

**AN ADDRESS BY GOVERNOR GEORGE ALLEN
TO THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA ON**

**THE STATE OF THE
COMMONWEALTH**



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Office of the Governor

George Allen
Governor

AN ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA

ON

THE STATE OF THE COMMONWEALTH

THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

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Good evening, my fellow Virginians.

Thank you for tuning in.

As you may have heard by now, the General Assembly was unable to organize itself to receive the *traditional* State of the Commonwealth message this evening.

So I'm speaking to you from the Governor's office, where so many important decisions have been made that charted the course of this great Commonwealth.

I reckon the folks in the Legislature will get things straightened out one of these days. But don't be surprised if you see more stunts like this to defeat my plan to let *you* and other hard-working Virginians keep more of the money you earn.

The truth is, I'd rather talk to you anyway. Because this is *your* government. And, you know, things would go a whole lot more smoothly around this Capitol if people would just keep that in mind.

My fellow Virginians, if there is a metaphor for our moment in history, it is found in Robert Frost's well-known poem, *The Road Not Taken*. There, he describes a traveler who pauses at a fork in the road and, instead of choosing the well-worn path, summons the courage to take the less-traveled, but more promising course.

Tonight, it is clear — *we, too, stand at a fork in the road.*

TWO CONTRASTING VISIONS

The General Assembly must come to terms with two contrasting philosophies – *two conflicting visions* – of what government should do, and what are the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

Will our state continue down the path of bigger government, increased spending and taxes, deepening dependency and declining values?

Or, will we make government smaller and more focused on core governmental duties – allowing you to keep more of your hard-earned money?

Some have said that this will make this Session of the General Assembly competitive. So it may, and so it has. But if it is to be contentious, let it also be enlightening for the people of Virginia. For when we meet in the marketplace of ideas and debate our principles and policies with civility and mutual respect, we provide you all, the people, with a *clear choice*. And choice is the lifeblood of representative democracy.

This evening, I am going to talk about the principles that are the foundation of the Allen Administration's ideas for cutting taxes and government spending, reforming education and welfare, and creating jobs. I want to focus on the fork in the road before us – these two contrasting visions of government and society – because it is this fundamental question that will shape for Virginians the present and future state of our Commonwealth.

GOVERNMENT AS GUARANTOR

One vision – the “big government knows best” vision – has held sway in America for much of the last 30 years.

It is an elitist vision. It assumes that the common sense and traditional values of regular folks are not adequate to the task of running their own lives, families and businesses.

It regards individuals and private institutions as *secondary* and *subordinate* to government bureaucracies and professional politicians.

Decades of government based on this philosophy have brought us –

- stifling regulation and burdensome taxes,
- mediocre education and declining job opportunities,
- excuses for criminal behavior,
- and a welfare-state mentality that has taught a generation of Americans to *depend* on others for what we want, and to *blame* others for what we lack.

This misguided experiment with government-guaranteed happiness has sapped the spirit and undermined the values of the American people.

It has done what no foreign enemy could -- it has robbed many of our citizens of their independence and their dignity.

VIRGINIA'S FAILED EXPERIMENT

For a long time here in Virginia, we resisted the national infatuation with *big government*. Republicans and conservative Democrats together insisted on a specific, well-defined and *limited* role for state government. They championed fiscal restraint.

It took our Commonwealth two centuries -- *two centuries* -- to reach its first \$10 billion biennial budget. But in just the last 15 years, state spending has *tripled*, and the budget now exceeds \$32 billion.

Even in the recent recession years when the private economy was shrinking, total state spending did not decrease. It has *grown* each year.

By any comparison, the budget growth in Virginia during the last decade has been excessive. State spending has grown *more* than the growth in population, *more* than the growth of personal income, and *more* than the rate of inflation.

It has grown *even faster* than federal government spending. In fact, over the last 10 years, state government spending in Virginia has increased at nearly *twice* the rate of federal spending.

What do you -- the people of Virginia -- have to show for the billions of *your* tax dollars state government has spent during the last decade?

- Students' test scores have shown no improvement.
- College tuition has risen sharply, until we took office.
- Jobs and investment have been lost to neighboring states.
- And violent crime has skyrocketed, leading you to demand a complete and fundamental overhaul of our criminal justice system.

My purpose here is not to assign blame.

