

**ADDRESS OF  
GOVERNOR RALPH S. NORTHAM**

**The State of the Commonwealth  
Address to the Joint Assembly  
2020**



**SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 1**

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
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Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, happy New Year, and thank you for that warm welcome.

To my wife Pam, Lieutenant Governor Fairfax, Attorney General Herring, Justices of the Supreme Court, newly-elected members, returning colleagues, and my Cabinet and staff, thank you for your service to the Commonwealth.

And good evening, Madam President and Madam Speaker. The Chamber looks pretty good from up here, doesn't it? It's a proud moment to look out and see a General Assembly that reflects, more than ever, the Virginia we see every day. This is truly an historic night.

Just one week ago, we closed a decade that sometimes challenged our fundamental beliefs—and even made us question what it means to live in a changing America.

So tonight, let us recall some basic facts, because we have a lot to be thankful for—and countless reasons for pride, hope, and optimism.

Today, around the world, scientific advances mean people live longer than ever before. Capitalism enables more people to live in prosperity than ever. And democracy gives more people than ever before the opportunity to live in freedom, and shape their future.

We should celebrate these amazing human achievements. Because today, we live at the greatest moment in the greatest state in the greatest country in human history.

But if we're honest, it doesn't always feel that way. Our country is divided. People are angry—left, right, center, urban, rural, men, women. Politics has grown too much about tearing each other down and too little about public service. And eight days into 2020, we know we have a long and painful election year ahead.

We just closed out a decade that brought a lot of change. The pace of change can be disorienting—and it's only getting faster. Ten short years ago, I had served in the Senate just a couple of years. I've cherished the opportunity to serve, and I'm thinking about that a lot tonight. But ten years ago, most of you were not here, especially in the House of Delegates. Everyone has a new role today. These new roles bring new responsibilities.

The changes in this General Assembly reflect the changes in Virginia. Virginia has grown by 600,000 people since then. That's like adding a new Richmond and a new Virginia Beach, in just a decade.

Ten short years ago, our country still reeled from the global economic collapse, brought on by Wall Street greed, and nearly 1 of every 10 Americans was out of work.

Today, more people are working than ever before. Statewide unemployment has dropped to record lows. That's good, and we need to keep this momentum going. But wages haven't kept up. Too many people are under-employed, and we can't ignore that fact.

The stock market has soared over these ten years. So have home prices. That's good news—if you're already doing well. But not if you're trying to. Many parts of Virginia have grown, as opportunity expands. Others have shrunk, as opportunity recedes.

The climate is changing, and sea levels are rising. Just ask the Navy, the shipyard, our friends on Tangier Island, or anyone who lives or works in Hampton Roads.

Virginia is changing. These are simply facts. In politics, over these past ten years, if you understood these facts, and you embraced change, then you advanced. If not, you fell behind.

I have been really excited about tonight. What an amazing opportunity for everyone here, and everyone at home, to witness history. Tonight, after 400 years, the first women are leading this Joint Assembly. Let's all congratulate them!

We celebrate this milestone, and we begin a new era. We spell that ... E-R-A!

We serve the people, and they have been clear: They expect us to face Virginia's modern challenges and to lead the way forward, to make our shared home an even better place to live and work.

Their expectations are really simple. Virginians want a well-paying job and the chance to get ahead. They want their children to have a world-class education. They want to be healthy. They want to live in a clean environment. They want to be treated fairly, and to participate in our civic life. They want to feel safe.

And they want an inclusive Virginia, embracing diversity—no matter the color of your skin, no matter what country you come from, what religion you practice, or who you love. I hear it all the time.

This is the work they have sent us here to do, and this is our job for the next 60 days and beyond. And tonight, it's my job to lay out where we should go, and how we will get there.

As a doctor, I swore an oath—first, to do no harm. I've learned that's a pretty good lesson for a public official too.

We start by protecting people's money. This means building up financial reserves and preserving our AAA bond rating. This is really important because it makes everything we do easier, and less expensive.

So I've sent you a budget that boosts our financial reserves to \$1.9 billion dollars. This is six times what we had in the bank when I came into office. Our savings were so low that a rating agency put us on credit watch. We were at risk of a downgrade. That would be bad.

