

**ADDRESS OF
GOVERNOR GLENN YOUNGKIN**

**The State of the Commonwealth
Address to the Joint Assembly
2026**



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Mister Speaker, Lieutenant Governor Earle-Sears, Madame President, Attorney General Miyares, Members of the General Assembly, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Powell, Justices of the Virginia Supreme Court and judges of the State Corporation Commission, our Clerks, Members of my Cabinet, and my fellow Virginians:

It is an honor to join you once again in Mr. Jefferson's Capitol for my report on the state of our beloved Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth is soaring.

The Commonwealth is alive with opportunity.

The Commonwealth is competing, and winning.

The Commonwealth is stronger today than she has ever been.

This is the state of the Commonwealth that I have had the immense honor of serving these past four years.

Fortunately, this service journey has not been a solitary one.

And as I prepare to hand the key to the Governor's Mansion over to Governor-elect Spanberger, I look around this room and I am filled with gratitude.

Filled with gratitude because I see so many men and women who have been involved in Virginia's incredible transformation. A transformation we have witnessed, and we have led – together.

And so to Lieutenant Governor Winsome Earle-Sears and Attorney General Jason Miyares, to members of my Cabinet and my Administration: "thank you."

To our General Assembly partners:

Most times I have agreed with many of you, and sometimes I have disagreed with some of you.

Frequently, you've been in my prayers.

And always, I have considered you to be devoted public servants. "Thank you."

The absolute best part of this season of service has been traveling every step of the way with the love of my life.

She has brought grace and joy to the lives of so many Virginians. Thank you to our most extraordinary First Lady, Suzanne Youngkin!

And finally, “thank you” to my fellow Virginians.

To say “thank you” comes nowhere close to conveying the profound sense of gratitude I feel.

Gratitude that this homegrown Virginian was hired and given the chance to go to work for the now 8.8 million Virginians.

I feel like I’ve met almost all 8.8 million of you. From Loudoun County to Danville, from the Eastern Shore to Lee County, and everywhere in between.

I’ve met incredible Virginians, like the small business owner who courageously started his first shop and then expanded to two, and then three.

Virginians like our teachers, who are exciting our students about learning, and helping them discover their passion in life.

Like the nurse who is empowering a fellow Virginian to leave behind a life of addiction, and start leading a life of hope.

Like the farmer who, rain or shine, makes sure the animals get fed and the fields get ploughed.

Like the shipbuilders who arrive at the docks when it is dark each morning, and who are building the most powerful Navy anywhere in the world.

Brave Virginians like our law enforcement heroes who put on a bullet proof vest every day to go to work to keep us safe.

Our amazing men and women who wear the cloth and serve our country, from the 150,000 active duty servicemembers, to the reservists, to the Virginia National Guard who has served Virginia since 1607.

Remarkable Virginians like the families of the fallen. No moments over these last four years have impacted me more than standing with families as we hear the End of Watch and say good-bye to these quiet heroes.

And our newest Virginians who didn’t grow up here, but found opportunity here, and now call Virginia home.

So to all of you and more: “thank you.”

It is you who have been the driving force for all we’ve accomplished over these past four years.

Thank you for believing we could change the trajectory of a Commonwealth that was stalled and make her soar.

Thank you for showing we can strengthen the Spirit of Virginia...together.

Four years ago, Virginia was in a very different place.

I was humbled recently when someone described what has taken place over these past four years as “The Great Virginia Renaissance.”

A Renaissance that reflects the real and widespread challenges we faced.

Our schools were 46th in the nation to reopen. Parents were being sidelined. And students were falling behind.

Virginia had the largest learning loss in the nation in fourth grade reading and math.

Twenty-five thousand small businesses had closed their doors in 2021. Job recovery lagged behind nearly every other state.

Violent crime had surged, with a 20-year high in the murder rate.

And for nine straight years, more people moved away than moved to Virginia from the other 49 states.

This was Virginia in January 2022. A Virginia that was lagging, not leading.

But amid these challenges we – all of us – saw a Virginia bursting with boundless potential just waiting to be unleashed.

And so, four years ago we, collectively, set out on a journey.

A journey to unleash opportunity. To transform government. To make Virginia the very best place to live, work, and raise a family.

