

**ADDRESS OF  
GOVERNOR ROBERT F. MCDONNELL**

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



**SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 1C**

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
RICHMOND  
2010**



# **Governor's Address to the Joint Houses of the General Assembly**

January 18, 2010

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker. Mr. President.

Mr. Chief Justice and Justices of the Supreme Court.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the General Assembly

My fellow Virginians

It is an honor to return to this historic chamber this evening to share with you some thoughts about the challenges and opportunities before us.

And I want to thank you for inviting me to address you for the second time in 48 hours.....I appreciate you wanting to hear from me so often, but I don't know if we can keep up this pace!

I enjoyed my 14 years serving the people of Virginia Beach in this House as their delegate. I've been looking forward to this moment for a long time. This will be the first time that I've spoken in the House of Delegates that Delegate Armstrong is powerless to interrupt me!

Tonight I thank our clerks, Bruce and Susan, for giving me the best seat I've ever had!

I extend my sincere appreciation tonight to Governor Tim Kaine for his service to Virginia. His help during the hectic two months of transition has helped prepare me to be ready to govern today.

Before we begin to discuss our Commonwealth, I want to direct our thoughts and prayers to another country. We grieve for the suffering people of Haiti who have lost loved ones, property and dreams. Please join me in a moment of silence for all those who were lost in last week's devastating earthquake, including University of Virginia graduate student Stephanie Jean-Charles.

Thank you.

The people of Virginia are responding to the tragic events in Haiti with an outpouring of concern and generosity, and I encourage all our citizens to donate what they can to the Red Cross and the

other relief organizations that are at this minute providing food, water, medical care and shelter to the people of Haiti. I especially want to thank our state employees who are already generously contributing to this relief effort.

Never as a middle class kid growing up in Fairfax County did I dream I would have the honor I received on November third. To serve as the 71<sup>st</sup> Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia is to follow in the footsteps of giants... Henry, Jefferson, Randolph and others.

But many who have inspired us were not Governors or even public officials at all. Today we honor a leader who was not a native Virginian nor a public official, but who forever changed the lives of Virginians and Americans for the better – Dr. Martin Luther King. As we work to help the people we represent make it through a time of unprecedented challenges, I am reminded that Dr. King said “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

Together we face challenges, and the choices we make this session will come after much reflection and debate. If we can show leadership and agree to cooperate we will move Virginia through these difficult times. I ask that you make decisions based not on which house or political party or branch of government wins.....but whether or not Virginia wins.

Much of the marvelous story of America was written in Virginia.

And much of her future will be written here as well.

“With challenge comes opportunity.” If that is true – we have lots of opportunity before us.

I pledge to work with you to create “A Commonwealth of Opportunity” for all Virginians.

As the early colonists, the founding fathers, and the civil rights leaders, the technology entrepreneurs seized the opportunities before them, so too will we seize ours.

I want to see opportunity flourishing in the successful start-up of a small business in Norfolk... in the farmer able to keep working his family’s land in Scott County... in the first-time home buyer receiving her new keys in Fredericksburg.

I want to see opportunity at work in the new technologies and systems that Virginians invent in Loudoun and Fairfax Counties.

I want to see opportunity alive in eager young minds, thrilled to discover the miracles of science or unlock the mysteries of history – young people who embrace learning and earning, and then living and giving.

And the steps toward those positive outcomes will take place right here, with you, in the House and Senate chambers of the oldest continuous legislative body in the Western Hemisphere.

Many of you are longtime friends and allies, some are “occasional” adversaries, but all are respected colleagues. You all share with me a common love of Virginia and the ideals she represents. For the 20 of you who are newly elected, I commend you for answering the call to public service.

Over the years, I have seen us work across party lines to produce results that matter. I recall a time, for example, when welfare reform and abolition of parole seemed like hopelessly elusive goals. Here on this floor we debated those issues. Out of our contests and collaboration came great good for Virginia, and with welfare reform, a model for the nation.

Working together, we have led the nation with business-friendly laws and job-creating tax and regulatory policies that have made Virginia one of America’s most prosperous states. We have led the nation in managing prudently and in governing innovatively. And from education standards to sentencing reform, we have shown that transformational leadership for America often begins here, where America itself began.

Now, we must agree to put in place policies that will unleash the innovation and ingenuity of the people of Virginia, opening the way for a new era of prosperity and progress.

It starts with policies to promote job creation and economic development.

The inherent dignity of a good day’s work in a worthwhile pursuit strengthens the soul, supports the family, and reduces dependence on government.