My point is that in area after area, what Virginians have seen in recent years is their government spending *more*, but delivering *less* -- less of the things that really matter, like good schools, safe streets, more and better jobs.

A NEW ERA FOR VIRGINIA

My fellow Virginians, the "big government" path has failed us. And you have demanded a *new direction*. But, you and I must convince the General Assembly that *the time to act is now!*

A year ago, I was elected by clear-thinking Virginians who sent a very direct and compelling message --

- *Cut wasteful, bureaucratic spending.*
- *Lower taxes.*
- *Reduce the size and reach of government.*
- *And make state government more efficient and more effective in meeting its essential responsibilities.*

A significant aspect of this new direction and new vision for Virginia is our plan to *cut taxes by \$2.1 billion* and reduce unnecessary government spending.

My proposal cuts the *State income tax*. Why? Because the income tax is a tax on work, a tax on productivity, and a tax on effort and self-reliance.

Our plan *triples* the personal and dependent exemptions over the next five years -- providing a meaningful tax cut for every working Virginian, but especially benefitting middle- and lower-income working families with children.

During the "big-government" experiment of the last decade, these have been the *forgotten Virginians* -- the people like you who work hard, who pay their taxes, who obey the law, who try to provide for their families and teach decent values to their children.

You are the people who are carrying the heavy load -- the folks who have been ignored while out-of-touch elitists and organized special interests have demanded more and more of *your* hard-earned money.

We hear the excuse that other states to the north of us have a higher total tax burden than Virginia's. Well, my response is this: If some Members of the General Assembly find that fact somehow persuasive -- if they really believe Virginians are not taxed enough -- then I reckon they will vote against my tax cut proposals.

But for those legislators who care about helping working families, the facts are:

- Virginia's individual income tax burden, per capita, is among the *top third* in the country.
- Virginia's personal exemption is the *second worst* in the Nation.

When our tax cut plan is fully implemented, a married couple with two children and a federal adjusted gross income of \$40,000 will get a *27 percent net cut* in their current Virginia income tax.

A typical family of four earning \$24,000 a year will have their state income tax burden *cut in half*.

For a single parent with two children earning \$15,000, my plan will reduce the state income tax *grab by more than two-thirds*.

Under our tax cut plan, up to 84,000 low-income, working Virginians will *no longer* be required to pay *any* state income taxes *at all!*

I also have proposed to increase job opportunities for Virginians by phasing out a tax that is broadly acknowledged as a *job killer* – the despised gross receipts tax.

This regressive tax falls hardest on small businesses, especially new and struggling enterprises. In fact, it is levied even on those that have not yet begun to turn a profit.

The small business men and women of Virginia are the backbone of our economy. Many more Virginia families have a paycheck this evening because of a small business employer than any other kind.

If we want our fellow Virginians to have the financial security and independence that comes with that paycheck, if we want Virginia to be a competitive state in which to do business, then it makes absolutely no sense to hold back some small businesses and cripple others with a regressive tax on their gross receipts.

There really are two *different* philosophical visions in conflict here.

One vision proceeds from the assumption that income belongs to the government, that the government should collect through various devices as much in taxes as the people will permit, and that it is the government's job to redistribute the taxpayers' money in ways politicians and bureaucrats think best.

Our *new* vision begins from the opposite assumption. I believe that taxpayers' money belongs to the people who earned and produced it. You know better than any government official how best to use it!

Unlike the "big-government" approach, our new vision places a value on the independence and self-sufficiency of the individual. It recognizes that a dollar kept by the person who earned it is far more valuable than any dollar handed out by the government.

The dollar you *earn yourself and keep* is a reward for your effort. It's an incentive for work in the future. It preserves the crucial connection between diligence and success.

The dollar that government *takes away and gives away* has the opposite effect.

My fellow Virginians, your demand for leaner, more efficient government, and tax cuts for lower- and middle-income families and small businesses is a *defining* issue understood by people all across the country.

It is understood even in Congress by Republican and Democrat leaders. And it's even understood now by the White House. We can only hope that folks on both sides of the aisle in Virginia's General Assembly understand the power and the importance of tax cuts for working Virginia families.

ADDRESSING THE PEOPLE'S PRIORITIES

Turning to other areas of the budget, the amendments I have proposed will ensure *increased* funding in this biennium for your people's top priorities and the government's primary responsibilities – education, law enforcement and job creation.

