

**REMARKS BY GOVERNOR ALLEN**

**STATE OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH ADDRESS**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



**SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 1**

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
RICHMOND  
1996**





# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

*Office of the Governor*

George Allen  
Governor

**REMARKS BY GOVERNOR GEORGE ALLEN**

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VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA**

**STATE CAPITOL  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA**

**JANUARY 10, 1996**

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Mr. President Pro Tem, Members of the General Assembly, my fellow Virginians: Thank you all for that very warm greeting. I appreciate it very much.

In Virginia, we love tradition, and it is good to be back in this historic chamber to address you and the people of Virginia on this opening day of the new session.

Another particularly loving tradition of Virginians is unselfishly helping others, especially in times of emergency.

During this current crisis -- the Blizzard of 1996 -- many volunteers and dedicated state employees have been working feverishly to clear roads and transport those in danger and need. One dedicated state employee sadly made the ultimate sacrifice in this current state of emergency. Minter Ramsburg, a Virginia Department of Transportation Construction Inspector in Caroline County, had just finished an exhausting marathon 12-hour shift battling the recent blizzard. While driving home, his vehicle stalled out. He then set out on foot. While trudging along through the deep and blowing snow, he suffered a fatal heart attack. Mr. Ramsburg left behind a loving wife, Carol, and a daughter, Donna.

Tonight, Minter Ramsburg's family is certainly in our thoughts and in our prayers, as are all those courageous and dedicated state employees and men and women volunteers who are working to ensure the safety of their fellow Virginians and visitors to our great Commonwealth.

Such heroic acts of public service are the essence of Virginia's character. It is during the most trying times that the character of a person and a community is revealed most clearly.

So to all state and local personnel, fire and rescue squads, volunteers, contractors, law enforcement professionals, and all those who have lent a helping hand to their neighbors in need, whether in last year's floods, fires and drought, in this blizzard, or in other daily emergencies, on behalf of all grateful Virginians, I know you join me in thanking them all so very much.

## **CONDITION OF THE COMMONWEALTH AT MIDTERM**

Ladies and gentlemen, we meet this evening to consider the overall condition of our Commonwealth. And I am pleased to report that it is *healthy*, *strong* and *improving*.

Today, Virginia is a safer place; a more prosperous place; and a better place to find a job, to live and raise a family.

All around we see signs of a *Virginia Renaissance* -- a renaissance of expanding freedom, opportunity, and personal responsibility for all our citizens.

Virginians look to the future, not with fear, but hope -- not with satisfaction over the way things *are*, but with anticipation of what they *can become*.

More than in any state in the union, we are preparing vigorously to meet the challenges of the 21st century -- challenges to both our competitiveness and our character.

And we are poised to succeed.

## **TOGETHER, WE HAVE MADE LANDMARK ACHIEVEMENTS**

With your support, I have been able to keep the promises I made to the people of Virginia two years ago, when they gave me the honor and responsibility of serving as their Governor.

The citizens of our Commonwealth are the *owners* of this Virginia government. They rightfully expect rational scrutiny of all government expenditures, accountability and measurements to determine success.

And there are many successes that, working together in a bipartisan spirit, we have achieved for Virginians.

So let us check on what has been accomplished so far.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY: CRIME RATES FALLING**

When violent criminals threatened the quality of life in Virginia, we responded by adopting a comprehensive revision of the criminal sentencing laws -- the most sweeping changes ever made in our justice system.

We adopted bifurcated jury trials, so that juries now know the prior records of the convicted criminals they sentence.

We cracked down on drunk drivers, and on sex offenders, and we dramatically increased the prison time served by all violent criminals, especially repeat offenders.

Most important, we abolished Virginia's lenient and dishonest parole laws, and replaced them with a system based on truth and justice for crime victims, law enforcement professionals, and law-abiding citizens.

We rejected the excuses of the criminal apologists, and stood up for the basic principle that people must be held *accountable* and *responsible* for their actions.

Convicted violent criminals now are staying behind bars and out of our communities. And the results are good.