Immediately following my Inauguration on Saturday, I signed Executive Order #1 on the Capitol steps.

This Executive Order established a statewide commission dedicated to creating jobs and promoting free enterprise and opportunity.

It was the first Executive Order of my Administration, because it must be the first order of business for all of us.

Unemployment has doubled in 5 years. We all know family members, friends, neighbors who have lost their jobs. This has made it tremendously difficult on many families trying to meet the basic needs for their children. I know there has been overwhelming support for the Virginia Federation of Food Banks and the work they are doing – Governor Kaine ensured additional funding for their efforts and I am committed to maintaining it.

Yes, we face a difficult budget cycle. The budget that I have inherited is dire, and it is unbalanced. We begin with nearly a billion dollar annual shortfall based on tax hike proposals that both parties have rejected. More spending cuts must be made. But even in the toughest of times – even now – we must have the vision and the foresight to invest in our future.

Our Jobs and Opportunity agenda consists of policies that make those investments.

First, I will ask you to significantly increase the amount of money in our successful job-creating Governor's Opportunity Fund. Delegate Armstrong, I'm glad to support your bill to rename it the Commonwealth Economic Development Fund, since we are all in this together to attract business.

There is a competition underway among the states and the nations. From Raleigh to Singapore; Tallahassee to Shanghai, governments are pursuing bold initiatives to attract new job-creating businesses to their borders. We must compete more vigorously to be successful. Growing the tax base through business development is the key to Virginia's economic recovery.

Let's start now by doubling the amount of the Fund for Fiscal Year 2011. We have fallen behind many neighboring states in the tax and regulatory incentives we offer, which cannot last.

Provide us the tools, we will get results.

I have assembled a very talented team to focus on economic development, with Lieutenant Governor Bill Bolling as a Cabinet level Chief Job Creation Officer, and extraordinarily successful businessmen and entrepreneurs Jim Cheng as Secretary of Commerce and Trade, and Bob Sledd as Senior Economic Advisor.

New funding is much needed to incentivize rural economic development.

It is imperative that we focus on bringing new jobs to rural areas of our state that have been wracked by double-digit unemployment.

In mid-December I joined Lieutenant Governor Bolling, Bob Sledd, and Delegates Armstrong, Marshall, and Merricks, and Senator Reynolds, at the annual lunch for the Martinsville-Henry Chamber of Commerce.

The message in the room was clear: If we will give them the resources, they will build the local economy. I agree.

The business of creating jobs is not a partisan one. That is why Republicans and Democrats will be carrying important components of my job creation package that will have immediate positive impact. I will also add a deputy secretary of Commerce and Trade to focus on rural economic

development, and honor the pledge for the Lieutenant Governor or me to visit our high unemployment rural areas every 30 days to find solutions to their challenges.

We will also target new Opportunity Fund dollars to the bio-tech industry. This is an industry of high-paying jobs in a fast-growing career field. Smart states look at this sector for future economic development. We will as well. Delegate Sam Nixon of Chesterfield is teaming up with Senator Mark Herring from Loudoun County to push my commitment to grant an income tax exemption for qualified investments by technology and science startup businesses.

And I will seek an important change in how the money in the Opportunity Fund is utilized. Currently funding is available to companies based on job creation and capital investment. We should broaden the use of the Fund for companies that significantly increase local and state tax revenue – allowing for even more investment in education, workforce development and job creation.

I will be asking you to approve an additional \$5 million for an industrial mega-site fund for this fiscal year. When a major business is considering a move to Virginia we must be able to meet the executives at the airport, drive them to a site ready for their project and show them that the only thing missing is *them*. Virginia is ready for their business – right now.

And we must incentivize businesses to create jobs for Virginians. I ask you to reduce the eligibility threshold for the \$1000 per job tax credit down to every business that creates 50 jobs, or 25 jobs in jurisdictions experiencing a higher than average unemployment rate.

There is an old adage in business that says you have to spend money to make money. Investment in job creation and economic development today creates new tax revenue tomorrow. I will identify the offsetting savings to balance these new job creation investments in budget amendments I will submit shortly.

On the campaign trail, I met small business owners from Alexandria to Abingdon. These are the innovators responsible for 70% of the new jobs created in our state.

One after another they told me familiar tales of paperwork, bureaucracy and slow turnarounds stifling their efforts. That is unacceptable. Any impediment to job creation and economic development is an impediment to the future of Virginia. And they must be removed.

