

**ADDRESS OF
GOVERNOR JAMES S. GILMORE, III**

**THE STATE OF THE
COMMONWEALTH ADDRESS 2000**



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James S. Gilmore, III
Governor

Remarks by Governor Jim Gilmore

The State of the Commonwealth Address 2000

"Leading in a Dynamic New Age"

January 12, 2000

Lieutenant Governor Hager, Attorney General Earley, Speaker Wilkins, President pro tempore Chichester, Members of the General Assembly, Chief Justice Caricco, Justices of the Supreme Court, colleagues in government, honored guests, my fellow Virginians:

We are the fortunate stewards of a government that affords the peaceful passage of power. The General Assembly has today seated the first Republican majority in the history of our Commonwealth. Congratulations to the members of both parties and chambers on a successful transition.

There is a lesson to be learned from this historic moment. Power is not permanent in a democracy. When the day is done, it matters less whether one party has a majority than whether we have created a better democracy for the people of this great Commonwealth. Virginia beholds an inclusive future with a new opportunity for real participation by all Senators and Delegates.

On New Year's Day, the First Lady and I invited all Virginians to visit the newly restored Executive Mansion. And my hand felt like they all came. The mansion has been restored to its original elegance, and is also an executive office and official residence. I believe we owe a debt of gratitude to Roxane and all of the team that restored this great legacy for the people of Virginia.

We begin the 21st century as a progressive and prosperous Commonwealth, poised to seize the boundless opportunities of a dynamic new age. Virginia is recapturing its rightful role as the leader of change in a changing world.

I'm pleased to report to you that the state of the Commonwealth is excellent and, in fact, has never been better. We will have sustained by next month the longest economic expansion in our history. More Virginians are employed now than ever before, and we've already created over 150 thousand new jobs during my administration. Welfare roles have dwindled to their lowest level since 1971. And 50 thousand more young people are earning a college degree than only two decades ago.

This prosperity is filling the Commonwealth's coffers with assets. My Secretary of Finance, Ron Tillett, estimates that the revenue of the state is up nearly 10% this year.

We are afforded an unprecedented opportunity to enhance the financial freedom of all Virginians. My administration is currently cutting sixteen taxes, including the phase-out of the car tax. The sales tax on food is also beginning to be reduced. And the income tax is being reduced on the wages of the soldiers and sailors who secure and defend our country. When all sixteen tax cuts are fully implemented, Virginians and their businesses will receive nearly \$1.6 billion in tax relief per year. And I assure you that the citizens of Virginia appreciate it, and many believe for the first time that someone in government remembered them.

But some in certain comfortable circles are calling for the undoing of our progress. They want government to not only spend every cent, but take more of the people's hard-earned money. In a system where government spending represents political power, there is no limit to spending. Restraint must come from within.

We must resist the temptation to incessantly increase taxes, which is typical of the old way of thinking. The financial struggles of everyday living are hard enough without the tax collector reaching deeper into people's pockets. Working men and women set priorities and make difficult spending decisions; we in government must do the same.

Does that require the sacrifice of our duty to be responsible stewards of the public good? Of course not. We can meet the obligations of a secure and humane society while still empowering the people with financial freedom. But government must be disciplined and acknowledge that we live in a time of change.

The people of Southside and Southwest Virginia know too much about living in a time of change. Already hurt by the collapse of tobacco prices and quotas and concerns about the future of the coal industry, many working men and women have also recently lost manufacturing jobs.

I announced last week the receipt of \$8.5 million to begin helping affected workers find jobs and return to a normal way of life. More must be done and will be done both with tobacco settlement money and other resources already available to the Commonwealth. I have proposed beginning education initiatives for the Southside and Southwest. And I have directed my Secretary of Commerce, Barry DuVal, to develop a comprehensive plan to recruit businesses and bring new jobs to these areas. We are a stronger Commonwealth with the success of Southside and Southwest Virginia.

But while we are working to revitalize our manufacturing and agriculture base, we must also be prepared to grasp other economic development opportunities afforded to us in the future.

Virginia is the Internet Capital of the World. Half of the world's Internet traffic travels through Virginia. Northern Virginia is one of the world's most wired regions. And information technology powerhouses, such as America Online, UUNet, PSINet, and Litton PRC make their home in Virginia.