The sharp *increases* in violent crime earlier in this decade have been replaced by falling violent crime rates throughout Virginia. Because we took this principled stand, Virginians today are safer and more free from crime, violence and the fear they breed than at any time in our recent past.

## **WELFARE REFORM: SAVINGS FOR TAXPAYERS**

We also fundamentally transformed Virginia's failed welfare system.

Last year, you joined me in adopting the most comprehensive, principled, pro-work and pro-family welfare reform legislation in the country. In addition to requiring able-bodied Virginians to work in exchange for their benefits, we acted to enforce the establishment of paternity and to make fathers meet their child support obligations.

Today, Republicans and Democrats alike are pointing to Virginia as proof that the people of the states can be trusted to reform welfare in a way that both provides for the truly needy and promotes the work ethic, independence and personal responsibility.

Our far-reaching reforms are now being implemented. And, already, there has been almost a 10 percent reduction in the welfare rolls statewide. The first taxpayer savings from these reforms is reflected in the new budget that I presented last month.

Child support enforcement also is improving, and that strengthens families by making deadbeat, absentee parents meet, at least, their financial responsibilities to their children. Not only is this positive reform saving taxpayers money, but it is freeing many children from the prospect of lives of poverty and dependency.

The declining welfare caseloads and reduced costs to taxpayers, however, tell only part of the story. The *real* success of welfare reform is measured, not just in dollars or caseloads, but in the renewal of the human spirit.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A LEADER IN THE CREATION OF NEW JOBS**

As you well know, I have made creating more and better jobs in the private sector the number-one claim on my time as your Governor. The time, energy, innovation and efforts we have invested in economic development have sent a very clear message that Virginia, indeed, is open for business!

In past sessions, you approved my requests for significant job-creating tax and regulatory reforms, including:

- the major business facility tax credit;
- a dramatic expansion and enhancement of the enterprise zone program, where lower taxes mean more investments and more job opportunities; and
- to regulate the regulators, now before a new regulation can be imposed, not only must they account for the impact on rodents and insects, but they also must consider the impact on people, their property and their jobs.

The overall results have been more jobs and more investments from new and existing enterprises.

Today, Virginia has catapulted to the forefront nationally in economic development. We are becoming known as the "Silicon Dominion," and Virginia's economy is positioned to take off as the high-tech revolution expands throughout the world.

Of course, the most notable successes have been the Motorola and IBM/Toshiba semiconductor manufacturing projects, along with Gateway 2000 computers. These projects, alone, will create 10,000 direct new jobs.

But the economic development and job creation gains of our first two years have been far more impressive and broad-based than that. We attracted a record \$1.9 billion in new investments in 1994 that helped create 87,200 net new jobs all across Virginia. And without a doubt, our successes in 1995 mean that the last 12 months will go down in history as a record-shattering year for new investments which create new jobs and more opportunities for Virginians.

## EDUCATION REFORM: STANDARDS ADOPTED, TUITION CAPPED

A fourth area in which we have made some progress in the last two years -- but where much work remains -- is in improving and seriously reforming our educational system for our young people. As a candidate for governor, I made it clear that my top priority in education would be to raise academic standards in the basic subjects, and then test students regularly to make certain they actually learn core subjects.

Last summer, after working with my Champion Schools Commission, parents, and the educational community for more than a year, the bipartisan State Board of Education unanimously approved new, high academic standards in math, science, English, and history.

In higher education, too, we achieved positive change together, though considerable work remains.

When I entered office in 1994, skyrocketing tuition increases -- averaging 12 percent each year -- were threatening to place a college education beyond the reach of most students and families except those of the wealthy elite. To halt this damaging trend, we worked to enforce streamlining and cap and limit tuition increases.

As a result, for the last two years, tuition for Virginia college students rose at an annual rate of just 2.8 percent -- below the rate of inflation.

At the same time, through restructuring, our state colleges and universities have begun to eliminate waste and bureaucracy, as well as allocate more resources to academic programs that fulfill the core educational mission for their customers, the students.

## GOVERNMENT REFORM: ACCOUNTABILITY AND SAVINGS

Finally, in evaluating the condition of our Commonwealth and the progress we have made, there is the operation of state government.