At the same time, it achieves *savings* by reducing the size of central office bureaucracies, and by decreasing spending on activities that cannot be justified as essential for Virginia's taxpayers to pay.

For every item in the budget, I asked two *key questions*:

- First, "Is this activity, no matter how well-intentioned or entrenched; is it *essential* for state government and taxpayers to provide?"
- And second, "Is this activity *more important* than a tax cut for all of Virginia's working families and small businesses – or other priorities the citizens have in law enforcement, education and job creation?"

This evening, three families traveled from different regions of Virginia to see their General Assembly *in action*. Those families – the Morgan's, the Pittman's and the Fritz's – are here in my office tonight instead.

Just as I did, General Assembly members will have to decide for themselves: Is spending nearly \$100,000 a year to operate a yacht *more important* than a tax cut for folks like Tom and Sharon Morgan? I sided with the Morgan's who are from Northern Virginia and have just put three children through college.

Is spending 25,000 taxpayer dollars to buy plaques for a fishing tournament *more important* than allowing families like Al and Teresa Pittman's to keep more of their hard-earned money? I chose the tax cut for Al, a Norfolk policeman, and Teresa, a homemaker, because they are struggling to raise their four children.

And, Is spending 120,000 of taxpayer dollars researching the merits of additional trees in cities *more important* than reducing the tax burden on Virginians like Dennis and Alice Fritz? I decided my priority was Dennis, an insurance agent, and Alice, an elementary school teacher, in Southwest Virginia. The Fritz's are working hard to provide for their three little girls.

These are *real* working families. If the Members of the General Assembly consider these and other hard-working families during this Session, then they certainly must agree with me that the taxpayers of Virginia should be our priority.

There is room in the budget to reduce unnecessary bureaucratic spending, and provide a tax cut – not just to these three families – but to *all* Virginians, especially those working families with children.

Were all the budget decisions easy choices with obvious answers? No. But, I made my decisions based upon the fundamental philosophy that people know better how to spend their hard-earned money than does government.

Our primary responsibility is to do what's right for *all* the citizens of this great Commonwealth.

Our obligation is *not* to perpetuate an ever-increasing and ever-growing government.

My fellow Virginians, our new vision of a leaner, more efficient government is achievable if we embrace the proven principles of the *private sector*.

That's why I began my government reform effort a year ago by creating a Blue Ribbon Strike Force that consisted mostly of leaders from *outside* of government. Some of their recommendations to increase efficiency, improve customer service, and reduce the cost of state government will come before the General Assembly this Session.

For example, last summer, my Administration consolidated certain functions at the Cabinet level, thereby reducing widespread duplication of those functions in the various agencies. As a result of this action and other streamlining efforts, my Cabinet Secretaries were able to *eliminate 14 positions for every new one they created*.

For some reason, some in the General Assembly are *opposed* to this common sense, cost-saving consolidation.

Recent restructuring efforts by our state colleges and universities are another example of increased efficiency. By reducing overhead and eliminating low-priority programs, our public institutions of higher education can hold the line against steep tuition hikes. And we can *improve* the overall quality of education provided to students.

My budget proposals also authorize a 2.25 percent salary increase -- and up to a 4.55 percent one-time performance bonus -- for all State employees. But we have funded these increases with existing agency resources, so our employees will become *active partners* in our efforts to identify inefficiencies and control costs in state government -- because they now have an incentive to do so and will be rewarded for looking out for *you*, the owners of Virginia's government.

In transportation, I am committed to protecting the integrity of the transportation trust funds and ensuring that we invest wisely to meet the mobility needs of a vigorous and growing Virginia. In fact, our budget initiatives make \$86 million in additional funding available for actual construction needs. The funds were generated -- not by jacking up gas taxes -- but by increased economic activity and through our streamlining and cost-cutting efforts.

We can significantly *supplement* these public resources with private investment. And I urge the General Assembly to adopt the bipartisan legislation that we have developed during the past year for public-private transportation projects.

Most of all, it's time to look to the private sector for economic development and job creation.

For the *first time* in years, our Commonwealth now has a comprehensive economic development strategy. It reflects the combined wisdom, not just of a few government planners in Richmond, but of over 800 business men and women, and community and local government leaders from across Virginia. These dedicated citizens helped us develop our *Opportunity Virginia* initiative.

