

Governor Youngkin's Inauguration Speech on 15 January 2022

Good afternoon. Mr. Speaker, Lt. Governor Sears, Attorney General Miyares, Madame President, Members of the General Assembly, Justices of the Supreme Court, my fellow Virginians.

Today we gather, not as individuals, nor as Republicans or Democrats but as Virginians.

And for the 73rd time in the history of Virginia, the home of American Democracy, we're participating in the peaceful and orderly transfer of leadership.

The will of the people grants a license to serve. A temporary license extended with trust, with faith, and with expectations to deliver on promises made.

And therefore, as I reflect on my Virginia home and my love for this great nation and its founding principles. I'm so very humbled to be sworn in as the 74th governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The solemn oath sworn today in the name of the almighty Father is done so with the love of my life by my side, your new First Lady, Suzanne Youngkin.

And with the pride and joy of our lives, our four children Grant, Anna, John and Thomas. I'm so grateful for their love and support. And to my sister Dottie I can feel mom and dad smiling down upon us today.

Suzanne and I want to thank Governor Ralph Northam and First Lady Pam Northam for being so gracious and supportive during this transition.

Their love for Virginia shines through their many years of dedication to her. On behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia I thank you for your service.

In this last election, we heard from more voters than ever before , 25% more, nearly 3.3 million Virginians who sent us here on a mission to restore trust in government, and to restore power to the people.

We stand here today as the messengers of that movement. Entrusted to protect liberty create opportunity and build unity for the hard work ahead.

This celebration is about that movement and not the candidates or elected-office holders. It's not about me, but rather about us.

And this movement continues to be fueled by the hopes and dreams and yes, the tenacity and grit of Virginians, of parents, students and teachers, of entrepreneurs and small business owners, of law enforcement and first responder heroes, of hard-working Virginians coming home from the midnight to 8am shift of active duty military, veterans and their families, of farmers, factory workers and healthcare heroes.

Today we stand together on behalf of Virginians who've never lost faith, even when they have suffered loss. Of Virginians who have not stopped dreaming of a better life, even in the midst of trials and tribulations.

My fellow Virginians, the spirit of Virginia is alive and well. And together we will strengthen it.

Together we'll renew the promise of Virginia, so it will be the best place to live, work and raise a family.

No matter who you voted for, I pledge to be your advocate, your voice, your governor.

We stand here on January 15, 2022 filled with hope and optimism for the years ahead. This hope and optimism springs from a shared vision for the future, and also from knowing what we have been through. We are acutely aware of the struggles Virginians have endured over the last two years, struggles that we continue to face.

Not a single one of us has escaped the tragic consequences of Covid-19.

Today we lift-up our prayers for the more than 15,000 Virginians whose lives have been lost. We pray for the families. And we pray for those who have survived but who have lost jobs, lost an income or a business, or even lost hope.

We know the impact borne by children, who fell behind because their classrooms were locked down too long.

And the strain placed on parents. Especially Virginia moms who had to juggle with their homes becoming job sites and virtual classrooms overnight.

This moment of hardship has been compounded by economic factors. Inflation and supply chain failures. Rising grocery, gas and utility bills. As well higher taxes and stagnant growth.

We've also witnessed a rise in divisiveness in the public square and distrust of public figures.

Our politics have become too toxic. Soundbites have replaced solutions --- taking precedence over good faith problem-solving.

Yet, as we gather here today, I join you with an unbridled sense of optimism, because I know and trust Virginians.

We're home to a resilient and courageous people, heroes who've inspired us, Doctors and nurses who worked double-shifts to save lives, grocers, truckers, postal workers who worked overtime to stock shelves and make deliveries, and neighbors who took care of the frail and elderly in their community.

Despite the continuing challenges posed by Covid-19, I see a path forward. Not to some pessimistic new normal, but to a new and better day.

Our common path forward is with the miracle of modern medicine, that's given us vaccines, new therapeutics and medical treatments.

Our common path forward is with our deep and abiding respect for individual freedom.

And our common path forward protects both lives and livelihoods.

My fellow Virginians, I come to this moment, and to this office, knowing we must bind the wounds of division. Restore trust. Find common cause for the common good. And strengthen the spirit of Virginia.

And to be clear this spirit of Virginia is not about government deciding for us what is best for us.

But rather reflecting the will of the people. Defending and protecting the rights guaranteed by our constitution. And a government and elected leaders going to work for “We the People”.

Make no mistake, Virginians remain resilient with that tenacity and grit and undeterred hope and optimism to press through these challenges.

We must venture forward because a new and better day is ahead of us.

After all, we are Virginians whose leaders gave birth to the most exceptional nation the world has ever known.

Yes a country with chapters of great injustice.

But also a country birthed on the fundamental notion of freedom. That we’re all endowed by our “Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”.

A nation whose ideas and ideals have been replicated and memorialized around the globe for nearly 250 years.