Two years ago, you joined me in adopting reforms that strengthened our ethics laws and ensured that the Virginia Retirement System is managed with the utmost competence and integrity.

Today, Virginia government is leaner, more efficient and less costly to working families. *Fewer* tax dollars today are going to pay for bureaucracy and *more* are being devoted to priority needs in education, public safety, and other essential services.

In all, we have reduced the size of state government by about 9,000 full-time equivalent positions during the past two years.

We also have sought to transfer government functions to the private sector whenever economically feasible. Where necessary activities can be performed effectively by persons employed in the private sector, rather than by government, it makes sense to do so.

Our progress on all of these fronts has been achieved while preserving and enhancing Virginia's national reputation for fiscal integrity -- a reputation that has earned us one of the few triple, "AAA" bond ratings in the country.

At the same time, we have managed to provide significant tax relief for the people of Virginia. Our actions to date have reduced taxes by \$136 million, and another \$232 million in tax relief will take effect during the next two years. This includes the repeal of the tax on Social Security and other tax law changes benefiting senior citizens.

Perhaps our most important achievement regarding state finances, however, was the positive action we took to avert the fiscal calamity of an immediate obligation to pay \$800 million for Virginia's wrongful taxation of federal retirees.

Through the able efforts of Attorney General Jim Gilmore, Delegate Dick Cranwell, and many others, we were able to achieve a settlement that is fair and equitable for the federal retirees and all Virginia taxpayers.

## **PREPARING VIRGINIA FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

Ladies and gentlemen, I have taken the time this evening to highlight this remarkable record of achievements in so many areas of vital importance to Virginians because there is a tendency in politics to focus only on the negative.

If we fail to recognize the sweeping changes and improvements we have accomplished together, we may overlook the tremendous opportunities that lie ahead of us.

We have the ability to launch Virginia into the 21st century as a top competitor and an international leader -- to place our Commonwealth on the cutting edge of advancing technology and economic expansion.

And we have the ability to ensure that our budding Virginia Renaissance is a renaissance of the spirit as well as the pocketbook -- a renaissance not only of material prosperity, but also of renewed values and shared ideals.

As we prepare for the dawn of the next century, we face a two-fold challenge:

- 1) To make real for Virginians the opportunity to compete effectively for the unparalleled economic possibilities that this dynamic new era will bring; and
- 2) To sustain and build upon Virginia's unique heritage, and preserve the special character of our people, as seen in strong families, cohesive communities, and unselfish service to others.

We must apply Virginia's traditional values and foundational principles creatively to realize the momentous opportunities of these exciting new times.



Let us, then, look to the future, and consider ways that we can work together to enhance the competitiveness and preserve the character of our Commonwealth for the next generation of Virginians.

## **JOBS: ENSURING VIRGINIA'S COMPETITIVENESS**

Focusing first on competitiveness, let me emphasize the importance of the performance grant legislation I will be submitting for the Motorola project in central Virginia and the IBM/Toshiba project in northern Virginia.

These two projects will create nearly 10,000 new, direct, high-paying manufacturing jobs for Virginians. To put that in perspective, even during the high-growth decade of the 1980s, Virginia actually suffered a net loss of 10,000 manufacturing jobs. With these two projects alone, we will completely reverse a decade's worth of manufacturing job losses.

Under the performance grant legislation I will propose, Virginians will realize tangible economic benefits from the Motorola and IBM/Toshiba investments before any incentives are paid out.

This performance-based approach, which we have pioneered, is blazing new trails, and has received top honors from *Business Facilities* magazine, a leading national economic development publication.

I will ask you to take a number of other specific actions this session to improve Virginia's economic competitiveness.

For example, I will submit legislation transferring all of the state's economic development, export and tourism marketing efforts to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. These actions promise dividends for Virginians by making sure there is continuity in our economic development efforts and by helping us seize opportunities and achieve our long-range economic goals even more jobs and investments here in Virginia.

The budget I have presented also provides increased resources for the Economic Opportunity Fund, which we have used to close deals for more than 70 major plant openings and expansions all around Virginia

For example, in far southwest Virginia -- from Lee County in the Cumberland Gap to Wythe County, and not even including the New River Valley -- this Fund already has been instrumental in securing investments valued at \$340 million, which have created more than 3,700 new jobs during the past two years.