The Internet is above all about freedom -- the freedom to compete, to prosper, to advance in a virtual and level environment, a more perfect marketplace for not only goods and services, but also ideas. No state is better equipped and more prepared to maximize the freedoms of the Internet than is Virginia. As I speak to you about various areas of government, I will show how we are using technology in Virginia today and also our plans for tomorrow.

But the potential of the Internet can only be achieved if every person is able to take full advantage of its opportunities. The more engrained the Internet becomes in our lives, the more important it will be for all Virginians to understand how to use it.

But the Digital Divide, which is being drawn between rich and poor, black and white and urban and rural, is separating our society between the technology "haves" and "have nots." My goal is for Virginia to do what no other state in the nation has done -- reach out and begin to close the Digital Divide. I am today pleased to announce several landmark initiatives in that effort.

First, through a unique public-private partnership, I have asked my Secretary of Technology, Don Upson, to take the lead in creating dozens of new Internet-ready computer centers across Virginia. These centers will give under-served youth both access to new technology and hands-on guidance on how to use it. In coordination with an innovative partnership called PowerUp, which includes more than a dozen nonprofit organizations, corporations and federal agencies, we will help ensure that Virginia's young people acquire the skills, experience and resources they need to succeed in the Internet Age.

Second, we must ensure that our schools are using these new technologies in the most effective manner to educate our children. Connecting a school to the Internet is meaningless if computers are visited and explored only on the occasional field trip from the classroom. It is not enough to wire our school buildings. We must also modernize our curriculum by helping our teachers integrate technology into the educational process.

That's why I am directing my Secretary of Education, Wil Bryant, to work with Virginia's high-tech businesses to develop a program that will find and recognize those teachers who have developed the best methods for using technology to enhance education. Within 90 days, the Secretary of Education will report back to me with a plan

focused on two areas -- highlighting our most innovative teachers and securing an improvement in educational results for our students.

But we must reach more than just our young people, we must bring our senior citizens, our single parents and all families onto the Internet and into our New Economy. I propose a new program called "Infopowering the Commonwealth" to place computers and hi-speed Internet access at every local library.

Additionally, I propose to use federal funds to provide training and education to help those on welfare to become part of our New Economy.

I want to ensure that our African-American citizens receive the skills and training necessary to participate in our economic prosperity.

I have asked the Secretary of Education to work with Norfolk State and Virginia State Universities - two of the nation's leading Historically Black Colleges and Universities - to partner with major high-tech companies in this state and develop a technology-focused curriculum that will give their students the skills they need to be hired at those companies. Through close partnerships with some of Virginia's largest high-tech firms, we will ensure that students who wish to work in this emerging industry are fully prepared to do so.

We can maximize the full potential of the Internet if access becomes more than a luxury exclusively for those who can afford it and those who already know how to use it ... if our schools bring computers not only into the classroom, but into the curriculum as well ... if our colleges provide the training to minority students they need to churn the engines of technological growth ... and if our government creates a new model of Internet-focused services for citizens and consumers.

In developing these and other initiatives, I am excited about the support our administration is receiving from Virginia's Internet pioneers. In particular, the planning support of America Online, a great Virginia company, and their chairman, Steve Case, has proven invaluable.

But I want to challenge every member of Virginia's high-tech community to step forward and make the commitment to help close the Digital Divide. The Internet Age is too promising in too many ways for anyone to be left behind. And with a new partnership of businesses, government, and the non-profit sector, we can work to ensure that all Virginians reap the fruits of this remarkable new medium.

The advent of the Internet offers a new opportunity and a new challenge to better educate and train our children.

More than four years ago, we began developing the Standards of Learning to ensure that our students have the basic knowledge, skills, and abilities to compete both in college and

in the workplace. Let me be clear -- we must not retreat from high academic standards. Our children are too important, too valuable, to give up on their futures.

Academic standards are about accountability. They were put in place because our schools were graduating children who couldn't read or write well enough to fill out job applications. Some students were passed from grade to grade based on age not knowledge. Parents and families began to demand more, and some began to lose faith in public education.

Now parents will know whether or not their children are being taught to read, write and do math and whether or not their children will be equipped to work in the New Economy we are creating. Our teachers, administrators, superintendents and schools can now be measured and held accountable by parents.

But we must keep providing schools and educators with the tools they need to help our children achieve greater heights. And I have budgeted over a half billion dollars in support to do so. The money will be used to supply teachers and students with the latest technologies, which will allow every high school to give tests on computers nearer to the end of the school year and enhance the opportunity for success.

