



REMARKS BY THE HONORABLE GEORGE ALLEN
GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

**AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGE COUNCIL'S
THOMAS JEFFERSON FREEDOM AWARD BANQUET**

NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

AUGUST 3, 1996

Good evening, and thank you for that warm welcome.

Susan and I are absolutely thrilled to be with you this evening. And we are truly honored to join with such a distinguished group of freedom-loving Americans and friends of the free enterprise system here at the 23rd Annual Meeting of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

Steve, [*Martin, Virginia State Senator*] thank you for that kind introduction. Steve is more than just a hard-working ALEC National Director, he is a great ally of our administration in the Virginia General Assembly. Steve is an effective leader who is principled, knowledgeable and tenacious. Steve, thank you for your tremendous leadership in fighting for our common-sense conservative principles and ideals.

It's good to be with Governor Lincoln Almond here in Newport, Rhode Island. I thank you and the Rhode Island delegation for your wonderful northern hospitality. And at the head table are a number of outstanding individuals: Rep. Dale Van Vyven, [*ALEC National Chairman*]; Rep. Bonnie Sue Cooper, [*Incoming ALEC National Chair*]; Sen. Brad Graham,

[*ALEC's First Vice-Chairman*]; Allan Augur, [*Chairman of ALEC's Private Enterprise Board*]; and Patricia Kempthorne, [*wife of U.S. Senator Dirk Kempthorne*]. Please thank Dirk for getting through that bill, before it was so widely popular, to end unfunded mandates from the federates.

I also want it to be clear that all of those wonderful things that have been said about what our administration has accomplished, so far, were the result of a team effort.

There were a lot of people involved, including cabinet secretaries, agency heads and lawmakers, without whom many of our good ideas would not have become the law of our Commonwealth of Virginia. And our key leaders on many of the most important issues were always members of ALEC. I want to thank the members of the Virginia delegation here this evening, especially State Senators Kevin Miller, Fred Quayle and Bill Bolling as well as Delegates Randy Forbes, Bill Howell, Harvey Morgan, Leo Wardrup, Bob Tata, Riley Ingram and Frank Ruff.

Tonight's award is really a team award, and an award for all Virginians.

Thank you in the Virginia delegation for all of your hard work.

ACCEPTANCE OF THOMAS JEFFERSON FREEDOM AWARD

My friends, I was a member of ALEC years ago when I was in the legislature. I always enjoyed reading about new ideas and sharing the best practices of states from across the country. I also have benefitted greatly from my involvement with ALEC and with its many women and men of character, commitment and energy.

The American Legislative Exchange Council is a great organization. You do an outstanding job working to improve government for the benefit of people in Virginia and in states throughout our great nation.

That's why it's heartening to receive ALEC's Thomas Jefferson Freedom Award. I'm truly grateful that you've so generously bestowed this prestigious award upon me.

Your award is named after my hero. I call myself a Jeffersonian Conservative. I did hold Mr. Jefferson's seat in the House of Delegates. For many, Thomas Jefferson remains the spirit of freedom and liberty not only here in our country, but for people throughout the world.

I also have great respect for the six past recipients of this award, especially for another of my personal heroes, President Ronald Reagan.

Other than being elected Governor by the people of Virginia, receiving ALEC's Thomas Jefferson Freedom Award is the highest honor that I have received.

I humbly thank you so very much!

JEFFERSONIAN CONSERVATISM

I know Dale promised you that this banquet would be over by ten o'clock, and I want to help him keep that promise. Nevertheless, there are several things of which we must be ever-mindful as Jeffersonian conservatives.

This annual meeting is drawing to a close. Yet, the effort to advance our shared Jeffersonian conservative principles of individual freedom and restrained government must always continue.

I believe the way forward is to restore the states, and the people of the states, to their rightful place of preeminence in our federal system. Our country began as an individualistic and community-oriented society with limited government, and rightly so.

It is now our responsibility to protect and preserve liberty by ensuring that the people of Rhode Island, Virginia and all of our sister states remain capable of securing and charting their own destiny.