In Southside Virginia -- from Martinsville and Danville, to Farmville and Greensville, and not including the Lynchburg Region 2000 area -- the Fund already has helped bring \$270 million in new investment, representing nearly 4,800 new jobs.

But, my friends, the *true* impact of these new jobs and new investments is far deeper and more personal. In each one of these situations, you meet people. I remember welcoming Bacova Guild, Ltd. to Alleghany County. It was the biggest investment made in that area this century.

There were a lot of young people, older folks and high school students there. One mother came up to me and told me what this meant to her. She said it means something very important for her two high school children. It means that they won't have to go somewhere else to get a job. It means they will be able to have a job here and stay in this community with their family, roots and heritage. *That's* what our economic development efforts are all about.

You also see it at the UPS and MCI investment announcements where new companies take over places in shopping centers that had been closed down for years. You see a new vitality in the community, and in the opportunities and hope that come for that area.

You see it in each and every one of those instances, even at the Galileo Electro-Optics facility. There was a place that had sat empty for three years, until a new Barr Laboratories came to Bedford County. You see that as really giving a great boost and a real shot in the arm to those communities.

So that is the *true* impact of these economic development opportunities and successes for the people of Virginia.

I also am recommending specific improvements in the enterprise zone and solar photovoltaic grant programs. These changes will have an immediate positive impact on new investments and job creation in Tidewater and central Virginia.

As we have addressed economic development needs on a regional basis throughout Virginia, it has become apparent that regional cooperation can be an important factor in securing major new investments.

For that reason, I will ask you this session to approve legislation enabling localities to enter into agreements for regional development and sharing of revenues generated by regionally beneficial economic development projects.

My friends, tax credits, performance-based grants, and other incentives for economic development have their place; indeed, they are a practical necessity in today's competitive environment. But, ultimately, there is no substitute for a healthy business environment that includes a strong Right-to-Work Law, low taxes, a restrained and balanced approach to regulation, and our best asset of all, the dedicated, skilled and hard-working people of Virginia.

When it comes to taxes specifically, I recognize that there is a legitimate debate over how large a share of a person's hard-earned income should be transferred to the government to address public needs. This debate, which is older even than our Republic, was renewed in Virginia last year. In the climate of an election year, that debate became harsh and negative. But it does not have to be that way.

I remain committed to lowering the tax burden on our citizens, especially Virginia's working individuals and families. For them, the personal and dependent exemption under our state income tax is still the second worst in the nation.

I also remain convinced that we cannot sit back in satisfied complacency and dwell on Virginia's historically advantageous situation, especially not when our neighboring states to the north and to the south are cutting their taxes in an effort to lure jobs and income away from hard-working Virginians.

The economic competition of the future will be fierce. But folks, let me tell you, *the future is now!* That is why we must be willing to change, adapt, innovate and improve.

I believe that we can come together behind a responsible plan to increase Virginia's competitiveness by reforming our tax structure and reducing the tax burden on working Virginians.

To take the politics out of this issue and move us forward toward a bipartisan consensus, I have asked Senator Walter Stosch and Delegate Alan Diamonstein to chair a new Governor's Commission on Competitive Tax Policy. The commission will have balanced partisan representation, and will be given free rein to recommend budgetary reforms and tax improvements that can help make Virginia an even more effective economic competitor.

In the meantime, I believe a consensus is already within reach on legislation to minimize the anti-competitive impact of the Business, Profession and Occupational License Tax, or "BPOL."

Working with Delegate David Brickley, who has been leading the BPOL reform and roll-back effort in the General Assembly, we have reached an agreement on legislation that will do several very positive things. It will make BPOL levies consistent and fairly applied across the Commonwealth. It will clarify and minimize the impact on manufacturers. It will exempt venture capital firms, and provide relief to software producers. And it will exclude all small businesses with gross receipts of less than \$100,000 from paying any BPOL tax at all.

These changes will eliminate approximately half of all current BPOL taxpayers from the tax rolls, and will provide much-needed tax relief for those new and struggling small business men and women for whom the tax is most destructive and unfair.

