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FOREWORD

RESTORING FISCAL INTEGRITY TO VIRGINIA GOVERNMENT IS HIGHEST PRIORITY

*The Honorable Mark Warner **

It is a privilege to write the Foreword to the *University of Richmond Law Review's 2002 Annual Survey of Virginia Law*. The University of Richmond, and the T.C. Williams School of Law have earned a national reputation for excellence and have contributed immeasurably to the Commonwealth and our nation as a whole.

As a candidate for Governor, I pledged to put Virginia and its people above partisan politics. Throughout Virginia—on its college campuses and in its civic organizations—there is a yearning for leadership that puts partisanship aside and emphasizes a businesslike approach to the challenges that confront us. I hope this foreword will give readers an understanding of how we have been working to achieve this objective and to move Virginia forward.

Our administration has enjoyed several notable successes. We won passage of a carefully crafted state budget—avoiding the rancor that prevented a budget from even being passed last year. We have helped to create thousands of new jobs, many of them in areas that have experienced economic setbacks in recent months. My administration has enrolled more than 12,000 additional chil-

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dren—an increase of thirty-six percent—into the FAMIS program, the federal-state plan to provide health insurance to children of working families. We launched the Governor's Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools (PASS) as a way to speed relief to schools at risk of failing on the SOLs.

I also take pride in having signed House Bill 1053, which was part of my first legislative package. This bill provides training and model policies to end racial profiling.

Most importantly, perhaps, we have restored civility to the political process and brought a new era of cooperation between the General Assembly and the Governor's Office.

Restoring Virginia's Fiscal Integrity

Virginia entered 2002 facing many challenges. Perhaps no area provided the Commonwealth with a greater challenge than our fiscal situation.

A slowing economy during calendar year 2001, the terrorist attacks of September 11th, and a structural imbalance in the Virginia budget combined to create a \$3.8 billion budget shortfall early in 2002. Closing this shortfall had to be our first order of business after taking office.

To achieve this, we ordered across the board cuts in agencies, held car tax relief at seventy percent, imposed new restrictions on the hiring of state employees, and enacted modest increases in state fees and costs that had not been raised in several years.

We also have insisted on a more business-like approach to the management of Virginia's fiscal affairs. For too long, tax cuts and new spending had been passed without regard to their long-term impact, which created a situation where the budget was structurally out of balance. I am requiring of my administration greater openness in the budget process, conservative forecasting of available revenues, no new spending commitments whose costs balloon in out years, no further actions that reduce revenue without accompanying spending cuts, and no new spending commitments that take effect beyond the next biennium.

At the time of this writing, the Commonwealth continues to receive unsettling fiscal news. On August 19 2002, we had to revise Virginia's revenues estimates by \$1.5 billion as a result of the

continuing softness in the economy. This latest shortfall will require additional savings (over and above the \$3.8 billion we have already achieved) and may necessitate additional layoffs of state workers.

There can be no priority more important than closing this latest shortfall and putting Virginia in a position to emerge from the current recession stronger than ever.

Transportation

Coming into the 2002 General Assembly session, transportation was one of the most pressing challenges for Virginia. Both Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads suffer from chronically choked roads that are in need of improvement. In Northern Virginia, much of the infrastructure for mass transit is aging and in need of replacement. The congestion in these areas diminishes the quality of life for our citizens. It causes commuters to spend too much time on the roads and not enough time with their families. It threatens to stunt economic growth, which is crucial to the whole Commonwealth.

I am pleased to say that the efforts our administration has taken, with the support of the General Assembly, will allow voters to have a say in how to best solve their own transportation problems. Passage of the referendums in Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia would infuse billions of dollars into improving the transportation networks in these regions and would be a major step toward improving the quality of life and economic prospects in both regions.

My administration is also actively working to improve the management of VDOT. We initiated an operational and performance audit of the financial and cash management practices of the agency. We also appointed a nationally recognized transportation professional, Philip Shucet, to run the agency. Under his leadership, we will eliminate the chronic cost-overruns, poor forecasting, and the under-estimation of project costs which had plagued VDOT.

Elementary and Secondary Education

No state can maintain a strong workforce without consistently producing well-educated citizens. Some of Virginia's schools have enjoyed a great deal of success, but I fully realize that there are some that are currently not meeting established standards. To assist these schools, I officially launched the Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools (PASS) on July 11th. This is a statewide partnership with business and community leaders, state educators, and local school and government officials designed to boost student achievement in Virginia's lowest academically performing schools.