It's just like your own credit. If your score goes down, it's harder to borrow money to buy a car or fix up your house—and it costs more too. A good credit rating is about saving money, and that's why it's so important. It's a critical tool to help us keep our economic momentum going.

Our economic climate has brought Virginia one of the country's lowest unemployment rates, at 2.6%. It's rarely been this low in the technology era, and every region of Virginia is experiencing a lower unemployment rate than a year ago.

Our economic climate brought Amazon to Northern Virginia, and I've taken them to Southwest Virginia to encourage investment there as well. That project led to a plan to train 31,000 people in computer science—all across Virginia.

Our economic climate brought Morgan Olsen to Danville-Pittsylvania County, creating 700 manufacturing jobs. It brought AeroFarms there too, to build the world's largest and most

sophisticated vertical farm. Agriculture remains the largest sector of Virginia's economy, and it's changing fast too.

I spend a lot of time listening to entrepreneurs around the country and around the world. They all tell me: We want to do business in Virginia. We need businesses to keep saying that.

We also know that the race for talent is on. Low unemployment means competition for workers. But just because you have a job doesn't always mean you can survive on it. The people who are building our economy should benefit from it too. The companies that recognize this will get ahead. So let's work together to raise the minimum wage.

Let's work together to help companies properly distinguish between contractors and employees. This will help workers get the fair treatment and benefits they deserve. And let's always remember that good conditions for workers depend on a strong economy and a strong business climate. That's how healthy and prosperous states generate the revenue to invest in safe streets, public education, good transportation networks, and more.

As you drove to Richmond for this session, you saw numerous road projects underway all over Virginia—improvements of I-81, I-64, 95 & 395, to name just a few. The Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel is being expanded, and we're moving forward on two new bridges across the Potomac River—one for cars & trucks, the other for trains.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make our rail system work better for commuters and passengers, across all of Virginia, throughout the southeast and along the entire East Coast. We're modernizing the Port of Virginia, to make it the deepest on the Atlantic Coast, so it can welcome the world's largest ships, and export our goods to every corner of the globe.

I thank you for supporting investments in this important infrastructure, because transit systems, bridges, and roads enable Virginia to compete in a fast-changing global economy. We have to invest to remain competitive.

It's no secret that the current way we fund transportation is simply not sustainable. States across the country are dealing with this. Clearly, it's good that people are burning less gas driving cleaner and more efficient cars. But that means revenues are dropping, while transportation costs are rising.

We need to reform transportation funding this session, and start to make new investments in transit to help commuters and low-income people get to work.

We also need to invest in broadband. Because the changing economy is about much more than moving people and goods—it's also about moving information. Broadband has become an economic necessity for business, for education, for healthcare, and for everyday life. So I've sent you a budget that invests \$35 million each year to get more communities connected. I ask you to pass it.

A changing economy requires us to think about education in new ways.

In the past, we thought of early childhood education merely as babysitting. But today, research shows that learning starts much earlier than we used to believe. The experiences children have in their earliest years lead to lifelong results. As a pediatric neurologist, and a parent, I know that learning needs to start earlier.

So I have sent you a comprehensive plan for early childhood education.

This plan will invest 95 million new dollars to help at-risk three- and four-year-olds start learning sooner. This means training educators, providing support, and setting accountability standards. I'm grateful to the First Lady for bringing together the early childhood community—parents, providers, the business community and more. They all know: If we invest in little learners today, we'll see great results for adults tomorrow. Other states have done this, and it's time for Virginia to get moving.

Then, we need to invest in our K-12 public schools—with teacher raises, more guidance counselors, and extra funds for high-need schools.

This budget increases the “At-Risk Add-On” for educationally at-risk students, by \$140 million. This is the largest single increase to this funding source in Virginia's history, and it's a critical investment in helping raise student achievement. An investment in public schools is an investment in students and our economy.

That's why it's so important. In fact, education represents 38% of the new spending in this budget. This is far and away the largest new investment we have proposed.

Then, after high school, people need to get job skills.

There's lots of ways to do this, from registered apprenticeship programs to Virginia's community colleges. They understand what employers need, and everyone can get to them. They're nimble, and they're changing fast to meet the needs of employers.

A changing economy requires us to think about their students in new ways too.

In the past, when people finished high school, then got a job or started a family, and then went back, we called them “non-traditional students.” But today, that describes a lot more students than ever. And many of them face two big barriers to getting advanced education—the cost, and life itself.