Reforming this gross receipts tax will make Virginia a more fertile ground for entrepreneurs with good ideas and the courage to take risks. And I hope you will pass it this session without rancor.

Now, increased entrepreneurship and homeownership also are essential to the revitalization of distressed communities. Viable neighborhoods cannot be created from the outside. Instead, people must acquire the tools to take effective control of their own lives, and the destiny of their families and communities.

Thus, I trust you will support my proposal to empower low-income families by creating the Virginia Family Savings Account. Among other things, this new initiative will exempt from state income taxes the interest earned on up to \$10,000 in personal savings if the funds are used for the purpose of education, starting up a business or buying a home.

## **EDUCATION: MEASURING THE RESULTS OF OUR INVESTMENT**

Let us now turn to the issues of our children's education.

Here, it is absolutely essential that we *link* our increasing education investment with genuine reform and accountability. In virtually every other area, we can point to *tangible, measurable progress* from our efforts -- from falling crime rates, to lower welfare rolls, to major new economic investments and the creation of tens of thousands of new, well-paying jobs for Virginia citizens.

In education, however, Virginia government has added billions in new tax dollars on a bipartisan basis over the last 15 years. And while there is much positive to say about our schools, we cannot point to measurable evidence of improvement from our investment. Instead, student test scores have remained generally static and have even declined over this period.

I have a chart here that makes it very simple to understand, I would think.

Now, let's look at the record. The amount of state tax dollars spent per pupil has increased 218 percent from 1980 to 1994. Yet, it seems no matter how many more billions that we spend on education, we see that the test scores remain relatively flat. No noticeable improvement.

The need for accountability in education has never been more urgent.

That is why the most important of my education recommendations is the implementation of new high academic standards in the basics of English, math, science and history, and the regular testing of students to make certain they and their schools are performing up to those standards. Then, these test results will be made available to students, parents, teachers, and all local citizens in school performance report cards.

I know there are some who may resist this sound approach to bring accountability to public education in Virginia. Our former colleague, Senator Jim Jones, has ably led the Board of Education's bipartisan effort to establish these new high academic standards. He recently wrote:

“Certainly there are many in the education establishment who do not want Virginia's schools subject to the accountability inherent in statewide academic standards. They prefer the current system, in which comparisons are difficult to make and an ‘A’ in algebra may represent a considerably different level of achievement in different [schools and classrooms].

Senator Jones continued,

Those who want no changes in the way schools do business will urge [members of the General Assembly] to concentrate on simply providing more money to schools and not to support the other half of the equation the public wants. [He cautions that the General Assembly] ought to resist that advice . . . . Raising academic standards for all children is one good idea whose time has come.”

I could not have expressed those sentiments any better or agree any more. And I appreciate those, like Lieutenant Governor Don Beyer, who have stepped forward to support my budget proposal for a comprehensive biennial testing program tied to these new high academic standards.

This increase in accountability is an essential part of the major new investment that I have recommend in elementary and secondary education -- all together, more than \$500 million in increased resources.

Ladies and gentlemen, the time for action is now. We cannot afford to let down another generation of Virginia school children.

I do not know about you, but when I look into the eyes of a young kid, especially a child in elementary school, my heart melts. Those eyes are eager, innocent and shining. They reflect a trust. They also reflect hope. And they reflect a world of knowledge just waiting to be discovered.

But we do no service for our children when we just throw money at their education. Spending money is easy. But, my friends, insisting on accountability takes courage and vision.

Accountability is what is lacking in our schools today, and providing it will be the true test of leadership in education this session.

We also need to take decisive action to return discipline and safety to our schools.

Our hard-working teachers should not be hit with frivolous lawsuits for trying to maintain order in our schools. Thus, I again propose to give our school teachers statutory immunity from lawsuits when they act in good faith to discipline students and control their classrooms. But, this year, I hope the House of Delegates will join the Senate and approve this sensible measure.

In addition, my budget recommendations include, for the first time ever, funding to provide civil liability insurance to every public school teacher in Virginia.