We could reduce tax burdens, lowering the cost of living for Virginians, and generate record state revenue.

We could restore educational excellence, and see our students perform even better.

We could enforce the laws and have the lowest recidivism rate in the nation.

We could overhaul our behavioral health system, and transform foster care so our kids are safe and our families are strong.

We could provide historic tax relief to our veterans, and honor them and their families with award-winning care and support.

We could lead the nation in connecting Virginians to high-speed broadband, and invest record amounts in our roads, bridges, and tunnels.

We could transform the great City of Petersburg through a historic partnership, and accelerate economic activity in Southwest.

We could deliver hundreds of millions of dollars in procurement savings, and serve all Virginians with best-in-class constituent services.

We could protect free speech, and keep our campuses safe.

We said we would measure outcomes not in terms of activity, but by accomplishments and actual results.

And we also said there are some things about which there can be no debate.

That we must grow, and we could grow like never before.

That we want Virginia to be a winning state – with more jobs, more opportunity, more people – not a losing state, shedding businesses and people.

That we must make Virginia the place companies want to build their futures... businesses like LEGO and Eli Lilly... like AstraZeneca and Hitachi... and not impose anti-business policies that chase jobs and opportunity away.

We committed that we would stop doing what doesn't work, and start doing more of what does. And what we know works... is Commonsense!

And by putting commonsense into action, we've achieved the kind of transformation very few people thought was possible.

This transformation started with business investment and jobs, and declaring on Day One that Virginia was Open for Business.

Over and over again I heard the same refrain from Virginians: "We want jobs – good paying jobs."

But, Virginia needed to start competing and Virginia needed to start winning...

We worked together to build an economic development machine. A machine that is unleashing opportunity like never before.

Virginia is now a leader in life sciences. A leader in advanced manufacturing. A leader powering some of America's most critical industries and supply chains.

Where Made in America once again means Made in Virginia.

Where day after day Virginians from all walks of life are hearing those magical three words: "You. Are. Hired."

On Day One we went to work to build that dynamic economy.

We streamlined regulations by 35 percent, saving Virginians \$1.4 billion every year by cutting the cost of bureaucracy. Including by reducing the average cost to build a home by \$24,000!

We invested a record amount in business-ready sites and drove Virginia government to move at the speed of business.

We transformed workforce development, consolidating a vast number of disparate programs into one new agency, Virginia Works, and created the nation's leading customized talent development program – the Talent Accelerator.

We restructured the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, and most importantly we competed... we competed to win.

And win we have.

We've won record business investment – over \$157 billion – more than the last six Administrations combined.

Growing over 20,000 new high-growth startups.

Record investment that has fueled enormous job growth.

Nearly 270,000 more Virginians are working today than when we started.

We have 255,000 open jobs, another 80,000 new jobs on the way from those investment commitments, along with 40,000 construction jobs. Virginia has jobs. Lots of jobs.

Virginia is a winning state, and the winning continues.

We announced in December AVIO's \$500 million dollar plant which will employ 1,500 people, and we finalized two more great manufacturing deals last Fall: a \$300 million dollar plant that will employ over 1,000 people in Southside, and \$1.2 billion dollar facility that will employ nearly 300 people in Virginia's Piedmont region.

We are leaving the next Administration a robust pipeline of great projects that well exceeds \$100 billion of capital investment and 32,000 jobs.

Virginia has been on a tear because we have protected Right to Work.

Please hear me loud and clear: change Right to Work and jobs will disappear. People will leave. And they will take their tax dollars with them.

Keeping Virginia soaring means keeping Right to Work right where it is...

No amendments. No reforms. No changes.

Keeping Virginia on a winning streak also means continuing to work and cooperate with our federal partners and the Trump Administration.

Constructively working with the Administration works for Virginians.

When a Governor picks up the phone and calls a Cabinet Secretary to work through issues, it's good for Virginia.

Issues like:

Turning on \$2.5 billion of paused grants. Attracting the Department of Housing and Urban Development Headquarters with more than 2,700 jobs to Virginia. Recruiting Fortune 50 businesses with billions of investment and thousands of jobs. Delivering hurricane relief faster than any other state...

...that is what is best for Virginians.

The record jobs and investments we've attracted have driven record revenues.

