthier place to raise families than we found it. Let us pass on to our children and grandchildren a Commonwealth which will be known everywhere as Virginia the beautiful.

The quality of life also includes the safety of our streets and the security of our homes. We will not allow law-abiding Virginians to be held hostage to fear -- prisoners in their own homes. We will seek to strengthen every aspect of law enforcement. And our message will be as clear as the results we are resolved to achieve: the laws that are made are to be obeyed.

Every person sent to prison must entertain no hope of escape. We are determined that, in Virginia, there will be no such thing as do-it-yourself parole.

But there is an even higher law that will reflect our society; the new Dominion will be based on a mutual pledge to each other of respect, of common purpose and compassion.

Today, more than ever before in our history, we truly are one people. We are strong enough to help the weak. We shall never exile them to an invisible corner, or treat them as scapegoats. We must not perpetuate their dependence; but we can and will help them to work for and win their economic independence.

The new Dominion will lead in economic development, for it is the greatest and most powerful social program we can ever have. The strength of our state requires it; our quality of life depends upon it. But economic development involves more than growth rates, statistics and numbers. We seek jobs for workers, homes for families, new opportunities for entrepreneurs to open a business -- and for those who have been left behind, a chance to earn a new start in life.

George Bernard Shaw wrote "the greatest of evils and the worst of crimes is poverty." It is essential that Virginia enjoy a vigorous, growing economy. Only through economic prosperity can we hope to maintain and improve the quality of life for all Virginians.

It is financial confidence and employment security that keep our families together, our children's educations enriched, and our personal health intact. Our wealth gives rise to our generosity, and our generosity makes us a people of character and faith. We can realize the Virginia dream, not just materially, but spiritually, through sustained

economic growth. As Governor, expansion of economic activity and opportunity in our Commonwealth will be of the highest priority.

The new Dominion will lead in transportation; it must, for we no longer have a choice. Transportation is now the vital link in our chain of progress; it is the challenge of our time for which there have been no simple solutions. And so we must dare to be different, to reach out for creative change and produce an integrated approach to the problems of public transportation, highways and roads, our air, water and rail systems. In the new Dominion we must plan for and invest in transportation systems. It is the roadway to the future.

And for all of us who are privileged to live in this time and place of history, the future is truly now. We can choose to shape history or be shaped by it.

My fellow Virginians, we are free from old stereotypes, and from the fearful prejudice which once paralyzed our progress. All of us who take the oath of statewide office today were children and students in the Virginia of the 1950s. We had no part in shaping that divisive and often bitter time; we do not look backward in anger, but forward in hope. We welcome the exciting demands of leadership in the 1980s; we are ready -- even eager -- for the journey that will take us to the new Dominion.

To you, the people, belongs the credit for the distance we have come so far. By the confidence you gave us in 1981, and that trust which you renewed in 1985, you made a statement about the character of Virginia -- about what you want it to be -- and what you believe it can become.

Challenge us here to live up to that high standard.

Challenge us to do our best -- to be bold and courageous -- and we will strive to make a good state even better.

Our choices may not always be popular, but we will always try to make them right.

Our guiding stars shall be that bright constellation of which Jefferson wrote as he left public office for the last time: "The care of human life and happiness ... is the first and only legitimate object of government."

With the blessing of the God who gave us life, we now embark anew on that happy task.

