

**ADDRESS OF
GOVERNOR TIMOTHY M. KAINE**

**The State of the Commonwealth
Address to the Joint Assembly
2010**



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Governor Kaine's State of the Commonwealth Address to the Joint Assembly

RICHMOND – Governor Timothy M. Kaine today delivered his final State of the Commonwealth Address to the Joint Assembly in Richmond. Below is the text of his prepared remarks:

"My fellow Virginians:

"I stand before you tonight, with many emotions, to deliver my final State of the Commonwealth address. While the quick passage of four years has its bittersweet aspects, the most significant feelings I have are gratitude for those who have supported me during my time in public life and pride in what we have accomplished during this Administration. Let me reflect on what we have done together before I conclude with the most important part of my comments, my expressions of thanks.

"When I was inaugurated Governor in Williamsburg four years ago, I chose a simple motto for my Administration: "Virginia Leading the Way." Ever since moving to Richmond in 1984, I have believed in our city and our Commonwealth and wondered why we were not seen more clearly as national leaders in the same way we were in the early years of the American Republic.

"The historian Susan Dunn wrestled with the same question in her 2007 book "Dominion of Memories," contrasting Virginia's intellectual, political, and economic leadership in the first 50 years of the nation's history to its decline in influence thereafter. Deep into the 20th Century, Virginia's insular and often backward-focused leadership-evidenced by the ill-fated Massive Resistance to racial equality-signed Virginia to a position of far less significance than that reached by our founders. What better place than Williamsburg, where Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson were inaugurated, to declare that Virginia was once again ready to claim the mantle of national leadership?

"As I leave office, I can say with confidence: Virginia has achieved that goal. No state in America has enjoyed the success we have seen in recent years. Some of the remarkable forward movement in Virginia has been obscured by the national recession that we saw starting in the Spring of 2007. But, Virginia is well positioned going forward because of our economic, educational, and political leadership.

"The Virginia economy today is one of the nation's most vibrant. We are in the top ten states in median income and have one of the ten lowest unemployment rates in the country. Only one other state-New Hampshire-can claim that distinction. Contrast this to the Virginia of 50 years ago, when personal income was in the bottom third of the nation.

"In the past four years, we have recruited five Fortune 500 companies to move their headquarters from other states to Virginia-two of them this past year alone-as well as announced more than \$13 billion in new investment during the longest recession since the 1930's. These economic development opportunities have been achieved in all parts of the Commonwealth; Volkswagen, Hilton, SAIC and CSC in Northern Virginia; MeadWestvaco in Richmond; Ikea in Danville; SRI in Harrisonburg; Alpha Natural Resources in Bristol; Aeva/Northrop Grumman in Newport News; Rolls Royce in Prince George; and Orbital on the Eastern Shore; among others.

"During my brief time as Governor, we have achieved the unparalleled honor of being recognized *eight times* as the best state for business in America by business organizations like Forbes.com and CNBC. With international economic assets like the Port of Virginia and Dulles Airport, a newly retooled workforce development system, and the nation's largest percentage of technology workers, there is no reason why we cannot hold onto our position of economic dominance for many years to come.

"Fifty years ago, the Virginia education system was no model, despite the fact that Jefferson was the first American to systematically place public education at the center of public policy. Our local schools fought to keep students separated by race-with direct or tacit encouragement from the Governor's office-and our higher education system offered only limited opportunities to minorities and women.

"Because of great strides in recent decades, *Education Week* now ranks Virginia as one of the top five states in overall educational quality, most notably recognizing the Commonwealth in 2007 as "the place where a child born today is most likely to have a successful life." Our high schools rank third in the nation in students passing Advanced Placement examinations, and our Latino students lead the country in elementary school performance.

"After great effort, you agreed that early childhood education investments have particular power. We've expanded pre-Kindergarten education by 40 percent in the last three years so that thousands more low-income Virginia children can now receive a strong start in life. As a result of stronger early childhood programs and targeted reading intervention strategies, we have dramatically increased the pass rate of our students on third grade reading tests, a crucial early test of the likelihood of a student's success later in the educational process.

"We have grown career and technical education programs throughout our state. As a former technical school principal in Honduras, it gives me great pleasure to see our kids earning industry certifications-more than 20,000 last year, up from only 5,000 annually when I took office-or working to achieve our new technical diploma or attending one of 9 newly-designated Governor's Career and Technical Academies.