\$10 billion in surplus revenue...8 percent compounded revenue growth for four straight years – 60 percent faster than the previous decade.

Record revenue that enabled \$9 billion in tax relief, and still historic investment across every critical area.

And while throughout 2025 many predicted financial calamity... not only has financial calamity not happened, but once again Virginia is running a significant surplus.

Yesterday, we announced December revenue results: a 20 percent increase over last December, and year-to-date growth of \$1.2 billion after just six months.

Revenues are growing at 8.6 percent, again...no COVID money, no one-time gifts...just historic revenue growth driven by historic business growth, job growth and strong consumer spending.

My introduced Budget included a reforecast adding \$1.2 billion in resources to Fiscal Year 2026 alone. December just added another \$395 million to that number.

Virginia has record resources.

I included \$700 million more tax relief in my proposed budget AND huge investment increases in Medicaid, Education, Law Enforcement, and Capital Spending.

And yet, bills raising nearly every tax known to man have been introduced.

One thing we have clearly demonstrated is that lowering tax burdens brings people, businesses, and jobs. Increasing taxes drives them away. Just look at California and Illinois, New York and Maryland.

Indeed, in 2023, for the first time in 10 years, more people moved to Virginia than moved away to the other 49 states. Commonsense works!

A significant part of that investment went to Education – a record amount reflecting a \$7 billion increase since the pandemic.

Empowering Virginians to seize unlimited opportunity all starts in the classroom.

The pandemic wreaked havoc on Virginia's students and families.

Schools were closed too long unnecessarily. We were 46th in the nation to reopen our schools. The learning loss was devastating.

Standards were lowered. Parents were pushed out of their children's lives. And we risked losing an entire generation if we didn't act quickly.

Restoring excellence in education has been our collective North Star.

It started with putting parents back at the head of the table in their children's lives because Parents Matter!

We passed historic bipartisan legislation to allow parents to choose if their child wore a mask, and to allow parents to remove sexually explicit material from their child's curriculum.

We're exciting students again by gaining the real-world skills they need to succeed after they graduate.

We've launched 15 new Lab Schools with space for 5,000 students, and we already have a long waiting list.

Innovative lab schools...from the maritime trades outside the shipyards of Hampton Roads...to space and aviation at Wallops Island...to data science and coding in the Shenandoah Valley and Richmond...healthcare in Southwest...and, teachers in the rural Piedmont region.

And with our huge focus on career and technical education, four out of five Virginia high school students now graduate with a credential or a certificate.

Great education outcomes require a great teacher. And we've supported teachers.

Teacher compensation is up nearly 20 percent. Teacher vacancies are down 36 percent. And Virginia was recently ranked the Number One state to be a teacher!

We also embraced transparency and accountability, and raised standards to drive better student outcomes.

Gone are the days of Virginia having the lowest proficiency baselines in the country, cheating our students by shuffling them along, or worse, lying about whether they could read or do math at grade level.

We made our standardized tests harder and our students did better, including a 20 percent surge in math proficiency.

Of course, students can't learn if they aren't in school in the first place.

We locked arms with the All-In Virginia plan. "Thank you" to Senators Locke and Lucas for your partnership. And now Virginia leads the nation in reducing chronic absenteeism and getting students back in the classroom!

Intensive tutoring works.

We've led all our peer states in math learning loss recovery. And the nationally leading Virginia Literacy Act is transforming the way students learn to read!

But in addition to learning loss, we know that behavioral health distress among teens has been surging since even before the pandemic.

Increased social media use and endless screentime are one of the main culprits. These devices and apps are profiting off our kids and stealing their childhood.

But we collectively acted to reclaim childhood and create a healthier and happier Virginia.

Bell-to-Bell Cell Phone-Free Education is now the law of the land across the Commonwealth!

Virginia is a model for the rest of the nation. Because in Virginia we don't follow, we lead.

Academic performance is up. Mental health and discipline challenges are down. And school cafeterias are humming loud with noise because students are talking to each other again.

To all the parents who advocated for your children, you have shown once again that yes, Parents Matter!

To make Virginia the very best place to live, work, and raise a family, Virginia has to be safe.

From Day One of my Administration, we have backed the Blue, supporting, encouraging and celebrating these heroic men and women.