Together, these measures will say to Virginia school teachers: "We stand with you 100 percent in your efforts to maintain orderly classrooms in which students can learn."

Fulfilling a commitment that I made long ago to the people of Virginia, my budget shares lottery profits with localities.

I have earmarked these funds for a genuine increase in overall spending for local education. What I propose is a flexible block grant that can be used by localities to reduce class size, defray school construction costs, increase teacher compensation, enhance school safety or address other education priorities identified by the school officials, parents, elected leaders, and citizens in each local community.

And, while we are on the subject of local flexibility, I want to applaud the efforts of Delegates Paul Councill, Phil Hamilton, and others who have taken the politics of fear out of the charter school issue over the past year and have crafted an excellent charter school bill that deserves broad, bipartisan support.

Ladies and gentlemen, Virginia is well on its way to national leadership in the *manufacture* of advanced technology.

Now is the time for us also to take the lead in the *use* of advanced technology to help young people learn.

As you know, I have proposed a \$125 million investment in classroom technology in this biennium -- the first installment in a multi-year effort to support the acquisition of classroom computers, networking systems, and instructional equipment related to the new standards of learning for science and math.

This technology eventually will connect students and faculty in all of our local schools and institutions of higher education to the rapidly expanding information highway. Interactive "distance learning" made possible by advanced technologies will bring a positive return on our investments. I also envision it helping us reduce disparities in educational opportunities for our school children, especially in smaller rural areas and core urban areas.

Turning to higher education, we also must sustain our recent progress toward greater affordability for all deserving and qualified Virginia students.

My budget continues my early efforts to hold the line against tuition increases for Virginia students. And I encourage you to approve my proposal for four-year tuition contracts, so that parents and students will know up-front what an undergraduate education will cost.

Our independent, private colleges also play a vital role in the diverse opportunities available to students in Virginia's higher education system. For students enrolled in these colleges, my budget recommendations include a significant increase in Tuition Assistance Grants, which are, essentially, vouchers for higher education.

To help ensure that Virginia is competitive nationally in attracting and retaining the best teachers, I also have recommended significant merit-based salary increases for faculty at our colleges and universities.

Altogether, my budget proposes to increase our investment in higher education by nearly \$350 million in additional funds and restructuring savings.

I realize that some think we should spend even hundreds of millions more. It reminds me of our daughter, Tyler's, Christmas list for Santa Claus.

She made a long list asking for all kinds of toys and things. Tyler is seven-years old, but she understands that Santa Claus cannot bring her everything she wants.

So I hope that those who incessantly criticize and demand more and more spending will understand that if Santa cannot meet all demands, neither can the taxpayers of Virginia.

Our common denominator in education, from kindergarten to graduate school, must be to link Virginia taxpayers' increased investment with measurable accountability and, most important of all, better academic quality and focus on the basics for our school children.

### **JUVENILE JUSTICE: REFORMING AND IMPROVING THE SYSTEM**

Now, despite our best efforts, some young people will go astray and will need special help to turn their lives around.

During the past year, my Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform, under the able leadership of Attorney General Gilmore, has developed sensible proposals to improve our juvenile justice system.

These proposals are balanced and address both the need to protect the public from violent juveniles, and the need to make our juvenile facilities places of reform and self-improvement rather than fear and despair.

During this same period, the Commission on Youth, led effectively by Delegate Jerrauld Jones, has developed other positive recommendations that are directed at many of the very same goals.

In the weeks ahead, I want to work with you to blend the best of these proposals into a package of broad-based, workable juvenile justice reforms.

Most important to me are these three elements:

- 1) First, we should ensure that there is available to each school system in Virginia a regional program of alternative education for chronically disruptive students.

This will provide a structured learning environment for the troubled youngsters, while assuring an orderly classroom environment for well-behaved students who want to learn.

- 2) Second, we should enhance the array of sentencing options available to juvenile court judges, and improve both the security and programming within our juvenile correctional facilities.

Both commissions have offered recommendations in this area, and there is much common ground. I particularly would like to see programs using military-school discipline and work experience implemented in our juvenile reform facilities.