Together, let's make Virginia the easiest state in America in which to open a business. One way we can do this: allow currently licensed businesses in Virginia to operate any new business venture under the license they already have while waiting for a new license to be processed.

I will also direct the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation and other licensing agencies to ensure that new businesses can get licensing processes and approvals

complete in 48 hours or less. We will also greatly enhance the effectiveness of our one-stop business startup centers.

And if you served our nation in the military and now want to serve our Commonwealth by opening a business and creating jobs for our citizens, we should serve you. We will waive administrative and licensing fees for veterans starting a small business who have been taking care of their families, facing medical challenges – all while serving our country here and overseas.

In a tough economy, a smart investor looks for the best opportunities in which to maximize limited resources. So too must smart states.

Tourism returns five dollars to the Commonwealth for every one we put in. I've seen the commercials for Michigan on TV here. It's time we put some Virginia commercials on TV sets in Ann Arbor and Lansing.

We have so much to offer. Beaches, mountains, history. Mt. Vernon. Virginia Beach. Luray Caverns. Yorktown. The birthplace of our nation.

Next year, America will begin commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Civil War. No state bore the brunt of that seminal event in American history more than Virginia. This is the state of Manassas and Chancellorsville; Petersburg and Appomattox.

In 2013, the nation will celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lincoln's signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. I am working with Senator Marsh and Delegates McClellan and Alexander to continue the good work from last year's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of Lincoln's birthday, through the Sesquicentennial and the anniversary of Emancipation. The world will come here to remember and reflect upon the lessons learned from this pivotal period in our history.

And while these tourists are here, they should stay awhile, spend lots of money, and help put more Virginians to work.

I propose an increase in funding of the Virginia Tourism Corporation by \$3.6 million in each of the next two years. I want the funding of the Virginia Tourism Corporation to double by the time I leave office in 2014.

Another smart investment we can make is in film production.

This year the movie "Secretariat" will hit theaters.

A movie about a horse from Virginia. With a director from Virginia. Filmed in Kentucky and Louisiana.



Not landing that production here meant an estimated loss of \$30 million in economic impact. That is a failure.

It's not hard to see why we struggle to attract film production. South Carolina offers a cash rebate for movie makers funded at \$10 million annually, and just north of us Maryland offers \$1 million. We have \$200,000 per year available in the Governor's Motion Picture Opportunity Fund. We simply cannot compete.

I ask you to increase funding for the Motion Picture Opportunity Fund by \$2 million.

Movies made in Virginia equal jobs created for Virginians.

Governor Kaine committed to invest \$1.3 million in the Virginia Spaceport. We can make Wallops Island the top commercial Spaceport in America, and I ask you to keep that money in place so that we can aggressively recruit aerospace companies and promote space tourism initiatives.

One of my favorite stickers reads "Make Mine Virginia Wine." The Virginia wine industry is dynamic and growing. They grow grapes and jobs. I've seen many of you personally and enthusiastically supporting the industry at legislative receptions!

We are the 6<sup>th</sup> largest wine-exporting state.

This summer I visited the Blue Ridge Vineyard in Botetourt. This beautiful vineyard hosts weddings, attracts tourists, and makes a really good Cabernet. Even better, it employs Virginians.

I will offer legislation to help Virginia's wine industry, that attracts visitors from across the country, by directing a portion of the wine liter tax to be deposited in the Virginia Wine Promotion Fund.

Another industry with tremendous growth potential is energy. I am committed to utilizing all of our vast, God-given natural resources to make Virginia the "Energy Capital of the East Coast." We must do our part to promote American energy independence.

We have the opportunity to be the first state on the Eastern Seaboard to sell the leasing rights to explore and drill offshore for oil and natural gas in 2011. The federal moratoria have been lifted. The state that is first will reap an economic bonanza. We can lead or be left out. Four years ago you had the foresight to pass legislation giving us a critical advantage. We cannot now let Washington bureaucracy undermine the clear desires of the people of Virginia.

I have written to Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar, and have let our congressional delegation know that this is a priority for our Commonwealth, consistent with President Obama's commitment to make our nation more energy secure. Several studies show that environmentally-safe offshore exploration and production will create thousands of jobs, put hundreds of millions

into our depleted state coffers, and spur billions in capital investment in the Old Dominion. There are many unemployed Virginians who are ready to work in the oil and gas production industry.

And we must continue to prepare for the reality of offshore production this session by mandating that 20% of the new tax revenues we generate, and any future royalties we receive, will be invested in renewable energy projects, with the other 80% going to transportation.