We have provided record funding. We've invested in equipment and training. Increased salaries.

I urge you to keep investing, to keep supporting, and to keep Backing the Blue.

We've taken on gangs, drugs, and human trafficking.

Our statewide efforts include gang task forces, extensive collaboration and cooperation with other states and with federal partners.

We've seized enough fentanyl that otherwise could have killed every Virginian ten times over.

We've arrested violent gang members, including the Number Three leader of MS-13.

We've brought down the most violent of crimes...especially in our most violent cities as part of Operation Ceasefire and Operation Bold Blue Line.

And thanks to our dedicated law enforcement professionals, we've seen a 30 percent decline in murders.

These courageous Virginians have more reinforcements on the way.

On Monday, I had the honor of visiting the Virginia State Police's 144th Class as they complete their Basic Session Training.

In a few weeks, this Class will graduate 94 incredible men and women into the ranks of Virginia State Troopers – the second largest graduating class ever.

Virginians are once again proud and excited to enter this most noble profession. "Thank you" to our heroes who keep us safe. And "thank you" to Colonel Matt Hanley for your leadership.

We've tackled the scourge of drug addiction head on. Our fight against fentanyl has been extraordinary.

When we started this journey, fentanyl was claiming the lives of more than five Virginians a day.

Suzanne and I have met, prayed, and cried with families who have buried a child, a spouse, a sister or brother, or a parent because of this evil.

And so we came together and launched a comprehensive fight against fentanyl.

A fight we've taken to the frontlines by enhancing penalties and creating tougher new laws.

Now drug dealers are on notice: if you push this poison and kill someone in the process, you will be held accountable, and you will be charged with felony manslaughter.

We've educated parents, students, teachers, coaches and pastors through the First Lady's It Only Takes One statewide campaign and the Attorney General's One Pill Can Kill public awareness initiative.

We've equipped Virginians to stop an overdose in progress by delivering 400,000 life-saving naloxone doses, and training nearly 100,000 people to use them.

We locked arms with community partners, including our It Only Takes One College Ambassadors and heroic Fentanyl Family Ambassadors who continue to inspire us all with their courage.

Thanks to our comprehensive efforts, Virginia now leads the nation in reducing fatal fentanyl overdoses by 59 percent!

Our fight isn't over. But where once there was heartbreak, now there is hope.

Empowering Virginians to lead the lives God intended has been the driving force behind our complete overhaul of our behavioral health system.

Virginians in crisis needed help and could not get it.

So four years ago we started a journey to transform behavioral health.

To expand capacity across the state. To deliver faster, more effective responses. To get law enforcement out of emergency rooms and back on the street. To expand the workforce.

Today, we've increased our care capacity in beds and chairs by 241 percent.

We've improved our responsiveness, with 988 crisis calls up by 456 percent to over 30,000 per month.

We've deployed nearly three times as many Mobile Crisis Teams across the Commonwealth – achieving a statewide average response time of just 42 minutes.

And we've substantially grown the work force, adding over 30,000 new health care workers.

The Commonwealth is setting the national standard for how to care for individuals in crisis. To get them the Right Help, Right Now.

Because when Virginians need help, Virginians show up.

There has been no better example of neighbor helping neighbor than when Hurricane Helene tore through Southwest.

In the face of devastating loss, the true character of our Commonwealth shone through.

Heroic rescues by law enforcement, first responders, and our Virginia National Guard.

Volunteers and donations rebuilt or repaired over 110 homes and assisted over 4,000 households.

Collaboration with state, local and federal resources has led to: Rebuilding Route 58 faster. Delivering Farm Recovery Block Grants before any other state and accelerating the reconstruction of the Creeper Trail at lightning pace so this huge economic contributor can be reopened by November of this year!

And the support coming from Virginia's \$50 million recovery fund is now flowing.

I visited Southwest Virginia 30 times in the 15 months following Helene.

I can tell you that today, Southwest Virginia has their collective foot on the accelerator. They're not turning back. And all of us should make sure they soar with the rest of the Commonwealth.

Every corner of the Commonwealth is benefitting from tremendous job growth and business investment.

And because business is booming and our population is growing, it means our energy and power needs are rising as well.