We *can* make Virginia a leader again in the competition for new jobs. We can do it by re-focusing our economic development resources and using them in partnership with the private sector, by unshackling free enterprise and insisting on regulatory policies based on sound science, and by leaving \$2.1 billion in the private sector. We *can* make Virginia a great place to invest, do business and create jobs.

A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCALITIES

As we embrace the people's vision of leaner, more efficient and more accountable government at all levels, we must forge a new partnership between the state and local governments in Virginia.

Before I became Governor, unfunded mandates on localities were commonplace. To change that, I said that I would veto any unfunded mandates the Legislature sent me. That's what I did. And I am prepared to follow through on that commitment again this year.

Despite the imperative of downsizing state government and meeting our citizens' demands for tax and spending reductions, my budget proposals provide more than a *13 percent increase* in state aid to localities over this biennium.

And I propose to eliminate the job-killing gross receipts tax, *not* by leaving localities high and dry, but by cutting state spending in order to provide replacement revenue. This commitment extends to each of the budgets I will submit as Governor.

And, as I have stated before, if the General Assembly sends me a reasonable bill that continues replacement funding for the gross receipts tax beyond the next five years, I will be pleased to sign it.

When it comes to the state and local relationship, I am not interested in *burden-shifting*. I am committed to *cost-savings*.

I am not interested in *switching* taxes. I'm committed to *cutting* taxes!

The new partnership I envision is one in which local governments are free from unfunded mandates and share equitably in available revenues so they, too, can focus on the people's priorities, reduce the size and cost of government, and work for a thriving and prosperous economy.

FROM WELFARE TO WORK

Along with cutting taxes and reducing spending, there are other essential building blocks in the solid foundation for our new era of freedom, opportunity and responsibility in Virginia.

One is welfare reform.

The Report of my Commission on Citizen Empowerment is clear: Our current system of welfare in Virginia is an undeniable failure.

Instead of creating opportunity, it fosters dependency.

Instead of helping more Virginians enter productive jobs, it entices more Virginians to remain idle and rely on government.

Instead of strengthening families, it breaks families apart.

It takes more and more away from working taxpayers. And, at the same time, it teaches us to expect less and less of the institutions that traditionally have held communities together – families, churches, synagogues, charitable and civic organizations and citizen volunteers.

The welfare reform legislation I will submit this Session reflects our new vision of *opportunity and independence*.

It is a comprehensive, statewide plan to replace welfare with work. Able-bodied citizens will no longer receive benefits unless they are willing to work for them.

And even this assistance will be temporary. Since the objective is independence, our new program is designed to get people *off* of the welfare rolls and *into* productive, private sector jobs. The only way to make that happen is to place a limit – and I propose a two-year limit – on welfare benefits for able-bodied recipients.

I am well aware that there are those who are physically and mentally unable to provide for themselves for reasons beyond their control. And we will certainly continue to make government assistance available to them.

But we must reject the misguided notion that it is somehow compassionate for government to *do for people* what they are capable of *doing for themselves*.

Personal responsibility. Self-reliance. Individual initiative. These are the common sense, principled ideas that guide our welfare reform proposals – common sense, yet revolutionary ideas at this moment in time because a completely different vision has guided our social welfare policies for far too long.

RENEWING THE VOLUNTEER SPIRIT

We must understand that government is only part – and, in truth, only a small part – of the real solution to our social needs.

Before big government made us dependent on its largesse, there were strong private institutions that assumed responsibility for addressing these needs.

One leader in the fight to re-energize these institutions, to restore our sense of community, and to rekindle our spirit of volunteerism is Richmond Mayor, Lee Young. In this capital city wracked by violence, he has challenged citizens to stop pointing fingers and start investing themselves in the renewal of their community – and not as subservient taxpayers, but as free citizens united for the common good. The response has been tremendous.

I am especially pleased that Mayor Young and Anna Lee of Fairfax County have agreed to lead our *statewide* effort – known as “Volunteer Virginia” – to enlist our citizens in improving their communities and helping those in need. I know Virginians will respond.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

As we seek a renewal of private action to improve our communities, we also must change the way government treats the most important private institution – the *family*.

I have already discussed our most urgent task: We must relieve the financial pressures on working Virginia families by reducing the tax burden on those who are raising children.

But there is more to it than that. When government policies are designed around the assumption that parents will *not* be responsible, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. We must recognize that parents have the *right* – and the *responsibility* – to guide the development of their children.