We must also promote Virginia's coal and natural gas industries in Southwest Virginia. As carbon sequestration and coal gasification technologies become cost-efficient, coal production can grow. Nuclear power growth must be incentivized. Virginia has more private sector nuclear industry capability than any other state, and new partnerships between AREVA and the University of Virginia are producing the engineers needed to grow this sector.

To further make Virginia a welcome home for alternative energy, I ask you to pass legislation making the entire Commonwealth a "Green Jobs Zone." Any business in the state that creates a green energy job over the next 5 years will receive an income tax credit of \$500 per position. "Virginia is for Lovers"...of renewable energy.

In Southside Virginia, I visited the entrepreneurs at Piedmont bio-products, who are using a creative distillation process to turn hardy sugar cane and switchgrass into a fuel that you can put in an engine or you can drink. It's not tasty, but it's another emerging Virginia energy technology. I look forward to working with Delegate Terry Kilgore and the Tobacco Commission to create an energy corridor in Southern and Southwest Virginia.

Of course the investments we make for our future will all take place in the midst of cuts we must make for today.

As unemployment has doubled, and Virginians have been forced to tighten their belts, revenue has declined.

The budget that was waiting for me at 12:01pm on Saturday requires \$4 billion in cuts.

Some say taxes must be raised – it's unavoidable. Here's what I say. I will work with you – Democrats, Republicans and Independents. We will meet and negotiate; there will be disagreements, and there will be compromises.

Virginians are struggling with the worst economy in generations. We will not turn our economy around by taxing Virginians more. To do so would ignore the indisputable truth that the fiscal fortune of any government is tied to the economic prosperity of its people.

Therefore, if you pass a bill in this recession that raises taxes on the hardworking families of Virginia – I WILL VETO IT.

And if you pass a budget embedded with those same tax increases – I WILL NOT APPROVE IT.

The steps required to close the \$4 billion budget deficit that we confront will be difficult.

We will make a start in the Executive office.

I will return a portion of my salary.

Members of my Cabinet and senior staff are taking a pay cut.

My Secretaries will reduce the size of their staffs and budgets.

Every opportunity to save, however small, is one that must be seized.

Budget challenges present legislative opportunities to think outside the box about what's in the budget and how we develop it. During my transition I called for reforming Virginia's budget cycle – an initiative that has received broad bipartisan support, including from my predecessor, Governor Kaine, and many other governors.

During this session, we must take the time to find new ways to deliver government services effectively, while reducing spending.

And it is time that we eliminated, consolidated or privatized programs and agencies that do not work or do not fulfill core government functions. As I traveled this great Commonwealth over the last year, I didn't run into anybody who thought selling Jack Daniels whiskey or Grey Goose Vodka was a core function of government. In the future I will present plans to privatize our ABC operations in a fiscally prudent manner.

I offer a frank assessment of what this necessary belt tightening will mean for Virginians in the short term.

It will mean more cuts to certain state agencies. Some state services will be reduced, some possibly consolidated or eliminated. We must do our best to treat our dedicated state employees fairly.

This is not only a short-term reality, but a longer-term necessity.

We must act now.

Certainly the national and global economy has had a significant impact on the revenues and the budget in Virginia. But that is only part of the story. Ronald Reagan used to say "Government is too big and it spends too much." He was talking about the federal government at the time – but it applies to state governments as well.

Since I got elected to this body in 1991, state spending has more than tripled, far beyond the rate of growth in population and inflation. We can do better.

The second Executive Order I signed from the steps of the Capitol on Saturday established the Governor's Commission on Government Reform and Restructuring. It is time to look for new ideas about how to make government work more efficiently and effectively, and within our means. We will find these new ideas, and we will implement them. I will work with the leaders at the Council on Virginia's Future to offer strategic reform initiatives.

I ask those of you sitting in this chamber tonight, our state employees at home watching on television, business and community leaders, members of the media, citizens and taxpayers: When bold proposals for reform are offered by me and by members of this Assembly to change the ways we do things, do not just tell us all of the reasons change should not or cannot occur. Instead let's work together work to implement the bold and sensible changes that will put Virginia on a secure financial footing.

This will be the philosophy that guides my service as Governor. And my request and challenge tonight is that you join me in treating this not as a time for painful cutting but as a time for making government limited but effective – efficient and affordable.

My dad told me as a kid that to get a good job, you need a good education. He was right.

