

**Report of the Democratic Party of Virginia Resolutions Committee
Adopted by State Central Committee
September 17, 2005**

**Virginia Democrats
Moving Virginia Forward
The Platform of the Democratic Party of Virginia**

1. Statement of Common Purpose

We exist as a party to elect Democratic leaders of character, integrity, ability and vision at all levels of government in Virginia. The Democratic Party of Virginia is committed to the goals of practicing fiscal responsibility, ensuring excellence in education, making adequate infrastructure investments, preserving the social safety network, creating economic opportunity for all, and protecting our environment. We are dedicated to defending our constitutionally established rights and freedoms. We work to organize all of our citizens through a democratic government to achieve together those beneficial ends that we cannot achieve individually. We believe, as did our party's founder, Thomas Jefferson, "That government is the strongest of which every man feels a part."

2. Continuing the Warner-Kaine Legacy

We commend Governor Mark Warner for his leadership over the past four years – leadership that has restored fiscal discipline to management of Virginia's government; preserved the Commonwealth's triple-A bond rating; supported and strengthened the Standards of Quality, Standards of Learning, and Standards of Accreditation of Public Schools; created over 300,000 new jobs in the Commonwealth; maintained access to health care and needed social services to families in need; supported first responders and adequate staffing of correctional facilities; and restored "trust" back to the Transportation trust fund. In recognition of these accomplishments, Governing Magazine named Virginia the best-managed state in the nation. We look to

Democratic candidates for Governor Tim Kaine, Lt. Governor Leslie Byrne and Attorney General Creigh Deeds and their partners in the General Assembly to continue and expand on Governor Warner's legacy.

3. Keeping Virginia Business-Friendly and Creating Economic Opportunity for All of Virginia's Families

We believe in and support public policies that create good jobs for all Virginians. We support the continued creation of a business climate characterized by a fiscally responsible government, a skilled and well-educated workforce, fair tax policies, access to abundant competitively priced energy, and well-planned transportation and infrastructure. We support targeting areas of need and economic transition through, for example, the Economic Strike Force concept. We also support regional cooperation to foster growth across political boundaries in urban and rural areas. We support Enterprise zones in central cities. We favor continuing efforts to preserve family farms through funding of the Agricultural Enterprise Act, encouraging agricultural easements, buying Virginia products, and eliminating estate taxes on family farms. We support small businesses and entrepreneurs and favor start-up assistance and health insurance tax credits. We also recognize the importance of women and minority-owned businesses in Virginia and support continuing efforts to increase state government contract procurement for such businesses. We support job creation through preserving our natural resources and quality of life and promoting agriculture, outdoor sports and tourism to Virginia's natural, historic and cultural attractions. We commend the Warner-Kaine administration for its ongoing efforts to strengthen Virginia's economy by attracting new businesses – from around the world – to the Commonwealth. We support the presence of military service members and their families in Virginia and we encourage maintaining and expanding Virginia's federal military

installations. We appreciate the Warner-Kaine administration's efforts to keep these installations open and to mitigate the effects of any base closings.

4. Improving Virginia's World-Class Public Education System

We believe that education is the key to opportunity. Virginia must move beyond a focus on competence to a focus on excellence for all of our students. Virginia's public system for lifetime education, from early childhood through adulthood, is one of our most valuable assets, preparing our children to become responsible adults and citizens, and equipping them with the knowledge and skills to compete in the new economy. We commend Governor Warner for his initiatives in lifetime education and for making the largest investment in education in Virginia's history. We call upon the Commonwealth to make full funding of public schools a priority. We support continuing to raise teacher's salaries so that they reach or exceed the national average. We also support strong professional development and meaningful evaluations for Virginia's teachers. Virginia leads the nation in using educational standards to improve performance, and we support quality education, not just teaching to the test. We applaud Lt. Gov. Kaine's Strong Start initiative which will provide high-quality pre-kindergarten to all four-year-olds whose parents choose to enroll them. The Commonwealth also must support and strengthen its colleges and we favor additional state support, increased management independence for colleges and universities that maintains protections for students, parents and employees, and the creation of a new four-year college in Southside Virginia. We support expansion of job training and retraining programs and continuing education for adults that will make available the skills adults need to compete for jobs in the new economy. We believe in expanding affordable Internet access to every home and public library, computer center and school in Virginia.

5. Preserving Sound Fiscal Management of Virginia's Government and Homeowner Tax Relief and Continuing Tax Reform

We recognize the Warner-Kaine administration's efforts to solve Virginia's budget crisis and to make Virginia's tax system more fair to all Virginians, through reducing government spending and implementing tax reform. We support Virginia's Democratic tradition of fiscal responsibility, and management and budget reforms that will continue to save taxpayers money. We support "truth in budgeting" so that programs will not be enacted unless there is adequate funding and we oppose unfunded mandates on local government and making promises we know we cannot afford. We support a constitutional amendment to limit the use of the transportation trust fund to transportation projects.

