



**Report of the Resolutions Committee  
2000 Virginia Democratic Convention**

Norfolk Scope

June 2– 3, 2000

This report was directed by Section 17.2 of the Virginia Democratic Party Plan. As required in the plan, no amendments or resolutions can be offered from the floor. The resolutions report must be voted on as a package by the Convention and approved by “a sixty percent (60%) vote of the delegates present and voting, a quorum being present.”

The Resolutions Committee approved this package on Friday, May 26, 2000.

Respectfully Submitted,

Senator Mary Margaret Whipple  
Chair, Resolutions Committee

Committee Members:

David Bulova  
Cathy Cantrell  
Harriet Durham  
Sandra Engelhardt  
Patrick W. Ephriam  
Craig Fifer  
John Flannery  
Kenneth V. Geroe  
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Ronald Jensen  
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Jim Leaman  
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Mary Lily Nuckolls  
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The Democratic Party of Virginia is united in its dedication to electing to public office leaders of character, integrity, ability and vision. Through our party and these leaders, we work to protect our constitutionally established rights and freedoms which provide us with opportunities to improve our lives. 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."

We are a Party of values and ideals. We believe in building strong families and communities. We believe in the liberty of the individual. We believe in the separation of church and state. We believe in a strong national defense. We believe that we should work together through a democratic government to preserve our liberties, ensure public safety and health, and provide everyone with the best possible educational opportunities. We work to make our environment clean and safe so business and commerce will prosper and create good jobs.

We are the Party of inclusion. The Democratic Party welcomes persons from all walks of life, of all ages, races, religions, and sexual orientation. This is 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 immigrants and the ethnic diversity that they bring to our party and our country. The Democratic Party honors people with disabilities and supports their goals of equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency.

In order to realize our ideals of liberty, justice and equality for all, we affirm our support for equal rights for women, including the right to reproductive choice free from government interference. We respect the right of privacy and believe that the intimate details of adult lives and relationships should not be the subject of government regulation. We affirm our historic commitment to civil rights and honor those persons who made the dream a reality. The Democratic Party has always been the party of Virginia's vision – the trustees of a better future for all.

Finally, we commend President Clinton and Vice President Gore for providing our state and nation with the strong leadership we deserve. The economy is stronger, the deficit has been eliminated and a budget surplus created. Education is better, our environment is cleaner, and our streets are safer. There is more opportunity, more responsibility in our homes, and more peace in the world because of their leadership.

## *Education*

We recognize that in today's society, education is the key to opportunity. The public education system is one of Virginia's most valuable assets, preparing our children to become responsible adults and citizens, and equipping them with the knowledge and skills to compete in tomorrow's job market.

It is not only children who are in need of education, but their parents as well. No parent who works a full time job should be forced to raise his or her children in poverty. Virginia Democrats support job training and retraining programs that make available the skills adults need to compete for jobs in the New Economy. We encourage assistance for technology-oriented adult learning classes to help provide citizens access to the high-tech career market in Virginia. We believe in expanding affordable Internet access to every home and public library, computer center and school in Virginia in hopes of closing the digital divide. We support providing more opportunities for continuing education for adults because education is the fault line that separates those who will prosper from those who cannot.

Virginia's schoolteachers are underpaid and overworked. There is a shortage of qualified teachers and public schools increasingly face competition from the private sector in attracting and retaining them.

Higher standards mean a greater necessity for quality instruction. We believe the Standards of Learning (SOLs) should not be the sole criterion for students to achieve graduation, but that multiple indicators of performance evaluation should be utilized. We support raising teacher salaries to meet that of the national average and maintaining that increase in order to increase the level of excellence in Virginia public schools.

No child should be forced to attend classes in a classroom with four wheels rather than four solid walls. Fiscally stressed local governments do not have the resources or the ability to generate the revenue necessary to meet all the education needs of our children. Virginia Democrats support and encourage efforts to provide more state funding for school construction and renovation. We support the return of all lottery profits to localities for use in public education and oppose school vouchers and other tax credit programs for parochial and private schools.

Virginia Democrats recognize that teaching good values, the responsibilities of citizenship, family life education, and a well-rounded curriculum, must be an essential part of education. We believe that fine arts and physical education in addition to academic studies should be taught in our schools. We celebrate diversity in education, knowing that exposure to different cultures enhances character and repels prejudices. We believe that schools should be provided with the resources and assistance to rise to the expectation of Virginia's citizens.

