

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
AND TO THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA
JANUARY 15, 1994
SOUTH PORTICO, STATE CAPITOL**

GOVERNOR GEORGE ALLEN



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**Inaugural Address to the General Assembly
and to the People of Virginia
January 15, 1994
South Portico, State Capitol
Richmond, Virginia
By
Governor George Allen**

MR. SPEAKER, Mr. President, Mr. Chief Justice, distinguished guests,
members of the General Assembly, my fellow Virginians.

No one can come to this moment without a deep reverence for Virginia,
its history, and its people. And as I assume my duties, I do so with a
fighting spirit, with humility and a deep sense of duty. I am truly grateful
to those who have entrusted me with the responsibility to serve as
Governor for all Virginians.

Over the years I have had many teachers who have prepared me for the
task which lies ahead. Three of those mentors are not with us today in
body. But I know they are with us here on this platform in spirit and I
have reserved three seats of honor for them. The first is my father -
whose blood and spirit live on in me. He taught me to always look for the
best in people. To never become discouraged and to keep fighting on. To
believe that, when properly MOTIVATED, every individual has something
they can CONTRIBUTE to the common goal.

Landon Birckhead convinced me to run for the House of Delegates in
my first unsuccessful attempt. And history was perhaps revised when he
convinced me to run the second time, which was more successful — thanks
to 25 voters in Albemarle and Nelson Counties.

And the always smiling Darden Towe reinforced my belief that the gift of life is to be used to help people and your community.

My wife Susan and our children have also been teachers who have prepared me for the office I now enter. Through their eyes and learning experiences I have discovered many worlds. And the experiences of family have instilled in me a fire to make our Virginia better for all our children and future generations of Virginians.

I am also keenly aware of the contributions of my 66 predecessors who have brought Virginia to the doorstep of the 21st century. I express the gratitude of the people of Virginia to Governor Douglas Wilder for his 24 years of public service to our Commonwealth. His inauguration four years ago affirmed that Virginia had entered a new era, free from stereotypes and free from prejudices, and those stereotypes and prejudices will not return. And his tenure during times of economic hardship helped to sustain Virginia's well-earned reputation for fiscal soundness and stability.

I wish to pay special tribute to three governors — Linwood Holton, Mills Godwin and John Dalton — for their lasting contributions to the advancement of our philosophy of responsible government. Governor Holton opened the door for opportunity and advancement on the basis of ability. Governor Godwin's principled leadership brought together people of different parties and established a new course for Virginia and whose legacies, such as our community colleges, endure for future generations. And the late Governor Dalton brought remarkable business management skills to the governor's office and will be long remembered for his legacy of compassion and energy.

Fourteen months ago, we began a journey across Virginia. Our journey took us to every region of our state. It took us to the inner-cities, the suburbs and our vast rural areas. Our journey led us to young Virginians and older Virginians.

At the outset of our journey, only a handful of insurgents came forward to join our cause for a new direction for Virginia's government. But as the journey continued, this insurgency grew, and it took root in cities and counties all across our Commonwealth. By election day, the insurgency had become a revolutionary army which was victorious in taking back Virginia's government for Virginians, not for stolid, status quo, monarchical elitists. It was a victory for the people who own Virginia's government, over those who think Virginia's government is for sale. In other words, the result was the most dramatic call for change we have seen in modern times in Virginia.

In his 1962 inaugural address, Governor Albertis Harrison said, "Every generation speaks of changing times, but change is a constant stream of time."

And so, today, we begin to write the next chapter in Virginia's history. Today is a day of celebration. And it is a day of commitment to the challenges ahead and to those principles upon which our Commonwealth, and our Nation, were founded. These principles are as applicable today as they were 200 years ago.

Chief among these foundational principles are those which were put forth in our Declaration of Independence — that all men and women “are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness” and that governments derive “their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed,” — **THE PEOPLE!**

I have and will steadfastly adhere to Jefferson’s vision of “a wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, which shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned.”

As we celebrate our heritage and traditions as Virginians, we must recognize that our Commonwealth has begun to stray from many of these cherished principles. “Wise and frugal” was replaced by massive government spending increases in the 1980s.

The primary duty of government to “restrain men from injuring one another” has been neglected as our Commonwealth has experienced an epidemic of violent crime, much of it the result of offenses committed by career criminals out on early parole.

The increased regulatory and tax burdens of the 1980s have left entrepreneurs and working Virginians less than ideally “free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement” and to retain and enjoy the fruits of their labor.

There is also an unease and even an alarm among the people about the character of contemporary society and the role of government in it. Increasingly, it appears that we have lost sight of the traditional values and core beliefs that once sustained us as a community of free and peaceable people.

The institutions that have traditionally taught the basic understanding of right versus wrong — families, schools, churches and neighborhoods — are under assault.

Sandra Day O'Connor warned “we pay a price when we deprive children of the exposure to the values, principles, and education they need to make them good citizens.”