Virginia's goal must be to ensure that every student is able to read at the end of the third grade. I propose hiring new teachers to expand our Early Reading Intervention program. And I also propose a new program to ensure that every student is skilled in mathematics by the eighth grade. These initiatives will help ensure that our children develop their skills so that they can have a life full of learning.

Finally, we are establishing special assistance teams to work with the schools that need our help the most. These teams will help identify the challenges that schools face and make specific recommendations to solve them.

A college education has helped me achieve my dreams. And I have an abiding belief that an opportunity for a college education should be available to all Virginians.

Last year, we made the affordability of a college education a top priority and cut tuition by 20 percent, while giving the colleges increased funding to compensate. But we must maintain our commitment to Virginia's parents and students. I will offer legislation to freeze tuition at our public colleges and universities for four years. This freeze is clearly making a difference for people. I remember the father with three daughters in colleges, and the single working mother struggling to keep her son on the path of success.

While making our colleges and universities more affordable, we have also made an unprecedented commitment to their quality. We have provided during my administration \$1.7 billion in new support for higher education in Virginia. And I'm asking you to build on this commitment by providing \$1.2 billion additional for our colleges and universities over the next two years. But at the same time, we must not shrink from our insistence that our colleges be accountable to the people.

One of my most important new initiatives is the establishment of the Technology Competitiveness Fund. I have set aside \$20 million to match federal or private research grants in science and technology. Today none of our colleges are able to consistently compete for these grants and the faculty and resources that come with them. Upgrading our research programs in key academic departments will modernize our workforce, serve as an incentive for industries to locate and expand in Virginia and to enhance the national reputation of our universities.

Other specific proposals include the purchase of new research equipment for our colleges and universities and more money for technology and academic upgrades at George Mason University, in the center of our information technology community.

But we must ensure that all of our college and universities advance together. Last year, we provided over \$10 million to enhance the quality of education at Virginia's two historically black universities, Norfolk State University and Virginia State University. This money made Virginia State the first Historically Black Land Grant University in America to be on par with other land grant colleges. This year, I'm proposing that we provide an additional \$26 million for our two historically black public universities. There will be no second class citizens in Virginia's system of higher education.

To continue to advance our state as a national leader academically and otherwise, we must showcase our natural assets of history and beauty.

Virginia is already one of the top ten tourist destinations in the nation. But we have tremendous potential that remains untapped and our attention is required to maximize that potential.

Last year, we refocused our attention on tourism by making the Virginia Tourism Authority a separate agency, poised to release creative energy. This year, I propose to market our African-American heritage, promote Revolutionary War and Civil War sites, and enhance our reputation as a recreation destination.

This is an opportunity for all Virginians to work together. As such, I support Governor Wilder's proposed National Slavery Museum at Jamestown and the new Civil War Museum in Richmond. I also believe that we must make it a priority to renovate state welcome centers and establish new regional tourism centers utilizing modern technology. Virginia must offer guests a high-quality experience that befits a first-class state.

These initiatives will help prepare us for the unprecedented opportunity of setting Virginia in the minds of all Americans as they celebrate the 400th anniversary of Jamestown in 2007.

Jamestown is in its very essence who we are and how we came to be. But the true story ... the complete story ... of Jamestown has never been told. The original fort that contains the clues to unlocking the colony's beginnings was thought to have been washed

away by the James River long ago. I remember being told that when I went to Jamestown on a field trip in elementary school.

But one man refused to accept the old way of thinking and six years ago put a spade into the soil of Jamestown Island and began to rediscover and rewrite Virginia's history. This visionary is with us tonight, the director of archaeology at the Jamestown Rediscovery Project, Dr. Bill Kelso.

Dr. Kelso's work has shattered the old assumptions about the colony and the people that secured not only our existence, but also that of America. Jamestown's settlers were not, as many of us were taught, solely in search of gold, nor were they unskilled in the arts of survival. Our first forbearers were scientists and military strategists and skilled tradesmen who endured unimaginable hardships to accomplish their mission of making permanent a place called Virginia. The true story of Jamestown, which today is a microcosm of the story of America, is one of skill and determination and success. Dr. Kelso, please stand to be recognized for your contributions to our Commonwealth.