Those who rank the states say a young person has a better chance to succeed here in Virginia than elsewhere. Good rankings aren't enough. We need good schools and good choices for every young person in our state, because every one has unique gifts from God with dreams and potential.

Joining me tonight is Secretary of Education Gerard Robinson

Gerard's story demonstrates what can be accomplished with the simple opportunity of a good education.

He grew up in a working-class family in Los Angeles. No one in the family had gone to college. When he graduated from high school, he was in the bottom rung of his class! He didn't give up – he enrolled in a community college while working fulltime for three years at a grocery store. Today, he has a Master's Degree in Education from Harvard, is finishing his PhD at UVa, and is considered a national expert on education reform. He is joining this Administration with a passion and a mission to ensure that every child in Virginia, in every community, takes advantage of the same opportunities that he did.

No child should attend a school that is not fully accredited. We will work with local school boards and governments to turn them around.

And no child should have her educational attainment determined by her birthplace or zip code, only her work ethic and intelligence. Every child must graduate from high school either career-ready or college-ready.

There are important steps we must take this session to reform and improve education in Virginia.

I ask you to join me in the effort to ensure that over the next four years, 65% of Virginia's education dollars go to instruction in the classroom, where our children learn.

We must start this session by increasing the state average by 1%, from 61% to 62%.

President Obama and I share a passion for good charter schools. He is committed to expanding them nationwide. I'm committed to helping him.

Charter schools are public schools with greater autonomy, more freedom to innovate, and they offer choices to parents. We have the weakest laws in the nation.

They are not silver bullets, but are positive alternatives that have been demonstrated to help students, particularly in some of the nation's underperforming school districts.

Nationally there are 4600 charter schools.

Here in Virginia, 12 years after we passed legislation to allow them, there are only three. That is unacceptable.

That number will increase to four when the Patrick Henry Charter School here in Richmond opens this spring.

Joining us in the gallery tonight is Everett, age 4, and his mom Kristen. Everett has applied to be in the first Kindergarten class at Patrick Henry.

I will introduce legislation this session that will result in the establishment of more charter schools, expand access to virtual schools, and pursue the innovative idea by Delegate, now Mayor Dwight Jones, to create College Laboratory Schools. The work we do to increase the number of high-quality charter schools and innovative education options is not just good for Virginia's schoolchildren. It's good for Virginia's bottom line.

The President's Race to the Top grant program allocates \$4.35 billion to states based on their support for educational reform, in particular charter schools. Just last week, I signed a letter in support of Virginia's Race to the Top Application developed by Governor Kaine and Superintendent Pat Wright in cooperation with our transition team. The request was for \$350 million. That is a tremendous amount of money we could apply to the next fiscal year, and put towards put into ensuring educational excellence here in the Commonwealth.

And we will get more science, technology, engineering, math and healthcare taught in our schools.

Of course education doesn't stop at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

In today's global economy it just begins there.

A college degree has never been more important. It has also never been more expensive.

Over the past decade college tuition has doubled. The state budget commitment has decreased by 40%. Virginia students and parents are left shouldering the constantly increasing costs.

We must make college more affordable and accessible.

We will do this by committing the Commonwealth to awarding 100,000 more degrees over the next 15 years in our community colleges and four-year universities. It is an audacious goal, but an important one for our future competitiveness.

Virginia's community colleges occupy the critical intersection between preparation and profession. We should make these underutilized assets of our higher education system the hub of our workforce development efforts, helping citizens get the skills they need to land the job they want in the communities in which they live.

Economic growth is also predicated on a modern and well-maintained transportation system, from our roads to rail to ports.

There are steps we can take right now to improve transportation in Virginia.

Our rest stops and welcome centers are important for safety and tourism. I've asked Secretary Connaughton to schedule a time for the Commonwealth Transportation Board to vote on re-opening the rest stops. We'll have those rest stops open within 87 days!

We should raise the speed limit in rural parts of the state to 70 mph on major interstates. In 2006 you voted to raise the speed limit to 70mph on portions of Interstate 85. Let's do the same on stretches of 95, 64, 77 and 81 in our more sparsely populated regions. Thirty-two states already have 70 mph speed limits; Thirteen have 75mph speed limits.

We should also step back and look at the structure and operations of the Virginia Department of Transportation anew.

We have dedicated employees at VDOT, but it is time to conduct performance audits to determine what works, what doesn't, and what can be done better for less. Delegate Glen Oder and Delegate Scott Lingamfelter are advancing legislation that looks at real structural

opportunities to identify both cost savings and also performance metrics on congestion relief and mobility.