"Finally, even in a tough time, our higher education system is clearly one of the two or three best in the nation and our capacity to serve more students has been enhanced through the passage in 2008 of the largest bond package for higher education construction in state history. All over this Commonwealth, our schools are expanding their ability to educate students in key disciplines, meet the state's workforce needs, and undertake critical research. This bond package is creating construction jobs today as we build a platform for greater economic success through expanded educational opportunity.

"And, while I am speaking of higher education, I must take this opportunity to applaud the newly named president of the University of Virginia, Teresa Sullivan. The choice of a dynamic and experienced president to lead one of the world's most important and historic universities is always worth celebrating. And what a wonderful thing to see a woman president at a University that did not even allow women as students when she began her own college education.

"Virginia's leadership extends to governance and politics. We are the best managed state in America, according to *Governing Magazine*. We are one of the few states to hold the rare Triple-A bond rating from all financial agencies for our fiscal management. And, even as we have cut billions of dollars from the state budget due to declining revenues, we have still managed to make huge steps forward in key areas of state government. For example:

"We have cut our infant mortality rate by almost 15%.

"We have dramatically reformed our foster care and community mental health systems.

"We have invested more than \$1.1 billion in the cleanliness of streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay-and taken steps to protect the blue crab, menhaden, and oyster populations that so many Virginia watermen depend on.

"We have restored more individuals' voting rights than any previous Administration.

"We have banned smoking in state buildings, restaurants, and bars.

"We have tripled the participation of SWAM businesses in state procurement.

"And, we have managed to permanently protect more than 424,000 acres of open space throughout the Commonwealth-largely working forests and farms. This acreage, more than twice the size of the Shenandoah National Park, encompasses private land placed under permanent easement, 3 new state parks, 5 new state forests, 13 new Natural Area Preserves, 5 new Wildlife Management Areas and parts of 25 Civil War battlefields. Never before has the Commonwealth moved so aggressively to protect the natural beauty of our state so that distant generations can enjoy the same resources that we cherish. And, with the finalization yesterday of a new easement to preserve an additional 13,350 acres in the Chesapeake Bay watershed-a parcel that will be announced shortly as the deed is filed-we enter 2010 with strong momentum to continue this effort.

"All in all, the last four years have seen amazing advances, especially given the tough circumstances we have all faced. It has been our task to lead our Commonwealth through the most

challenging economic climate since the 1930's. We have not shrunk from the job. Instead we have met the challenge through hard work and innovative governance-and Virginia stands in a unique position because of our efforts.

"Now, to be sure, there are significant challenges ahead. Thanks in large part to the positive effects of the federal Recovery Act, the national economy went from bleeding 800,000 jobs a month to less than 100,000 jobs a month-a decrease of nearly 90% in the last year. But, more work remains to bring back robust economic growth. And, as we all wrestle with this national challenge, there are issues here in the Commonwealth that we must contend with.

"The biggest challenge facing us is the decades-old gridlock in transportation investments. I had hoped to solve that issue as Governor but could not convince you, the General Assembly, that we needed to invest new state money in roads to maintain our competitive edge. To be sure, we made important progress in the last four years in implementing smart growth strategies to mitigate congestion. And, we did strong work together to advance rail and public transit solutions-including the extension of Metro rail to Dulles Airport.

"But, we still have too much congestion in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads, too many substandard bridges, and too many rural communities with insufficient transportation access to generate jobs. Our aging infrastructure cannot continue to meet the needs of Virginians-the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel is 50 years old and the Midtown Tunnel is more than 60 years old. We do not have sufficient evacuation capacity should a sizable hurricane threaten Hampton Roads. Although we have built a number of highway projects through agreements in accordance with the Public-Private Transportation Act (including along the Capital Beltway and Route 28), we have failed to invest in general upkeep or maintenance. In fact, one of the only accomplishments that Virginia can claim in road funding in the last four years is this: we eagerly took infrastructure money contained in President Obama's recovery package. Now, I do admit to pride in helping a President who cares about the infrastructure needs of the states. But, those dollars will run out in 2011 and Virginia must have more dedicated revenue to meet our needs.

"The largest obstacle to solving our transportation needs is a philosophy, espoused by some, that it is always wrong to raise taxes or fees. Thank goodness that previous state leaders did not hold that view-if they had, we would have no community college system, dirtier rivers, a lackluster school system and even fewer roads. Virginia is a state with a very favorable tax burden and we should do all we can to keep it that way. But, no state or nation can maintain its economic edge with a declining infrastructure. Eventually, we need leadership in this collective body to find a path toward responsible advances in road investments.