The tourism initiatives that I have proposed will open the doors to our vast wealth of history, beauty and culture. And in doing so, we will reap tremendous economic benefits, and we will also tell our fellow citizens across America and people around the world the inspiring story of who we are and how we came to be Virginians.

The history of Virginia is a history of great Americans. Many heroes have sprung from the soil of our Commonwealth, and all Virginians admire great American heroes. Many of those heroes have been recognized and celebrated for their contributions, including those we celebrate on Lee, Jackson, King Day.

But the combination of these individuals on a single day creates confusion among our citizens. The time has come to enhance these holidays and give them each their due recognition. I urge you to create individual holidays for Dr. Martin Luther King on one day and Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson another.

Bringing jobs and investment to the Commonwealth is key to maintaining a high quality of life and so is having an efficient and reliable transportation system.

My transportation plan, which is called Innovative Progress and has been developed in conjunction with Secretary of Transportation Shirley Ybarra, provides \$2.5 billion for transportation over the next six years without raising taxes. As the name suggests, it is more than simply a funding plan. My plan represents a new way of thinking about Virginia's transportation challenges.

Innovative Progress breaks with tradition by putting general fund dollars directly into transportation. I will submit legislation to create a new Priority Transportation Fund, which will be used to address critical, statewide transportation projects. The Priority Transportation Fund will break the old, formula-driven methods of allocating

transportation dollars. The people want transportation to be a priority, and we should make it so.

My plan uses the best thinking of Wall Street to fund the Priority Transportation Fund by securitizing the 40% of tobacco settlement funds not already dedicated for other purposes. It also accelerates the receipt of federal funds to advance 90 existing road construction projects.

Technology is another key component of my strategy to improve transportation in Virginia. It can be used to make our existing roadways more efficient, which means less of a need to build new roads.

I propose \$10 million in tax credits to businesses that promote teleworking in highly congested areas. Employers should take into account the need for families to spend quality time together, rather than sitting in traffic, and I'm providing the resources in the form of tax credits to help make this possible.

Innovative Progress is the beginning of new thinking about transportation in Virginia. And it was carefully debated in the past election and is overwhelmingly supported by the public. We can't turn back to the old ways of increased taxes and bond bills that provide only temporary measures instead of real solutions. I urge you to enact my plan and work with my transportation commission as they offer new thinking about our long-term transportation challenges.

A solid transportation plan is good for not only economic development, but also a clean environment. Our goal must be to enhance the quality of life of all Virginians, which includes the preservation and protection of our natural resources.

My Secretary of Natural Resources, John Paul Woodley, is spearheading this year a new environmental education initiative called Virginia Naturally 2000. The goal of Virginia Naturally 2000 is to empower individuals with the knowledge they need to make the right decisions about their environment. Education is the key to excellence in environmental stewardship.

But beyond expanding our environmental education efforts, we must also renew our commitment to improving water quality. We took a significant step last year of funding sewage treatment improvement projects in Lynchburg and Richmond. The Water Quality Improvement Fund should be used to enhance these projects and other environmental initiatives that are critical to clean water in our Commonwealth. The people of the communities depend on our efforts to make their water cleaner and safer.

As we keep our commitments to maintaining a high quality of life for all Virginians, we must also keep our commitment to caring for the most vulnerable among us.

I first became concerned about the state of our mental health system when I was Attorney General and took the initiative to visit several institutions. I saw first hand the conditions

in which many of our mentally disabled citizens live and those who care for them work. I knew then that modernizing our mental health system was more than something that we should do ... it was something we had to do.

Together we made the historic commitment last year of providing nearly \$41.5 million in new funding to enhance the quality of both state and community-based services. And I have proposed another \$36 million to build on that foundation over the next two years.

But money alone can't raise the quality of our mental health system to the higher standard I seek. We must fully embrace proven new medical treatments and expanded community care where a majority of those we care for have the best chance of reaching their highest human potential -- closest to home.

My administration, with the leadership of my Secretary of Health and Human Resources Claude Allen, began that process last year, and the results have been encouraging. Admissions to state mental institutions are estimated to be reduced by 40% this year alone while people who once would have been confined to institutions are living successfully in communities with enhanced opportunities to lead truly productive lives nearer their loved ones.

But there is much more work to be done to further modernize our system of care. My Commission on Community and In-patient Care has recently recommended the creation of a Mental Health Trust Fund to be created initially by the restructuring of Eastern State.