I believe Mr. Jefferson best enunciated the sum of good government during his first Presidential Inaugural Address in 1801. He boldly declared:

“A wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, but which shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned.”

This was the sum of good government 200 years ago. And I trust you all agree, that remains the sum of good government today!

Unfortunately, the federal government — especially the unelected bureaucrats — has defied, and routinely ignores, virtually every constitutional limit to confine its reach, and thus safeguard the freedoms of Americans.

As Jeffersonian conservatives, we believe decisions that affect people's lives most directly can — and should — be made by the level of government closest to them. That is, of course, if a government even needs to be involved at all!

For future generations, therefore, we owe it to our fellow citizens to put our principles and

ideas to work so we can help deliver the progress the American people genuinely want and certainly deserve.

CREATIVE CONSERVATISM WORKS

We, in Virginia, have proven that creative, Jeffersonian conservatism can — and does — work for the benefit of our citizens.

By always working to change, adapt, innovate and improve, we are moving Virginia forward in such important areas as law enforcement, education, job-creating economic development and welfare reform.

Criminal Justice Reform

Over the past three decades, for example, this country has listened to the criminal apologists, who are always blaming someone else for a crime. It's society's fault. It's government's fault. It's teacher's and parent's fault. Some even blame the trauma of potty training! It is always someone else's fault, except the criminal.

In Virginia, however, we said it was high time to reject this misguided philosophy and hold criminals accountable and responsible for their violent actions!

We abolished the lenient and liberal parole system that was letting violent criminals serve only a quarter of their sentence. We replaced it with truth-in-sentencing.

Now, a ten-year sentence means ten years in prison in Virginia!

Here is another example of how our views are different from liberals. Recently, I was reading the *Washington Post*, a wonderful newspaper, which was lauding the Mayor of Washington, D.C. for keeping a campaign promise of putting an ex-convict on the Parole Board in the District of Columbia. He wanted to make sure the perspective of those who have been imprisoned was represented.

I, too, made a promise. I pledged to the people of Virginia that on our five-member Parole Board, who decide whether or not to release early someone convicted and sentenced before we abolished parole, I would appoint a crime victim.

Well, I have actually appointed two! One is woman and a rape victim, while the other tragically had her young child murdered.

For the first time in history, Virginia now has the perspective of two victims of crime on this very important panel. This is the kind of perspectives that ought to be represented on parole boards!

My friends, it's principled reforms and innovative ideas like these — along with our fundamental transformation of the old juvenile justice system — that are behind the fact that all categories of violent crimes across the board are down in Virginia!

Other states may have a different view of crime and want to do something else. Let them do it. But, in Virginia, we have determined what is best for our citizens.

We are making Virginia safer!

Education Reform

In education, we have stood up to the elites in the education establishment who think the only way to show care — and the only way to improve public education — is by simply spending more money.

Yes, the budget I signed into law this year provides the largest increase in education spending in Virginia history, about \$1 billion. But if spending more money was the only solution, then student academic achievement would be going way up. Unfortunately, we know it is not.

That is why we, in Virginia, have linked our increasing investment in education with real academic reform, accountability and measurable results!

We have killed feel-good Outcome-Based Education. It is graveyard dead and gone in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In its place, we have put high, academic standards in the basics of reading, writing, math, science and history. We also have successfully established regular testing program to make sure students are actually learning these core subjects.

It wasn't easy. Virginia's forward-looking reforms, however, have been heralded across this country, from Maine to California, and from IBM Chairman Lou Gerstner to former National Endowment for the Humanities Director, Lynne Cheney.

Virginia is leading the nation in establishing high academic standards and measurable results.

We are moving forward not because any bureaucrat in the federal Department of Education told us to do it... and not because we wanted to get any Goals 2000 money, which we have turned down.

In Virginia, we think accountability should not be to those folks on the north bank of the Potomac River, but to the parents and taxpayers of Virginia!

Job-creating Economic Development

We also have applied our Jeffersonian conservative principles to strengthen Virginia's competitiveness for more economic growth and job opportunities.