Here's an example. At Reynolds Community College here in Richmond, a majority of students are people of color. The college looked at “retention rates”—who starts a degree program and then goes on to complete it.

They identified students who started one academic year and didn't come back the next. They asked why didn't these students come back?

The answer is really important. The facts showed it was not academics that kept them from coming back. In fact, these students usually had earned a 3.1 grade point average when they left school.

Let that sink in for a minute.

These students enrolled in a degree program—trying to get a skill, so they can get a job, and provide for the people they love. They set a goal. They worked hard. They performed well, but dropped out. Why?

They left because life got in the way. The car broke down. Or the baby got sick. Or they lost their job. Just trying to get ahead. And then life hits you.

If you're that person, and life gets in the way, you're out of luck. That breaks my heart. Here's the good news: Reynolds found ways to help, and now Virginia needs to help too.

So I'm sending you a proposal to help people "Get Skilled, Get a Job, and Give Back." We call it "G-3."

We'll make a deal with people trying to get ahead. If you need help, and if you choose to go into a high-demand field—like health care, early childhood education, IT, public safety, or the skilled trades—and if you commit to community service, then Virginia will cover your tuition, fees, and books.

And if Pell grants already do that, we'll give you a stipend—\$1,000 a semester to help with transportation, child care, the rent, or even food. To help with life. That's a small amount for the Commonwealth, but it can build you a future you never thought possible. In return, we'll ask you to serve the community.

Virginia will be one of the first states in the country to do this. This program is about people. But remember this: This is an investment in our economy too.

Because Virginia is one of the few states that have record unemployment, and lots of people who are under-employed, and hundreds of companies that need workers, and too many places where too many people are stuck in poverty, especially in urban and rural Virginia.

I intend to keep the classroom-to-career pipeline open—and to keep our economic momentum going. So let's work together to help people get skilled, get a job, and give back.

That's just one way we are making it easier to go to college. We are also increasing funding to make public colleges more affordable for students. We are increasing the Tuition Assistance Grants that make private colleges more affordable for Virginia students. We're making it easier for DREAMers to attend college and get ahead, with in-state tuition.

We are increasing higher education grants for veterans and the National Guard. This is an important way to honor their service, especially now as tensions rise in the Middle East.

We're also increasing funding for Virginia's two public historically black colleges and universities. They play a critical role in training our workforce, and these funds will help bring them more in line with other universities.

Please welcome President Abdullah of Virginia State, and President Adams-Gaston of Norfolk State, who are with us in the gallery tonight.

I want us to also work together to make sure that people have a roof over their heads. Affordable housing helps attract jobs and build thriving communities. But this basic necessity is out of reach for too many people, especially in a strong economy.

So I'm proposing to triple the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, which works to increase affordable housing and keep people from experiencing homelessness.

We're also proposing a new program to help reduce evictions. It changes everything when you have a safe place to come home to every night. I saw that recently, when I met Ms. Karen Harris in Richmond.

She had been without a place to live for more than 20 years. Living on the streets. She told me, "It feels like there's no hope. That no one cares."

Then, three years ago, she got a place to live. A group called Virginia Supportive Housing helped her find it. They help people in lots of ways, from managing their health needs to filling out paperwork. It's a great program. They demonstrate that the best way to make sure people have a roof over their head—is to put a roof over their head.

And guess what happened when she got a safe place to live?

Her physical health improved. Her mental health improved. The fear is gone. She's working. She's learning new things, and she's giving back. Her life has literally been transformed.

She told me, "I don't have to just exist in this world anymore. Now, I have a chance to live." You want to know why this affordable housing proposal is so important? Look up there and see the big smile on Ms. Harris's face. Please help me welcome her to the gallery.

Now, let's turn to health care.

None of us wants to worry about it—not even a physician. We all want it to be more affordable and easier to understand. For years, folks tried to expand Medicaid in Virginia. We got it done together. Today, 375,000 more Virginians now have access to care. That's good news, and now there is more to do.

I ask you to pass the healthcare equity budget I sent you last month.

It looks like this. Do you want to see new mothers get more home visits? Should new mothers get access to care for a year after their baby is born? This budget does that.

Do you want to find a way to cover doula programs in the community? Do you want to help reduce maternal mortality, particularly among women of color?