For too long, Virginia's policies and the Utilities planned for a stagnant Virginia. Well, we are not stagnant. We are growing. And we must execute a plan where power is reliable, affordable, and Made in Virginia.

Meeting this growing power need means continuing to support an All-of-the-Above power plan.

What it definitely doesn't mean is rejoining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

It's a bad deal. It doesn't work. And it's a regressive tax that drives up the cost of living for all Virginians.

It also doesn't mean driving away data centers. The positive economic contribution from data centers is enormous.

The industry will pay their fair share of power costs, even bringing their own power behind the meter. The national security imperative will drive huge investment. Virginia should win. Don't drive it away to other states.

What it does mean is that we must continue to build gas-powered generation and nuclear power.

We need to double our generating capacity in the next 10 years. Renewables alone – which will drive up costs and risk brownouts – just can't get it done.

Just look at Maryland, where electricity rates have nearly doubled, and are 19 percent higher than the national average.

I urge you to undo the Virginia Clean Economy Act.. It simply does not work for Virginians.

The good news is we can both meet our energy needs and be great stewards of God's natural resource blessings to Virginia.

With the huge efforts we have made to support our Chesapeake Bay 2025 goals, including record funding for Agriculture Best Management Practices, I am proud to report that the Chesapeake Bay is healthier than it has been in decades!

And Virginia led the way to set the new framework signed in December for the next phase of preserving our great Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Virginia's transformation has been broad. From healthy rivers and streams to healthy moms and healthy babies.

Through our Healthy Moms, Healthy Families, and Healthy Communities initiative, we've seen a 68 percent reduction in maternal mortality!

Building Blocks for Virginia Families delivered the best Public-Private-Parent Choice model for Early Education and Childcare in America... not only maintaining full access for 74,000 children after the Biden Administration cut funding, but also with my recent introduced Budget providing 6,000 more subsidy slots. Our quality model leads the nation.

We've shown it is possible to make government work for Virginians.

The Virginia Employment Commission has cleared all its backlog of more than 700,000 work items coming out of COVID, and we've cleared 1.7 million in total.

Among peer states, we now make benefit decisions faster than anyone, and we rank top third at getting out the first payment to unemployed Virginians.

We've cut waiting times at the DMV from nearly 40 minutes to, in October, the shortest average wait in history – 5.9 minutes!

We've shown that with clear purpose and with commonsense, it is indeed possible to make government work for Virginians.

And it is possible to take a Commonwealth that was stalled and make her soar like never before.

By every single metric, today Virginia is stronger than she has ever been. Stronger:

Financially. Educationally. Environmentally. Stronger in terms of Public Safety. In terms of Behavioral Health. With better Infrastructure. And with more opportunity than ever before.

We have strengthened the spirit of Virginia, together.

A Spirit of courage and fortitude. Of compassion and love. Of resiliency in the face of challenges, and always rising to meet new ones.

And this same Spirit was beating in the hearts of our forebearers 250 years ago as well.

Throughout this year, all of America will take part in our semiquincentennial celebrations. But no state has as much to celebrate as we do here in Virginia.

Because 250 years ago it was Virginians who led the way to America's Founding.

Washington. Jefferson. Madison and Monroe... Patrick Henry... and so many others along the way.

America was Made in Virginia!

This “new nation, conceived in liberty,” was born, and then built on those foundational values that have sustained us for two and a half centuries.... even when we didn’t live up to them.

The revolutionary belief that government is of the people.

That government exists to serve the people, not for people to serve the government.

Because our rights – those unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – come from God, not government.

The foundational pillars and values that must always define America were born right here in Virginia.

Pillars and values that have made America a beacon of hope to the world for 250 years.

And those values and that beacon must continue to guide Virginia’s future.

250 years ago, Virginia led. And I will humbly submit that over these past four years Virginia has led in so many ways that may have stunned others, but should surprise none of us.

And so as we prepare to write the next 250-year chapter of our nation’s history, Virginia should and Virginia must continue to lead.

It has been the honor of a lifetime for Suzanne and me to serve in this season alongside all of you.

So from the bottom of our incredibly grateful hearts: “thank you, Virginia.”

May God bless all of you. May He continue to bless our great Commonwealth. And may He always bless the United States of America.