It is in times such as these that we must renew our commitment to certain fundamental ideals; ideals that have been proven in experience and tested by time.

Our challenge is to bring creative conservatism to Virginia's government: To take our Jeffersonian conservative principles and apply them creatively to improve society and to attain a more secure and prosperous future for Virginians. By empowering people to determine their own destinies, we offer them the opportunity to succeed.

Throughout our history, it has been the power of the individual, not the government, which has propelled our country forward. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, active in the antislavery movement and a pioneer in the effort to give women the right to vote observed, “nothing strengthens the judgement and quickens the conscience like individual responsibility.” She was right.

Virginians are ready for a return to this kind of principled reform.

Virginians want their government to once again reflect their wisdom, their good common sense and their pride in self-determination and self-reliance.

Virginians understand that government has been steadily whittling away at their freedoms.

Virginians know that government policies have been diminishing opportunity and stifling initiative under the heavy, grimy boot of excessive taxation and spending and regulation.

Virginians recognize that the cost of big government in Richmond, as in Washington, is measured not in material terms alone, but in the toll it takes on the human spirit — the loss of independence and self-esteem, the loss of promise and potential, the loss of hope.

The people of Virginia have a clear understanding of the change that is needed. They have given us a clear mandate to make that promise of change a reality. And, though some here may doubt their insight, this much is clear: The problem in Virginia today is not that the people have lost touch with reality; it is that our government has lost touch with the people.

In recent times, the will of the people has been frustrated by an unholy alliance of manipulative well-heeled interests, entrenched bureaucrats, and political opportunists. It is time for this to end. For this great house that Jefferson designed was meant to be the people's capitol, not the citadel of special interests.

Not far from here, at St. John's Church, a great patriot named Patrick Henry aroused the conscience of his fellow citizens and lit the fire of revolution. Then, as now, there was widespread frustration — a feeling of powerlessness and futility — even in the face of an undeniable wrong. Like Patrick Henry, I have a healthy distrust of our overburdensome federal government. And whenever the rights and prerogatives of Virginia are threatened by Washington, I will stand up to fight the beast of tyranny and oppression that our federal government has become.

But the state government must be limited as well, and my healthy distrust of government will guide my decision-making at this level. Because, as Patrick Henry extolled, we, as citizens, can take back our government when it becomes too intrusive. "We are not weak," he declared, "if we make a proper use of those means which the God of Nature has placed in our power....The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, and the brave."

These stirring words of Virginia's first governor, who took the oath of office 217 years ago, are the words we hear echoing in the brisk winds of change that swirl about us on this invigorating January day.

For they are the words of empowerment and individual initiative.

They are the words of revolutionaries who turn ideas into action.

They are the words of those who refuse to give up or give in, even in the face of seemingly impossible odds.

Who are these revolutionaries? They are not just heroes of another age. They are ordinary Virginians who lead the extraordinary lives of today.

They are the mothers in the public housing projects fighting to save their young children from the scourge of drugs.

They are the victims of violence and the families of victims, channeling their pain and grief into positive action to protect others.

They are the teachers who overcome the odds and send young men and women into the world equipped with the academic skills they need to succeed.

They are the small business owners, the backbone of this economy, who take risks and invest, and whose ideas create the jobs that sustain working families throughout Virginia.

They are the farmers who feed us.

They are the foresters who replenish the trees that shelter us.

They are the police officers, firefighters and medical personnel who guard and protect us.

They are the people from Chincoteague to the Breaks of the Cumberland, from Danville to Winchester, and places as diverse as Fairfax and Franklin Counties, Virginia Beach and Buchanan County, who toil and sacrifice to mold the character and secure the future of their children — and who pause, if at all, only to lend a hand to a neighbor.

Nowhere else on this earth is there a people possessed of a special character such as ours.

Nowhere else is there a people upon whom such blessings have been bestowed.

Nowhere else can a person stand in the lengthening shadows of the founding fathers, and gaze into the hopeful faces of today's revolutionaries, and know the pride which bursts forth when declaring, "We can do it. We're Virginians."

When I was sworn in to serve as the United States Representative for the people of Virginia's Seventh District, I told my colleagues that I had come to the House with a mission and with goals. And that mission and those goals continue today.

My fondest hope — my foremost goal — as Governor is to empower you, the people of Virginia, and to challenge you to take control of your destiny — so that you may build a better future for yourself and your children, and make a lasting contribution to your community and your Commonwealth.

As we forge ahead with a new course for the future, we will succeed by working together in a bi-partisan manner, in partnership with the people of Virginia. Together, we will make Virginia safe again. We will make Virginia a place of opportunity again. We will make Virginia the envy of the Nation again.

May our Creator bless our great Commonwealth and provide to all of us: the wisdom and guidance we need to govern fairly, justly, and in the best interest of all Virginians.