In this Session of the General Assembly –

- I will propose measures to strengthen our ability to establish paternity and enforce child support obligations. Specifically, I propose to: deprive “dead-beat” fathers of their driving privileges, except to work; and, hold parents of fathers under 18 financially liable for child support, if the minor father is unable to meet his obligation.
- I will ask the Legislature to promote parental involvement in the sensitive decisions about abortion and sex education for minors.
- And I will seek legislation requiring young welfare recipients to live with a parent or legal guardian as a condition of receiving temporary assistance.

The decline of the family has many devastating consequences, but none is more alarming than the rapid growth in *juvenile crime*. We must meet this challenge squarely, with compassion, but also with firm resolve.

During the coming year, Attorney General Jim Gilmore will, at my request, chair a gubernatorial commission that will address the pressing problem of increased juvenile crime and offer specific solutions.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Our hope for the future lies in strong families. It also lies in *quality education*.

I firmly believe that more decisions about education must be made at the community level, where parents have an effective voice in the decisions that affect the schooling of *their* children.

In the past, state education policies have saddled local governments with unfunded mandates, empowered the bureaucracy here in Richmond, and focused on social consultant fads rather than on basic, academic fundamentals.

Today, the most essential reform needed in public education is a return to *high academic standards* in the basics of English, science, math and history.

In less than three weeks, my Superintendent of Public Instruction, will present to the State Board of Education a comprehensive revision of the Standards of Learning. These rigorous academic standards have been developed through unprecedented cooperation between local public school teachers, state officials, and the diverse and dedicated citizens serving on my Champion Schools Commission.

This is the first step in a process that will give these high academic standards the force of regulations. It will measure student performance against these standards through regular testing and provide a meaningful system of accountability and accreditation based on academic achievement.

I also will ask the General Assembly to embrace the charter school concept.

Charter schools are *public* schools.

Charter schools encourage creativity and competition *within* the public school system by empowering local school boards to contract with anyone, from teachers, to nearby colleges, to businesses -- all to improve the academic proficiency of students.

As I see it, charter schools are an additional tool for use by local communities, *not* something to be imposed from Richmond. Therefore, my legislation will ensure that charter-granting decisions must have local support and that the State Board of Education *cannot* override a local decision.

I also will propose that we make statutory – and therefore permanent – the program of targeted aid to at-risk students in the “disparity” plan that we began last year. However, this program will be *incentive-based*, and not another unfunded mandate on our local public school systems like the bills I was forced to veto last year.

Finally, it accomplishes very little to talk about high academic standards when fear stalks our schools, and teachers spend valuable class time dealing with disruptive students.

It is high time to empower our dedicated and conscientious teachers, and to help them take charge of their classrooms without fear of reprisal or lawsuits. Therefore, I will submit legislation to grant teachers immunity from liability for the reasonable actions they may take to discipline or assist students, and maintain order in their classrooms.

Taken together, and considered in light of the overall increase in education spending budgeted for this biennium, our education initiatives reflect a *new vision* of academic excellence, accountability, parental involvement, community control, safety, and a solid commitment to our dedicated teachers.

These initiatives offer hope for *real* educational improvement after years of high-cost experimentation and unfulfilled promises.

REBIRTH OF FEDERALISM

Just as we seek to empower parents and local communities through education and other reforms, so, too, must we insist on the *decentralization of power from Washington*.

Our goal is to bring government closer to the people. And, in pursuing this objective, nothing could be more encouraging than the spirit of change sweeping the new Congress.

For the first time in our lifetimes, there is not only the possibility, but the promise, that pestering federal interference and federal mandates on state and local governments will be pared back and, in some cases, eliminated altogether.

Of course, we cannot stand by and wait for this change. We must defend Virginian's rights and prerogatives. That's exactly what Attorney General Gilmore and I did on Monday, when we went to court to challenge the constitutionality of the burdensome dictates of the Environmental Protection Agency.

But the good news is that we are no longer in this battle alone.

In November, I hosted a *second* revolutionary gathering in Colonial Williamsburg. There, a majority of the Nation's governors gathered, and we invited the newly elected congressional leadership to join us. Together, we are charting a new direction for our country – *away* from the failed approach of centralized power in Washington, and *back* to the founders' design of a true federal system of shared powers and dual sovereignty.