I propose selling surplus land and buildings at Eastern State and depositing the proceeds in the Trust Fund. That money will be spent first on behalf of the patients of Eastern State, and then, on the behalf of all citizens with mental disabilities across the Commonwealth. This plan does not close Eastern State, but it does offer an historic opportunity to do the right thing.

We must also focus attention on the single most rapidly growing segment of our society - Virginia's senior citizens. The demand for public services for Virginia's senior citizens continues to grow. An integrated support system for these men and women is an important part of maintaining strong families and encouraging independence.

I've budgeted \$20 million to increase reimbursements for key service providers so that high quality care can be maintained for our senior citizens. Additional funds are also included to support family caregivers and to study tax relief options for seniors and their families.

And while discussing families and health issues, as I mentioned last year, when it comes to the most difficult decision a woman must make - whether or not to have an abortion - I believe she should be fully informed about the medical implications of that decision and have an opportunity to reflect on that information. That's why I'm asking this Assembly to pass this year legislation to require informed consent and establish a 24-hour waiting period for abortion.

In the area of public safety, Secretary Gary Aronhalt has worked tirelessly this year to enhance the safety of our streets and schools.

Virginia Exile -- which I requested and you approved last year -- is underway in communities all across the Commonwealth. I applaud these communities for their commitment to reducing gun-and-drug related crimes and helping keep guns out of our schools.

But our work in public safety is not done. Now it is time to turn up the heat on the drug criminals and their distribution enterprises that are a threat to our communities. I am proposing the Substance Abuse Reduction Effort -- or SABRE -- to stop the spread of illegal drugs, get dealers and pushers off our streets, and strengthen our treatment and prevention programs. It is time to declare that in Virginia drugs and drug dealers are not an acceptable part of our society.

SABRE creates a new State Police Drug Eradication Division and expands drug treatment. By 2002, the more than 200 new troopers in this division will provide a permanent force to assist localities in fighting drugs and drug related problems. SABRE will offer cash rewards of up to \$10,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of major dealers.

SABRE also gives attention to our juvenile drug offenders. Without sustained intervention in their lives, many will continue to victimize others and return to jail as hardened adult criminals. I propose strengthening after-care supervision and treatment systems for these youths.

Fully developing a modern Virginia requires the modern tools of government.

My Secretary of Administration, Bryan Slater, and I are both very proud of the work being done by state employees. As a public sector employee myself in both local and state government, I know that these are some of the most dedicated men and women to be found anywhere in Virginia. And I also owe a great deal of gratitude to the thousands of Virginians who have volunteered to serve on boards and commissions. I appreciate the outstanding effort of my Secretary of the Commonwealth Anne Petera in recruiting these individuals.

Competitive pay for state workers has been the focus of the bipartisan Commission on Reform of the Classified Compensation Plan. Last year, we provided a 6.25 percent pay increase for state employees. The Commission recommended that we continue to improve the state pay system and make it even more competitive with the private sector. I've recommended an additional 2.4 percent pay raise for state employees and will work with the Commission to enable a new pay system to properly compensate our workers.

As we reform how government operates day to day, we need to examine the old ways of doing things politically and determine which should be changed. Many of our current

laws were written in an era when some desired to keep the number of voters small and uninformed and to concentrate power in the hands of a few courthouse officials. Those days are gone, and now we must begin to dismantle those laws and restore our democracy to its fullest.

First, it is time to acknowledge that there are two political parties in Virginia. We must allow voters to register by party and to place party identification of candidates on the ballot. We must also ensure the integrity of our voting by requiring all Virginians to show some form of identification at the polls.

And we must begin judicial reform. When a circuit judge appoints someone to fill a vacancy for sheriff or some other local office they are not playing a judicial role, but rather a political role. The Judge is choosing between parties and between individuals within a party. This has been the method used to control the Courthouses and local politics in Virginia for many decades.

Judges have appointed Commissioners of Accounts, local electoral board members of both parties, and made a wide range of other non-judicial appointments and decisions. It is time to remove these appointive powers – it is time to remove politics from the judiciary.

And so, my fellow Virginians, at the start of the new millenium, we begin anew. This is the dawn of a dynamic new age, with the opportunity to set out on new paths, in new ways. Change is everywhere around us, but change is not our enemy; it is our ally as we build on our strengths. The Commonwealth has accomplished much and has much of which to be proud. But I assure you now that Virginia's best years lie ahead. Thank you.