In the future, I will be asking you to adopt a further series of transportation funding reforms to meet the needs.

Twenty years ago I was a prosecutor in Virginia Beach.

I believe ensuring that the safety of citizens in their homes and their communities is the foremost obligation of government.

Tonight I ask you to join me in saluting the men and women of the Capitol Police, the Virginia Department of State Police, City of Richmond Police, that worked together to ensure that everyone who participated in the Inaugural events were safe.

We will not have “A Commonwealth of Opportunity” if we do not first have a Commonwealth that is secure.

To ensure a secure Commonwealth in which all Virginians can safely live their lives and pursue their dreams I will propose legislation asking you to:

First: protect victims of domestic crime by making our protective order procedures consistent with our neighboring states and helping victims of domestic violence to extend the length of protective orders when there is evidence of an ongoing threat. I thank Senator Janet Howell for carrying this bill along with Delegate Rob Bell.

Second: Keep up the fight against gangs, which I worked on with many of you as Attorney General, by expanding “Gang-Free School Zones” to “Gang Free Zones”, to better target gang activity wherever it occurs. Senator Marsh is teaming up with Delegate Jackson Miller on this key initiative.

Third: Tough sentences are only half of the equation in making Virginia safer.

We must provide real opportunities to prisoners to turn their lives around, and to become responsible and contributing members of society when their sentences have concluded. A failure to do so only leads to more crime, and more victims.

I will work with faith-based and community organizations to create an effective prisoner re-entry program to keep people out of jails and prisons. It’s smart government, and will save money. I’ve seen firsthand the good that can happen when we do.

Last month I stood in the basement of a local Richmond church at the Christmas Party for the members of the McCovery Program: men who had been incarcerated and struggled with substance abuse.

They had been subject to two forms of confinement: physical jails and mental addictions.

But on this December night they resolved together they would:

“Accept the challenge of change” and that “Recovery is my responsibility.”

Family members looked on with admiration.

One of those family members was a little 7 month old boy named Xavier, whose father Michael was a program member.

I had first met Michael visiting the Richmond city jail. Now, Michael was free of the bars of imprisonment, accepting the responsibility of seizing the opportunity he had been given to turn his life around....for him and his son.

Michael is here with us tonight and I congratulate you Michael for what you are doing for yourself and your family and being an example of people turning their lives around.

Every day, Virginians help each other with generous acts of personal charity. I’ve seen it firsthand recently at The Healing Place in Richmond,

The Food Banks and Boys and Girls Clubs statewide

The USO in Norfolk.

The Carpenter’s Shelter in Alexandria.

The opportunity to serve one another is a call we all must answer. So tonight, I encourage all Virginians to continue to give back, help out, and work together.

Tonight, I have laid out some of my priorities for the year ahead of us.

Four years from tonight we will meet here again and look back on our time working together.

This is what I hope we can say:

That we had the foresight and the courage to invest in Virginia’s future when times were tough.

We helped create tens of thousands of new jobs, reduced our unemployment rate, expanded our tax base, and led the nation in job creation and economic development.



We embraced educational reform and didn't let old traditions and the status quo stand in the way of expanding opportunity for all children.

We put Virginia in the vanguard of the national charter school movement, rewarded our best teachers, put more money into the classroom, and expanded opportunities in the fields of science, technology, engineering, math and health care.

We put Virginia on a track to become a leader in higher education and made a college education affordable and accessible to all motivated young people.

We vigorously defended the Constitutional rights of our people to life, liberty and property.

We seized the opportunities presented to us by our vast natural resources and made Virginia the "Energy Capital of the East Coast."

Through prioritization, bonding, technology, public-private partnerships, and ingenuity we built new roads and bridges, expanded rail, improved our port and helped Virginians get to work a little quicker.

We ensured the safety of our citizens and the security of our businesses and communities by investing in public safety.

And we made government more cost effective, user-friendly, simpler and easier to navigate for our citizens.

Our founders created this nation with courage, pledging their lives, fortunes and sacred honor. Several lost their lives, most lost their fortunes. But none lost their sacred honor. We today, 234 years later, should pledge our best effort to build a stronger Virginia, by focusing on results and not credit, cooperation and not division. I ask for your partnership, your ideas, your talents and your hard-work in the weeks and years ahead.

God bless you and your families for serving the people of Virginia.

And God Bless the Commonwealth of Virginia.