We have unleashed the power of the free enterprise system by enacting positive tax and reasonable regulatory policies in our Commonwealth.

Delegate Bill Howell carried a bill for our administration on regulatory reform. In Virginia, we now require economic impact statements — not just environmental impact statements — for all new regulations.

We thought it was time to regulate the regulators and the unelected bureaucrats for a change!

Of course, we in Virginia — just like people in every other state in the Union — want to breathe clean air, drink pure water and have productive land. And we are concerned about woodpeckers, rats and all manners of flora and fauna.

But we would like some balance. That's why we give equal consideration of the impact of state regulations on people, their property and their jobs!

We also have achieved \$360 million in various forms of tax relief for Virginia citizens and businesses, and we have doubled the number of state enterprise zones in Virginia.

Folks, enterprise zones are an object lesson in economics. In enterprise zones, there are less regulations and less taxation. The result is more risk-taking and more investment which creates more jobs, more prosperity and, yes, for those who care about revenue for government, there is more revenue for state and local governments.

Our innovative enterprise zones were instrumental in attracting Gateway 2000 Computers to invest millions of dollars and create 1,000 new jobs in Virginia. Gateway 2000 joins IBM-Toshiba, Motorola and Seimens-Motorola, giving our Commonwealth the new name of the "*Silicon Dominion!*"

We've also attracted Frito-Lay in Lynchburg, American Home Products, which is leaving New Jersey to locate in Richmond, and many more successful companies are relocating to, or expanding in, our Commonwealth of Virginia.

Of course, each one of your states is in economic competition, with other states and even with other countries around the world.

In Virginia, we believe we must have the right policies... the right labor policies, such as our Right to Work law, which we consider to be a matter of individual freedom. People should not be forced to join a union, or be compelled to do so, as a condition of employment.

We want to have reasonable workers' compensation policies. We, in Virginia, are proud of having one of the lowest workers' compen-

sation rates in the nation. We achieved this by keeping lawyers' role limited and by not allowing gradually incurred injuries to be lopped on to employers.

And we have low unemployment taxes... competitive tax policies... and a quality education system focused on academic excellence. And our state government is there to help — not hinder — our friends in the private sector.

The bottom-line is that our economic development efforts are working. We are attracting record levels of new investments and creating thousands of new jobs for people throughout Virginia.

Welfare Reform

In welfare reform, great progress is being made this week down in Washington.

It is truly remarkable because, for the first time in almost anyone's memory, there has been a shift of power and decision-making authority to people in the states.

Not surprisingly, all of the whiners and liberals are spewing fear, preaching gloom and doom, and talking with desperation about impending disaster because of the new welfare reform law that was passed.

How dare those arrogant individuals say that states cannot handle such an important responsibility as reforming welfare! They say that if you leave it to the states, folks will be starving, and wandering around without hope of a better life.

Well, I am here to tell you that there is no reason to be fearful. We, in Virginia, already put into law more than a year ago historic welfare reforms. The twin pillars of our principled reforms are the work ethic and individual responsibility.

And Virginia's law is similar to — but tougher and more comprehensive than — the reforms adopted by Congress, and which the President has agreed to sign.

For example, we require able-bodied welfare recipients to work in exchange for their benefits within 90 days — instead of waiting two years under the new federal law.

Because welfare never was meant to be permanent way of life, Virginia's welfare reforms place a two-year time limit — instead of a five-year limit.

Mothers and fathers are being held accountable and responsible for their actions. We are not increasing welfare benefits for those who have more children while on welfare in Virginia — a provision not in the federal legislation. We also have tough paternity requirements in Virginia. We want to get after the "deadbeat dads." Fathers should be responsible for helping raise and support their children, not just taxpayers and mothers.

We have abolished the "marriage penalty" in our welfare system that was tearing families apart.

These are just a few of the provisions in Virginia's landmark welfare reforms. And after one year of implementation, I'm pleased to inform you that our principled reforms are working!

Welfare rolls statewide are *down* over 14 percent in Virginia.

Child support enforcement is *up* 14 percent in Virginia.