- 3) And, third, for the protection of the public as well as the vast majority of young people in the juvenile justice system, we must move the hardened juvenile murderers, rapists and other especially violent criminals into secure and separate facilities within the Department of Corrections.

These vicious juvenile killers and rapists constitute a relatively small percentage of the inmates in our juvenile justice system, but they inflict a large amount of fear, violence and havoc on other incarcerated juveniles and on law-abiding citizens in our communities.

They are criminals who commit vicious adult crimes, and they should be tried and punished as adults.

Together, these and the related reforms you will consider this session constitute a balanced attack on what is perhaps the greatest single threat to our long-term safety and prosperity here in Virginia.

We cannot hope to have a commonwealth of opportunity for our citizens if we lose a whole generation of Virginians to drugs, crime, and violence in our schools and on our streets.

### **PRESERVING VIRGINIA'S CHARACTER**

Ladies and gentlemen, as we seek a future of opportunity for Virginia's next generation in the competitive world of today and tomorrow, let us also take care to preserve the special character of our Commonwealth and people.

Since the days when those hearty settlers first reached Jamestown in search of freedom and hope in a bountiful new land, we Virginians have been defined by our faith, our courage and our sense of family and community.

Our great legacy to our nation and the world is a legacy of liberty -- of free people exercising responsibility and charting their own course under the watchful eye of a loving God and with a helping hand from family, neighbors and friends.

Here in Virginia can be found the most creative, the most energetic, the most principled and generous people on the face of this earth.



We place too little faith in them when we refuse to trust them with the right of Initiative and Referendum.

We sell their judgment short -- and arrogantly exaggerate our own insight -- when we insist that the major decisions affecting their lives must be made by a centralized government in Richmond or in Washington.

And we ignore the wisdom of the ages and four centuries of successful family life in Virginia when we fail to trust parents with the upbringing of their children.

Parents *can* be trusted to make choices for their children in education.

Parents *should* have the right to know, and be involved, if their young daughter is undergoing the trauma of an abortion.

And the fundamental role of parents *ought* to be recognized in our fundamental law through a Parent's Rights Amendment to the state Constitution.

Here in Richmond and up in Washington, these struggles are being waged over cultural values. But rather than seeking to impose our values on others, we seek only the liberty to shape them for ourselves, in our families and in our communities, by the lights that guide our consciences, and the truthful lessons that light our paths.

In 1964, a man destined for greatness as President of the United States defined the issue of our age. This issue will lie just beneath the surface throughout this session, as you make many important decisions that will affect life in Virginia for years to come.

Ronald Reagan said in 1964:

"It's time we asked ourselves if we still know the freedoms intended for us by the Founding Fathers. . . . This idea that government was beholden to the people, that it had no other source of power, is still the newest, most unique idea in all the long history of man's relation to man. This is the issue . . . : Whether we believe in our capacity for self-government or whether we abandon the American Revolution and confess that a little intellectual elite in a far distant capital can plan our lives for us better than we can plan them for ourselves."

Today, in our nation's capital, the battle rages over whether the people of the 50 states will again be entrusted to chart their own future. And, here in this historic capital on the James, we, too, have great decisions to make.

Let us resolve in the days ahead to conduct ourselves, not as an all-knowing elite in a far distant capital, but as servants of decent and sensible people who rightly desire to choose their own way for themselves, their families and their communities.

## A VIRGINIA RENAISSANCE

Ladies and gentlemen, our duty is before us. In the coming days, each of us will work for our principles and ideas.

Jeffersonian conservative principles will guide my actions.

But whatever our differences may be, let us each fulfill our duty -- without regard to pride or petty political advantage -- to bring forth the full flowering of our *Virginia Renaissance*.

My friends, Virginia stands at the dawn of a new era, with more hope and promise even than in our glorious past. Truly, our best days are not 200 years ago; on the contrary, Virginia's best days lie ahead over boundless horizons.

So together, let us blaze a trail into the next millennium, certain that the principles that guided our courageous forebears still light our path today, and will show us the way to an even more prosperous and fulfilling tomorrows.

Thank you all so much, and may God continue to bless this beautiful, free and magnificent creation which we love as Virginia.

Thank you, and good evening.