### *Economic Security For Virginia's Families*

In the old economy, most workers could count on one job for life. They knew that hard work was rewarded with raises and steady jobs; they were confident the company would take care of them, their families, their health, and their retirement. Success was tied to the success of their employer: sacrifice when times were tough and a share in the wealth when times were good. In the new economy, the rules have changed. We need to find new ways to help working families find economic security: better training to help workers learn skills to get new and better jobs; the security of good health care and safe pensions so they can take care of themselves and their families.

The Democratic Party of Virginia stands with the working men and women of Virginia, including those who have dedicated themselves to public service at all levels of government. We support increasing the federal minimum wage. We are convinced that the best way to help people lift themselves and their families out of poverty is to pay them a living wage. We also support the right of workers to form bargaining units and believe in the principle of equal pay for equal work and pay equity. Agriculture remains a key component of our state's economy, and we will continue to be strong advocates for farmers and their families.

Virginia Democrats urge the passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act because employment discrimination of any kind has no place in our society. We support the formation of public-private partnerships and leveraging federal dollars to maximize worker training and retraining opportunities. As our economy continues its rapid evolution, we must implement "lifetime education" so that we leave no worker behind and unable to compete. We encourage providing more quality training opportunities for people with disabilities, so they can learn the skills they need to live independent, productive lives. We strongly advocate continuing the progress made in moving people from welfare to work by strengthening child support enforcement; ensuring adequate childcare; and guaranteeing health care coverage. Further, we recognize that true self-sufficiency will only be realized if training and educational opportunities are provided.

Finally, The Democratic Party of Virginia stands with those who have lost jobs through no fault of their own. We believe they should receive higher unemployment benefits and help with health insurance. In areas of high unemployment, such as the Martinsville/Henry County area, where employees have found themselves out of work due to the Tultex Corporation bankruptcy, we are proud to stand up for and with Virginia's working men and families. Virginia Democrats categorically reject the actions of Governor Jim Gilmore that have denied assistance to these families in their time of need.

## *Environment*

All Virginians should be able to enjoy Virginia's natural heritage—and Virginians should be assured that the air they breathe is pure, the water they drink is clean, and the land they live on is safe from hazard. We understand that we have a sacred obligation to protect the earth and preserve our quality of life for our children and our children's children.

We recognize the importance of continuing our efforts to restore the quality of the waters in the Commonwealth with meaningful tributary strategies, the reduction of nutrients entering our waters in excessive amounts from non-point sources or specific facilities, elimination of toxins, and protection of our non-tidal wetlands. We support the Chesapeake Bay Agreement and its promise of improvement in this significant natural resource.

The Old Dominion is rightfully renowned for its scenic beauty, which is, along with its history, one of the primary attractions for the state's booming tourist industry. Virginia's reputation as a place of natural splendor is important not only to the state's economic future but to the quality of life of its citizens. Preservation of air quality and open space are more important than ever to maintaining this beauty for future generations and should receive additional support from both the public and private sectors.

Virginia currently is second in the nation in importing out-of-state trash. This reputation as one of the primary waste dumping sites in the United States is simply incompatible with Virginia's image as a place of natural beauty. Virginia Democrats support Senator Robb's efforts to curb importation of out-of-state trash and urge Congressman Bliley to remove the roadblock he has enacted to prevent such a bill from becoming law.

The Democratic Party of Virginia believes that we can protect the environment and expand the economy. We support the reauthorization, funding and enforcement of federal and state environmental laws and programs that preserve and strengthen the government's ability to oversee, implement and enforce public and private adherence to environmental standards. We challenge businesses and communities to take more initiative in protecting the environment and we want to make it easier for them to do so. We encourage all families and businesses to continue to recycle in hopes of sustaining our scarce resources and expect the government to assist in these efforts for conservation. Environmental protection should include more education on compliance for small and medium sized business, more strategies to increase compliance with less red tape and more timely review, but tough enforcement for those who put human health and safety at risk.

## *Health Care*

The Democratic Party of Virginia is committed to ensuring that all Virginians have access to affordable, high-quality health care. Few issues are more important to families than health care. From prenatal care to long-term care, from quality mental health services to the early detection of disease, Virginians of all ages are affected by our system of health care.

We know that prevention is more cost-effective than emergency treatment, that Virginians need a voice in their health care decisions, 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 are committed to making these goals a reality.

Virginia Democrats believe that individuals should be empowered to make their own health care decisions, in consultation with medical professionals. The bottom line in health care should be the well being of patients, not the profits of Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's).

General Assembly Democrats have repeatedly introduced legislation to hold HMO's accountable for their medical treatment decisions, only to see Republicans defeat this legislation. Virginia Democrats continue to support legislative efforts to hold HMO's liable for their treatment decisions.