Approximately 117 schools fall within the PASS program because of student performance on Standards of Learning exams. Eighty-four of these schools have been designated as PASS Priority Schools. These schools will receive up to twelve days of intervention by academic review teams, with additional follow-up to track progress made by students, teachers and administrators. The remaining eighty-three schools will benefit from having academic review teams spend up to four days reviewing curricula and advising administrators and faculty on effective strategies for boosting student performance on the SOLs. We can no longer afford to allow our struggling schools to underachieve. As Virginians, we should not accept the fact that some of our children are obtaining second-class educations. The PASS initiative is a strong start toward closing the achievement gap among various school districts.

Together with our successful efforts to preserve funding for school construction and teacher certification programs, our PASS initiative will go far toward promoting excellence for Virginia's children.

Higher Education

The quality of the education that our students receive at institutions of higher education is one of the most important issues that any administrations could face. For far too long, politics has played too large a role in how the boards at our public universities have been selected. I believe it is essential for these boards to be selected on the basis of merit, which is why we established the

Governor's Advisory Commission on Higher Education Board Appointments. This commission reviews potential appointees to the governing boards of Virginia's public colleges and universities to help ensure that appointments will be based on merit, experience, sound judgment, and proven leadership.

Virginia has been fortunate to have some of the best public universities and community colleges in the country. We may have difficulty in the future maintaining this status if we do not generate much needed revenue. This fall voters will face a General Obligation Bond Referendum that will authorize some \$900 million in critical construction projects that goes towards Virginia's Community Colleges, public four-year colleges, universities, and museums. This infusion of cash will pay for urgently needed upgrades, renovations, modernizations, and new construction on Virginia's public college and university campuses, and necessary improvements at state museums, historic sites, and cultural attractions. An additional \$130 million will be authorized to improve Virginia's State Parks and open spaces.

By passing the education and parks bond referendum, Virginians will be laying a firm foundation upon which to build a better Virginia.

Economic Growth and Development

During the late 1990s, certain regions of our state experienced extraordinary economic times. However, other regions did not benefit nearly the same way, and these areas are likely to be hard hit during economic downturns. Keeping this in mind, we have created Economic Crisis Strike Forces to provide immediate and coordinated responses to individuals and communities experiencing plant closings, major layoffs, and other economic catastrophes. The Strike Forces provide a single point of contact for citizens in affected communities seeking unemployment assistance, job training, or social services. With the help of these strike forces, these communities should be better able to weather poor economic times and do well in good economic times.

Beyond providing more expeditious help to those displaced by poor economic conditions, we have also worked to attract new industries to Virginia. Virginia received great news in early May when Eli Lilly and Company announced that it would invest \$425

million in a new insulin manufacturing facility in Prince William County. The Commonwealth continues to be an attractive location for companies and investors, as evidenced by the fact that we competed successfully with other states for this facility. Prince William County will enjoy 700 new high-tech jobs, as the facility will formulate, fill and package products that are used all over the world to treat diabetes. Other grants from the same fund have promoted economic development in other areas of the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth Security

Since the tragic events of September 11th, people all over the United States have gained a greater appreciation for just how vulnerable we are. I am determined to make Virginia much safer than it was before the terrorist attacks, while also being better prepared in the event that another tragedy occurs. The Secure Virginia Panel, created in early 2002, has the responsibility of updating the Commonwealth's preparedness plans in light of the new terrorist threat facing the nation. Former Lieutenant Governor John Hager, Assistant to the Governor for Commonwealth Preparedness, is leading this panel. Lieutenant Governor Kaine, Attorney General Kilgore, other government officials, and non-government officials are other members of the panel. Like other aspects of the administration, we have assembled a truly bipartisan team.

Conclusion

When I took office in January, I challenged the members of the General Assembly to work with me in a renewed bipartisan spirit to achieve our shared goals: fiscal integrity; improved public education; economic growth for every corner of the Commonwealth; and a strengthened quality of life for all Virginia families. I am pleased to say that legislators from both sides of the aisle responded. Our challenges today are only exceeded by the enormous potential of Virginia's future. For despite all of our challenges, the Commonwealth remains fundamentally strong, with a smart, well trained workforce, good schools, and a quality of life second to none.