Do you want more sickle cell services, and more health care workers in communities with high needs? This budget does all that.

Do you want more behavioral health care and community services? Do you want military service members and veterans to have better access to health care? This budget does that too.

This is the first time Virginia has invested in all this, in a serious way. This is the right thing to do for people, as we shape a Virginia that represents everyone. This also has real economic outcomes. When people are healthy, they can work and contribute to our economy. That's good for everyone.

I also ask you to take three more actions to make health care easier and more affordable.

First, I am sending you legislation to create a state-run marketplace.



This will help people who buy insurance on their own. The federal government runs the current system, and it isn't working. Virginia can do it better ourselves, and save money too.

Second, I ask you to create a "reinsurance program."

That helps insurers cover high-need people. It helps keep premiums low. The federal system used to have one, but it ran out—so premiums went up. We'll adjust the cigarette tax to pay for it. Let's be clear—it will still be lower than every neighboring state but one.

And then, it's time to end the laws that restrict a woman's right to direct her own health care.

Virginia has put these in place over the past 20 years or so. They're not about health care. They are about injecting politics and the government into the relationship between a woman and her physician.

You don't have to be a doctor to know that's bad medicine. No more will legislators in Richmond—most of whom are men—be telling women what they should and should not be doing with their bodies. It's time to overturn these laws.

Another thing that's important for our future is investing in our natural environment.

I grew up on the Chesapeake Bay, and I value stewardship of our natural resources. This responsibility goes back to the earliest days, when our Creator charged us to care for the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. I've seen how fragile our natural resources can be. I've seen over and over again how a clean environment and a strong economy go hand-in-hand.

So we made this a priority from the beginning, and we have accomplished a lot, starting with combatting climate change.

I set a clear goal: To have 3,000 megawatts of renewable energy—solar and wind—under way during my term, and up to 2,500 megawatts from off-shore wind soon after. That's enough to power more than a million homes.

We aim to have 30 percent of Virginia's electricity come from renewable sources in this next decade, and to make it 100 percent carbon-free by 2050. We're on track to achieve this clean energy goal. And know this: We'll get there sooner if technology advances faster, and if we can keep rates affordable. I'm pushing the energy companies to do just that.

We're leading by example. Last fall, we signed the country's largest contract to buy renewable energy to power state government. We're finally joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, called RGGI. We're replacing old diesel school buses with new electric ones. We dedicated \$20 million from the Volkswagen environmental settlement to super-charge the effort. In Botetourt, Virginia's first on-shore wind project is now moving forward, and we have broken ground on the first off-shore wind project, about 30 miles off of Virginia Beach. Now, it's time to super-charge that too.

So I have sent you plans to create a new Office of Offshore Wind. I ask you to do this, so Virginia can lead in clean energy.

Here's why this is so important: That off-shore wind project will be enormous. The turbines are huge. They are taller than the Statue of Liberty. So you can't build them in some far-off factory,

put the blades on a truck and drive them over. They're just too big. It's best to build them close by, then send them out to sea.

Here's what's so exciting: This means thousands of advanced manufacturing jobs for Hampton Roads. This will create an entire new clean-energy industry here in Virginia. It will expand supply chain and logistics opportunities. But we have to invest to make it happen.

So I ask you to approve up to \$40 million to upgrade the Portsmouth Marine Terminal to get it ready.

This is good for the environment—and it's good for our economy too. So if you believe in clean energy, if you want to see American manufacturing jobs right here in Virginia, jobs that will supply parts for offshore wind up and down the East Coast, then I ask you to pass this budget.

Clean energy is just one of many ways we aim to protect Virginia's natural resources. Our budget protects open space by tripling our current investment in land preservation. It includes major new clean-water funding.

These investments will help local governments tackle stormwater pollution and upgrade wastewater treatment plants. They will help farmers reduce runoff and implement "best management practices" in conservation. They will help restore oyster reefs in the Chesapeake Bay, because a single oyster can filter 50 gallons of water a day...plus they're good to eat and good for you.

All together, our investments in clean water total more than \$400 million, and they will put Virginia on track to meet our obligation to clean the Bay by the 2025 deadline. We want other Chesapeake Bay states to look to Virginia as the clean water leader. Let's get it done together.