"A second challenge is the need to keep our higher education system in the position of national pre-eminence that it currently enjoys. Fifty years ago, Virginia's adult population received higher education degrees at less than half the national average. Today, we are well above the national average in the percentage of our citizens with a Baccalaureate degree, and we are the only Southern state that can make that claim. But, higher education attainment in Virginia has flattened out at about 40%. While still good by American standards, we need to realize that the leading nations in the world are educating nearly 60% of their population with higher education degrees today. We have a huge gap that we need to overcome to maintain our strength in this important area. And we face an additional problem here-Virginia college tuition is now higher than national averages, effectively reducing access to many students who are most in need of educational advancement.

"In December, I presented a budget that, by eliminating the \$950 million annual car tax subsidy, creates the possibility for directing more resources to expanded higher education in the future. After four years of doing this job-and leading Virginia to accolades for management, educational outcomes, fiscal stewardship, and business climate-I firmly believe that I have presented you with a budget that will create the opportunity for the forward-looking investments that Virginia needs. I know you are wrestling with what to do in the coming legislative session. Just remember that you are leading a state that stands at or near the top in the most meaningful categories today. But, the competition from other states and nations is intense. If you do not act boldly to move forward, the Commonwealth will move backward.

"Let me conclude with a few simple words of thanks-words that cannot truly capture the depth of my gratitude for having had the opportunity to serve.

"First, I thank each member of the General Assembly for your willingness to sacrifice time, income, and privacy for the honor of serving in the oldest continuous legislative body in the Western hemisphere. I applaud the public spirit that compels each of you to do this tough job and thank you for your many kindnesses during the past years.

"To Virginia's public employees (many of whom are in this room tonight), the public servants who do the hard, unglamorous, everyday work of serving your fellow citizens; I offer my deepest respect. I am deeply aware that the things you do as a part of your daily work are nothing short of extraordinary-I want to recognize the Fairfax County rescue team currently on its way to Haiti to offer their support in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in that nation. The last years have been tough on you-no raises, layoffs that have increased your workload, and an increased need for services due to the challenging times we live in. But, I see your optimism and concern everywhere I travel, and I want to tell you how proud I am of you. I especially thank my team of Cabinet Secretaries, agency heads, and Governor's Office staff for being at the helm during turbulent times. Your leadership has been exemplary.

"To the citizens of Virginia: you have welcomed me into your homes and businesses, your schools, churches, and communities. You have inspired me with your resilience and creativity. I have no doubt why Virginia is in such a strong position today-you are the reason. I thank you for the honor of serving as the 70th Governor of the Commonwealth. Let me say a special thanks to the citizens of the City of Richmond-you got me started when you saw my name on a ballot for City Council in 1994. Seven elections and 16 years later, you are still my strongest supporters.

"Finally, to my wife Anne, my children, my extended family, and my wonderful core of friends. You were my strength before I ever thought about political life. You have supported me through the joys, trials, and sacrifices of public service-and it has been a joint effort every step of the way. I thank you with all my heart, and I can't wait to see what the next chapter of life holds in store for all of us.

"As I conclude, I'll just briefly mention a recent event that really sums up my feelings tonight. When we unveiled my official portrait last week, the audience reacted with a bit of surprise. In a departure from other Governors' portraits before mine, I am not wearing a jacket in the image-just a shirt and tie. I am standing outdoors on the banks of the James River. But, the main reaction I heard was surprise that I am smiling in the portrait. One of the members of the press covering the event actually asked me with a sense of incredulity after the unveiling: "All the challenges of your term and you're smiling?"

"Of course I'm smiling. Even in the toughest of circumstances, there is no higher honor than to serve as the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia. I have had the full experience of serving in the best and worst of times and the memories are powerful-playing harmonica with bluegrass bands all over the Commonwealth, kayaking to the barrier islands off the Eastern Shore, visiting our Virginia Guard troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, welcoming Queen Elizabeth back to Virginia, comforting the families of law enforcement personnel slain in duty and the families of wonderful young people and faculty who lost their lives on one of the most tragic days in our state's history in April 2007. I rejoiced on the great days and prayed for strength on the hard days, humbled and honored to play my small role in the grand sweep of Virginia history.

"I'm smiling because, as I finish my time as Chief Executive, I am proud of what we've accomplished and satisfied to place the reins of a successful state in the hands of a friend, Bob McDonnell.

"With confidence in our success, I wish each of you the very best and look forward to working alongside all Virginians as we continue to lead this nation for years to come.

Thank you."

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Office of the Governor Timothy M. Keane
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