More families on welfare are now from two-parent families in Virginia.

And we've saved Virginia taxpayers nearly \$14 million.

Now, some folks say we cannot get welfare recipients in to jobs that are any good. Well, those naysayers are wrong.

We are getting welfare recipients into more private-sector jobs. In fact, over 1,600 welfare recipients statewide are working. Yes, some of these jobs are entry level. But they are not dead-end jobs.

There is an employer in northern Virginia, Frank Meeks, who owns a couple dozen Domino's Pizza franchises. He pledged to hire 300 welfare recipients in the next 12 months.

At the announcement, one of the naysayers said "What good is this?" So, one of the women on welfare was asked what she thought about our reforms.

In response, the woman said she was very happy with the Allen plan. She thought it was good for her children to see that their mother is working.

Not happy with this response from the mother, the naysayer asked, "Well, what kind of future does anyone have delivering or making pizzas?"

Frank Meeks, an entrepreneur who actually owns 19 franchises throughout metro Washington, D.C. — then interjected, "How do you think I got started?"

My point is that Virginia's welfare reforms can serve as a model for the nation. Our principled reforms are improving peoples lives by freeing them of a failed system, and giving them an honest chance to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to lead self-reliant and productive lives.

So when folks preach gloom and doom, let them know how not just Virginia, but other states, are leading the way forward without waiting for the federal government.

Welfare reform is benefitting taxpayers. And it is empowering individuals to lead lives that are not dependent on government, but full of opportunity and independence.

PRESERVING OUR FREEDOMS IN THE FUTURE

As you can tell, our common-sense, conservative principles and creative ideas are working in Mr. Jefferson's state!

What we have going on in our great Commonwealth is something that I call a Virginia Renaissance — a rebirth of expanding freedom,

opportunity, prosperity and personal responsibility for all our citizens.

And I believe all Americans — not just Virginians — are yearning for an American Renaissance as well!

You, the leaders of the American Legislative Exchange Council, also will be the leaders this American Renaissance. You have been... can... and will continue to deliver this rebirth of freedom, opportunity and prosperity in your communities, your home districts and your home states.

To achieve this worthy goal, we must secure the ability of people to chart their own course, and control their own destiny. That means restoring and preserving the liberty that our nation's Founders intended in a balanced federal system by reasonably amending our United States Constitution.

One positive reform I support, and Virginia's General Assembly endorsed in 1995, is the States' Initiative. It would allow states to initiate constitutional changes without having to depend on Congress or the convening of a constitutional convention. In fact, earlier this week, I joined U.S. Senator John Ashcroft of Missouri for his introduction of a States' Initiative constitutional amendment in Congress.

The States' Initiative is an essential tool that can help restore balance to state-federal relations.

Another important tool is the States' Veto. The States' Veto would grant two-thirds of the States — acting in concert — the power to repeal overly burdensome federal laws or regulations. The States' Veto probably would be used very rarely, if at all. But it would be a powerful, and very helpful, tool to restrain federal excesses.

These two forward-looking proposals would help ensure greater freedom and more self-determination for future generations of Americans.

JEFFERSON LIVES!

My fellow patriots, I thank you for honoring me with your award and for allowing me join in this important annual meeting. Your efforts are helping to chart a new course for America's future — not from the cold corridors of Washington, D.C. down... but from the grassroots up.

That's good because it is at the grassroots level — in your home towns, your counties and your state legislatures — that the decency, integrity and common-sense of the American people is most easily found and best understood.

I think that if Thomas Jefferson was with us this evening, he would be proud of our continuing commitment to his enduring ideals and principles. Indeed, the spirit of freedom that Mr. Jefferson talked about in the Declaration of Independence is clearly alive and well in the work of ALEC as well as in your hearts, minds and souls.

But please remember, the preservation of the empowering spirit of Jeffersonian principles rests not just with the recipient of ALEC's Thomas Jefferson Freedom Award. In truth, it rests with each of you and with all of us.

It is my fondest wish that, together, through our work and principled endeavors, John Adam's dying words will continue to ring true: Jefferson lives!