What this can mean for us here in Virginia is nothing less than a *rebirth of freedom* – a chance to chart our own course as a free Commonwealth – a chance for our citizens to control their own destiny by making decisions at the community level.

I call on the General Assembly to seize this unique opportunity and issue a ringing bipartisan endorsement of this new vision of federalism and self-determination, including participation in the historic Conference of the States to be held later this year.

Let us join together, as Virginians did two centuries ago, and lead the way to federal constitutional reforms that truly can make freedom the lasting legacy of our land.

TRUSTING THE PEOPLE

These times of change also challenge us to reform our own fundamental law – our constitutional charter – so that *you* have a direct voice in the management of *your* affairs at the state level.

If the General Assembly *truly* embraces this new vision of freedom – if they trust the people *as I do* – then they *must* understand that initiative and referendum is an idea whose time has come. It is high time to give Virginians this basic right to direct the course of *their* government.

And while we are on the subject of referenda, let me reiterate my support for a general obligation bond issue this fall to address prison construction needs associated with the abolition of parole.

Certain capital projects *unrelated* to the impact of our truth-in-sentencing legislation require immediate action. However, we *can* – and I believe we *should* – give the people of Virginia an opportunity to vote this November on the financing of the long-term prison construction program necessitated by parole abolition.

MAKING PROGRESS TOGETHER

My fellow Virginians, we have many challenges before us. Some will say we cannot meet them in a bipartisan fashion. But I know we can.

Some said we could not abolish our lenient, deceitful parole system and bring truth-in-sentencing to Virginia. But we did.

Some said we could not achieve a fair and equitable settlement of the longstanding tax dispute with federal retirees. But we did.

Some said we could not increase funding for the education of at-risk students without forcing an unfunded mandate on localities. But we did.

We also worked together and succeeded in strengthening our ethics laws and removing the cloud over the Virginia Retirement System.

And we helped make college education more affordable for more Virginia families by holding tuition growth to the rate of inflation – about 3 percent.

Few thought we could compile such a *remarkable record of accomplishment*. But we worked together and we achieved much.

We must now turn in that same cooperative spirit to the important issues that will be placed before the Legislature this Session.

In preparing this budget, I had to make many tough decisions and hard choices.

Now it is time for members of the General Assembly to choose – the stultifying status quo, or an invigorating new era of freedom, opportunity and responsibility for you, the people of Virginia.

Already some are saying we cannot embark on such a journey. But you – the people of Virginia – have set our compass. You want us to succeed. And you say, "*We can and we must!*"

CONCLUSION

All of these changes will require *vision* and *courage*.

I know it is not easy for some politicians to listen to the demands of special interest groups and even some well-meaning citizens who are just absolutely convinced that, while all *those other* programs are wasteful, their project is absolutely *essential*.

But there is a choice to make. The road before us diverges.

Like Frost's traveler, we can see one path that is well-traveled and easily followed. But it disappears into a dark thicket of disappointment and dependency.

The other path is less traveled. But it leads us out of the dull shadows of mediocrity and into the bright sunshine of boundless horizons and limitless possibility.

Let us set about this course of reform with *character, courage* and *resolve*.

Sometimes, when I listen to political figures talk boldly about reform and then retreat under fire from the entrenched special interests, I am reminded of the Union commander, George Stedman, who reportedly told his troops:

"Men, I want you to stand and fight vigorously
and then *run!*"

Well, let me tell you all something – *I am not going to run!*

I made my decision a year ago, when the people of Virginia gave me their trust, that I was going to fight – and *keep fighting* – for the changes I promised you and the principles in which I believe.

I ask *you* to stand and fight along side of me.

Fight for the honest change that you have demanded.

Fight for the right of people who work hard and play by the rules to keep more of what they have earned, and to raise your families as you see fit.

Fight for a new vision that empowers citizens to take care of themselves and help others.

Fight for the values and principles that have made us the most free and most hopeful people in the world.

That's the real Virginia way. Our proud heritage is *leadership*. So let us in government, therefore, rise above partisanship, special interests and politics-as-usual.

With faith in ourselves, faith in each other, and faith in our Creator, let us now strive for something *better*.

For a change, let government do *not* what is *convenient* for government.

Let government *do* what is *right* for you – the taxpayers of Virginia.

Thank you, and have a good evening.

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