We believe that tax cuts can be used in a responsible manner to spur economic investment and growth. Last year's budget responsibly addressed a budgetary shortfall and eliminated the state's portion of the food tax, reformed the income tax to eliminate the marriage penalty, increased the personal exemption, and removed 141,000 low income workers from tax roles. We support giving local governments the ability to provide homeowner tax relief that suits their needs, including allowing localities to exempt up to 20% of a home's assessment from property taxes. We also support a revitalization tax abatement program to exempt new additions and renovations from taxes for a set period. Finally, we support a tax credit for small businesses that will help them provide health insurance to their workers.

6. Ensuring Affordable, Quality Health Care for All Virginians

We support legislation to improve access to health care for all Virginians. We commend Governor Warner for enrolling an additional 129,000 children in the FAMIS (Family Access To Medical Insurance Security) program, which helps working Virginia families get health care for their children. We affirm our support for programs that focus on illness prevention. We

recognize that hard-working, lower income citizens need assistance with the costs of health care, and that the elderly and persons with disabilities of all ages should be able to live as independently as possible. We support allowing states to purchase safe prescription drugs from other countries. To assist small businesses in providing health care to their workers, the Commonwealth should establish a purchasing pool that will allow them to join together to obtain lower rates and provide small business tax credits. We support expanding access to health care services, especially for women. We also encourage wellness and nutrition education in Virginia's schools.

7. Finding Solutions to Critical Transportation Problems

We acknowledge that traffic congestion and inadequate infrastructure impact Virginia's growing economy and Virginians' quality of life. We recognize that much more needs to be done to meet the state's current and future transportation needs, including state and local long range planning and restricting the transportation trust fund to transportation purposes. We also believe that the Commonwealth should facilitate better planning that will help us choose the right road and transit projects to support future growth, make better use of existing infrastructure, strengthen existing neighborhoods and protect open spaces. We commend the Warner administration for improving VDOT's on-time and on-budget performance and look forward to further improvements. We support improving ways for Virginians to get around, including expanding railway service, upgrading regional airports and increasing investment in public transportation, telecommuting, and ridesharing. We also encourage intelligent transportation systems and traffic management improvements which can improve safety and efficiency, reduce delays, save time and help the environment.

8. Preserving Virginia's Natural Resources

We can protect the environment and expand the economy. All Virginians should be able to enjoy Virginia's natural heritage and be assured that the air they breathe is pure, the water they drink is clean, and the land they live on is safe. We acknowledge our obligation to protect the earth and preserve our quality of life for future generations. We support efforts to develop a comprehensive statewide water strategy to ensure access to affordable clean drinking water for all Virginians, restore the quality of the waters in the Commonwealth with meaningful tributary strategies, reduce levels of nutrients entering our waters, and protect non-tidal wetlands. We support the vigorous pursuit of the goals of the 2000 Chesapeake Bay Agreement and its promise of improvement in this significant natural resource. We support preservation of open space through land purchase (including the use of a dedicated funding source), conservation easements, and other innovative approaches. We are concerned about Virginia's air quality issues and support efforts to reduce industrial plant emissions and automobile pollution. We support efforts to obtain federal authority to limit importation of out-of-state garbage and other innovative and effective ways to address this issue. We support a commitment to energy efficiency, including innovative technologies.

9. Keeping Virginia's Citizens Safe And Secure

We believe that keeping Virginia's citizens safe and secure, both at home and abroad, is one of the most vital functions of government. We appreciate our police officers, state troopers, sheriff's deputies, firefighters, first responders and National Guard members who keep us safe. We support improving their wages and benefits and full funding for the tools they need to do their jobs. We applaud the Warner-Kaine administration for increasing resources available to state police and local law enforcement. We support coordination of efforts to investigate and

respond to potential terrorist activity. We also support the expansion of state police units to fight gang and drug violence. We support the right to keep and bear arms as defined in the Virginia Constitution and the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and efforts to promote firearm safety. We support restoring state funding to Project Exile, which provides mandatory sentences for criminals who use guns. We also support state law enforcement initiatives to provide protection and safety for victims of family violence, and to ensure proper payments of child and family support.

10. Celebrating Values of Diversity and Community

The Democratic Party of Virginia supports full equality of opportunity for all people and opposes discrimination in any form. We welcome women and men from all walks of life and from all regions of the world, without regard to wealth, age, race, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. We affirm our support for equal rights and opportunities for women. We affirm our historic commitment to civil rights and honor those Virginians who made that dream a reality and we support the establishment of a civil rights monument on the State Capitol grounds. We commend Governor Warner for his efforts to simplify and speed up restoration of voting rights for non-violent offenders. We believe that every Virginian has a constitutional right to privacy in the intimate details of adult lives and relationships, including personal health care decisions and the right to reproductive choice. We strongly support ensuring women's access to contraception. We embrace new Virginians because we are a nation of immigrants and descendants of immigrants who have enriched our society and have made significant contributions to our culture and character. We welcome our new citizens and the ethnic diversity that they bring to our party and our country. We honor people with disabilities and support their goals of equality of opportunity, full participation,

independent living and economic self-sufficiency and support the state's implementation of the Americans With Disabilities Act.