Soon after taking office, I ordered the Department of Environmental Quality to modernize outdated regulations, strengthen enforcement, identify reasons for delays in permitting, and improve transparency.

These were the first steps in restoring a critical agency that had been cut by 30 percent over the past decade. We need to keep making progress. So this budget includes new funding to help DEQ better protect the environment.

A major portion is dedicated to community outreach, and it's time to create a permanent Environmental Justice Council. This is about addressing community issues up front. It's about transparency in decision-making, when projects might affect a neighborhood, or historic lands. It's the right thing to do, and I ask you to support it.

In all of our work, we strive to treat people fairly, and to make it easier to participate in our civic life.

Basic fairness and equity are the foundation of our legislative agenda for this session. If we are going to move forward as a Commonwealth, we must take an honest look at our past. We know that racial discrimination is rooted in many of the laws that have governed our Commonwealth.

So we convened a Commission to examine overtly discriminatory language that's still on our books. These include laws banning school integration, prohibiting black and white Virginians from living in the same neighborhoods, and prohibiting people from getting married unless they're the

same race. These words remain enshrined in law, even as many of the Acts have been overturned.

Words matter. They represent who we are and what we value. Actions matter too. So it's time to remove these words from Virginia's books.

Then, we will pass comprehensive protections in employment, housing, and public accommodations for LGBTQ people. These are important steps toward building a more equal, just, and inclusive state.

We need to make it easier for people to participate in their government. There's no more fundamental way to do that, than to vote. But in recent years, Virginia has steadily added more restrictions on voting. This infringes on our most basic civil right as Americans.

We need to make it easier to vote, not harder. So we should do two things. One, no excuses required to vote absentee. The government shouldn't have to okay your reason for needing to vote early. And then, we need to make Election Day a holiday. We can do it by ending the Lee-Jackson holiday that Virginia holds a week from Friday. It commemorates a lost cause. It's time to move on.

And while we're at it, we need to let localities decide what to do with the Confederate monuments in their community. They know the right thing to do.

We also need to take an honest look at our criminal justice system, to make sure we're treating people fairly—and using taxpayer dollars wisely.

For lots of historical reasons, our criminal justice system doesn't provide a second chance. If you make a mistake at a young age, and even if you pay your debt to society, your punishment too often follows you throughout your life.

Now make no mistake—if you commit a crime, there will be consequences. That can't change, and it won't. But the punishment must fit the crime. Not every offense deserves a life sentence. It's time to temper justice with mercy.

Remember—this is a bipartisan issue. Lots of Republican-led states have reformed their criminal justice systems. It's time for Virginia to do it too.

This means de-criminalizing marijuana possession—and clearing the records of people who've gotten in trouble for it. It means making permanent the temporary policy you passed last year—the one that says no more suspended drivers licenses, just because you owe court fines. If you can't drive, how can you get to work to earn the money to pay those fines? This temporary policy is working. Let's make it permanent.

Criminal justice reform includes reforming parole. If offenders are older, or terminally ill, and they've paid their debt to society, and they're no longer a threat—what's the benefit in keeping them from being eligible for parole?

Our criminal justice reform package funds more public defenders, including the first public defender office in Prince William. It provides support to returning citizens, and funding to speed up reviews of requests for pardons.

This is about simple justice and fairness. When you've paid your debt, we should welcome you back, encourage you to participate in civil society, and restore your right to vote. The data show that, and it's just the right thing to do.

Lastly, let's turn to gun safety.

I know this is a deeply emotional issue. Let's focus on facts. You all know the issue, and so do the voters. Because this is not new.

Last summer, after the terrible shooting in Virginia Beach, I called the previous General Assembly into special session to take immediate action. I proposed eight common-sense measures, designed to keep firearms away from dangerous persons. But there WAS no action. The measures I proposed did not receive a hearing.

Virginians watched. They saw what happened, and they were appalled. So they changed the legislature. And here we are.

This issue generates great emotion. But the facts are the facts, and I want Virginians to know the facts. Gun violence takes the lives of more than one thousand Virginians every year. Three people every day. At that rate, everyone on the floor of this Chamber would be gone by March.

These are mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, friends, and little children. Virginians have had enough of the vigils and the funerals, enough of the mourning. They made that clear at the ballot box.