And Virginians have led boldly from our founding – Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and our very first governor, Patrick Henry, who insisted on adding the Bill of Rights to the Constitution to protect our individual liberties.

This is our lineage. And following generations carried that mantle, leading and serving as Virginians are called to do.

Barrier-breakers like Maggie Walker and Governor Doug Wilder (who is here today) --- leading the way for the historic inauguration today of our new Lt Governor Winsome Earle Sears and our new Attorney General Jason Miyares.

The people of Virginia just elected the most diverse leadership in commonwealth history. Sending a message that Virginia is big enough for the hopes and dreams of a diverse people.

We stand here today to accept the license to lead. And will do so by including all and welcoming all. Because the future of Virginia belongs to all.

I come to this office, ready to lead and serve on day one.

We'll start where the future is determined in the classroom preparing Virginia's children to be Career or College ready.

Starting today, we will raise standards, raise teacher pay, invest in facilities and children with disabilities.

We will create innovation lab and charter schools of achievement – within the public school system.

We will remove politics from the classroom and re-focus on essential math, science and reading. And we will teach all of our history the good and the bad.

And we know that when our children don't go to school it harms their learning and development. So let me be clear we must keep our children in school 5-days a week.

Starting today, we will tackle the high cost of living.

We will suspend for a year the recent tax increase on gasoline, and eliminate the grocery tax altogether.

In addition, we will double the standard deduction on income taxes, rein in skyrocketing property taxes, provide the largest tax rebate in Virginia's history, and cut taxes on our military veterans' retirement benefits.

Solving the cost crisis is not merely about restraining taxes, it's about growing incomes and opportunities as well.

Starting today, we will be crystal clear – Virginia is Open for Business.

We're going to re-energize the engine of the economy by reducing regulations, investing in job training, making it easier for business to access capital, and get all Virginians back to work

Our goal is to create 400,000 jobs and 10,000 new startups over the next four years.

We're going to make Virginia competitive again, no longer conceding corporate relocations and expansions to our friends in Maryland, North Carolina and Tennessee.

We will compete. And we will win.

The most basic compact government must make with every citizen is to preserve public safety.

My pledge is that we will restore safety by fully funding law enforcement.

Starting today, we will comprehensively fund higher salaries, better training, investments in equipment. And we will protect qualified immunity for law enforcement.

And we will invest in community policing programs to build trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve and protect.

Like so many, I'm troubled by the recent attacks on our police – the vast, vast majority of these heroes perform an incredibly challenging and dangerous job with extraordinary professionalism.

As governor, we will return respect to the men and women who wear the uniform all law enforcement officers, corrections officers, and first responders who take an oath to keep us all safe.

Somewhere along the way we've lost the ability to show respect to one another. To disagree without being disagreeable.

And we've tried to silence the people most responsible for the lives of young children --- their parents.

Parents should have a say in what is taught in school, because in Virginia, parents have a fundamental right to make decisions with regards to their child's upbringing, education and care.

To parents I say we respect you. And we will empower you in the education of your children.

Our deep respect and gratitude remains for the heroes, who've fallen in the service to our nation, the veterans living among us today and those currently serving on active duty America is free because you were and are brave.

So I ask every hero serving in our military today, every veteran of the service in years past, every member of law enforcement who has worn the badge, every first responder, to either stand, or raise your hand, so we can recognize your service.

If someone tells you there are no heroes anymore --- tell them to come to Virginia.

My fellow Virginians, we each have the power to make this commonwealth a better place.

No one alone and certainly not a governor can ensure an entire commonwealth can live up to its promise.

But one Virginian at a time one act of service and sacrifice at a time we can make this Virginia we love stronger and better for all who live here.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birthday we celebrate today and whose great life we celebrate Monday with a national holiday once said, "We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now."

For us that boat is named Virginia, and today we set sail to a new and better day.

Since the founding of Jamestown a little more than 400 years ago we've been an imperfect people on the course to a more perfect union. At times we've failed to live up to our ideals. But we all want to do what is right and what is morally just even if we fall short.

What is seared in our heart by a loving, almighty Creator is not a desire for power or conquest, not a love of self, or personal advancement.

Rather it's a belief that life is worth living when we serve a greater cause than self when we love without expecting favor in return and when we set aside ego for the greater good.

We are one Virginia. We are all sailing in the same boat.

With faith in a loving God, whose presence can be felt here today. And in partnership with Lieutenant Governor Sears and Attorney General Miyares, our Cabinet, and the duly elected leaders of the Virginia Assembly, we will chart and sail a course through our present troubled waters. So we reach the shores of a new and better day --- with more opportunity and more prosperity.

What we can do together is truly limitless.

We must set our eyes on the common values and common future that unites us. To work every day to strengthen the spirit of Virginia, and redeem the promise of our people.

It's day one. Lets get to work.

Thank you , God bless you, and may God bless the Commonwealth of Virginia.