So we are back, with eight common-sense measures to keep dangerous persons away from firearms. If you have demonstrated extreme risk of violence, or there's a protective order against you, you shouldn't have a firearm. This means universal background checks. If there's nothing in your record, you have nothing to worry about.

Let's be clear. This is all fully consistent with the Second Amendment. Every one of these proposals has passed constitutional muster. Other states have passed them into law. They were drafted by your own attorneys at Legislative Services, and teams of lawyers have reviewed them.

It's clear that a majority of Virginians support these measures, and so do a majority of you. Many of you ran on common-sense gun safety, on both sides of the aisle.

I know that "thoughts and prayers" are important and well-intended, after an act of violence. But Virginians spoke in November, and they expect votes and laws to make Virginia safer.

As this discussion begins, let's have an honest conversation based on fact, not fear. We will engage in civil dialogue. I ask all Virginians to refrain from promoting fear and intimidation.

I want to reiterate: This common-sense legislation does not violate the Second Amendment. No one is calling out the National Guard. No one is cutting off your electricity, or turning off the Internet. No one is going door-to-door to confiscate guns. These laws are intended to keep Virginians safe. Period. It's time to act.

On Monday, it will be two years since I stood on the steps of this Capitol and swore an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of Virginia. I take this oath seriously.

Every night, when I go to bed, I ask myself, How well did I do today? How well did I serve Virginia? And when I'm down, and yes—I'm human too, I search for new ways to carry out my responsibilities. Believe me, I've found some over the past year.

A few things sometimes keep me up at night. I worry that our country is too polarized, and that we might not get past it. I worry that too many people believe there's not a place for them in our democracy. I worry that a child born a decade ago, looks at our country's politics today, and thinks this is normal. I want that 10-year-old to know how wrong that is. I want her to know that we are bigger than this.

We all have a lot to do to change America's politics. And this country once again looks to Virginia for leadership. It's easy to see why.

In Virginia, we protect the people's money. We balance our budget. Washington hasn't done that in a generation. In Virginia, we save money. We put it in the bank for a rainy day. In Washington, they've run up the national debt above \$23 trillion dollars. One day, that bill will come due, and it's going to cost us all.

And in Virginia, we treat each other with respect. We know that nasty tweets and name-calling are wrong. We would punish our children if they acted that way, and we should be sick of it.

I think we all want to live in a country where we'd be proud if our young child can look to our country's leaders and say, I want to be like that person when I grow up. We don't have that now. But we can get it back, and we must.

Tonight, to everyone who took the oath of office today, I say congratulations.

And I ask you to remember: We all represent everyone who lives in this great Commonwealth. Family, friend, and foe alike. Whether we know them, or whether we like them. Even if you never met them, or visit the place where they live.

That's not easy. It calls us to reach out of ourselves, to be larger, to be generous of heart. To be forgiving, and to treat each other as we would like to be treated.

I learned that lesson from my mother. When I was a kid, she taught children who were learning English as their second language how to read. She worked in health care, nursing sick people back to health on Virginia's Eastern Shore. She volunteered with the hospice, comforting people in their final hours.

She taught me that, no matter who we are or where we come from, we are all equal in the beginning and in the end. I've thought of that many times since I've had this job. That lesson comforts me, especially as I take on a great responsibility, like the one that you and I begin together tonight.

Tonight, I've presented an agenda that is different from every previous General Assembly session. It's a lot bolder, and it's more forward-looking than ever before. I'm here as your Governor because I'm a builder, and I hope you will choose to build too. Let's build Virginia's future together.

I know it will not be easy. Nothing that matters is. I also know this: Our hardest days are behind us, and our greatest days ahead. In America, we love a new beginning.

As I look around this room, I see 140 people that I'm eager to work with. Some I've known for a long time. Others I'm just getting to know. Everyone in a new role.

I know you love Virginia, and I do too. I was born and raised here. Pam and I chose to raise our family here, and we intend to live the rest of our lives here. We've got a lot to do for the people of Virginia. And when we do it right, treating each other with respect and decency, Virginia will once again show the country how to lead. I can't imagine a more noble mission, or anyone I'd rather take it on with.

I'm grateful to the Virginians who stand together, and who encourage me every day.

On behalf of Virginia, thank you all for your willingness to serve—and to your families for supporting what you do. Let's make Virginia proud.

May God bless you, may God bless Virginia, and may God bless the greatest country in the world.