Because the choice of physician is among the most important of health care decisions, Democrats also support legislative efforts to allow patients to choose their own doctors, just as they can now choose their own pharmacists.

Virginia Democrats recognize that access to prescription medication is critical to adequate health care and the rapidly increasing price of prescription drugs places a heavy burden on older Virginians, particularly those on fixed incomes. Many seniors face the awful choice of buying food or medicine.

General Assembly Democrats at the state level, and Senator Chuck Robb at the federal level, have led legislative efforts to provide prescription assistance benefits to seniors. These efforts have been thwarted by Republican majorities at both levels, denying many the relief they so desperately need.

Virginia Democrats re-emphasize their support for efforts at both the state and federal level to provide prescription assistance to senior citizens and call on Republicans to withdraw their opposition to this vital legislation.

### *Political Reform*

As Virginia Democrats, we have a responsibility to make democracy work better. It is up to us to ensure that the process by which we nominate candidates, especially to statewide office, is as open, accessible, and inclusive as possible. To this end, Virginia Democrats support a statewide state-administered primary method of nominating future statewide candidates. Primaries afford the maximum opportunity for participation by voters and strengthen our candidates by providing them with valuable campaign experience.

A statewide state-administered Presidential primary in 2004 should be implemented. Further, we urge the House and Senate Democratic Caucuses to work with the State Party Chair and the members of the Democratic National Committee representing Virginia to ensure enactment of legislation enabling this primary within DNC guidelines. We also support legislation that would amend Virginia law to allow Virginia voters to register by political party.

In addition, we have an obligation to try to restore the public's lost faith in our political system. We must act to strengthen campaign finance laws. Virginia Democrats support legislation that would impose reasonable limits on contributions to state and local campaigns, as well as prompt dissemination by the State Board of Elections and local Electoral Boards of campaign finance disclosure statements by electronic means. Legislation that would prohibit out-of-state campaigns from using Virginia law to set up political "slush-funds" for virtually unregulated and unlimited contributions should be enacted. We

believe it is fair to expand home rule for localities to give them flexibility to address local needs. Fair and equitable political appointments make our political system more inclusive, and we support them.

### *Public Safety, Security and Criminal Justice*

The maintenance of public safety is of paramount importance in a civilized society. Individuals convicted of violent crimes must be separated from the rest of society.

Virginia Democrats also recognize that the U.S. Constitution guarantees equal treatment under the law and prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity or national origin in the exercise of police powers. The fair administration of justice is a primary bulwark of the freedoms that Virginians hold dear, and the public must be confident in this fact at every stage of the criminal justice process.

We applaud the accomplishments of the Clinton/Gore administration in protecting our children and our neighborhoods from violence through community policing, tougher sentencing, and early intervention programs. Young people must be steered away from the dangers of crime and drugs.

Virginia Democrats support efforts for common-sense firearms safety legislation, including Virginia's one-gun-per-month law and the federal Brady Law, which have prevented thousands of criminals from obtaining guns. We endorse efforts to use technological advances, such as trigger locks, which minimize access to firearms, especially through theft. We also support the ability of localities to enact sensible and reasonable weapons regulations to ensure the safety of their own citizens.

Criminal profiling on the basis of ethnicity, race or religion is abhorrent to our system of justice and such practices must cease.

Crimes against individuals because of their race, religion, color, national origin, gender or sexual orientation are deplorable, and we support the adoption of protections against these types of hate crimes.

In view of recent national developments concerning the issue of capital punishment, including calls for a moratorium, it is imperative that Virginians remain vigilant and take all necessary steps to ensure that the death penalty is applied fairly and impartially in order to prevent the execution of innocent persons.

As technology advances, particularly in the area of DNA evidence, our system of criminal justice needs to be flexible enough to adapt in order to prevent the execution of those who are, subsequent to conviction, proven to be actually innocent. Proof of actual innocence should not be precluded by any deadlines for introduction of evidence bearing on actual guilt or innocence.

In all cases, justice must be administered in a fair and color-blind manner in federal and state courts and administrative proceedings including those conducted by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). We support fair and just immigration laws that treat similarly situated individuals equally.

### *Social Security and Medicare*

Social Security and Medicare are two of the proudest legacies of the Democratic Party. These two initiatives have helped to ensure the economic and physical well being of millions of older Americans. Over the next fifty years, both programs will require a substantial infusion of additional funds to cover benefits for the aging "baby boomer" generation and successive generations of Americans.

President Clinton, Vice President Gore and congressional Democrats have worked hard to protect Social Security and Medicare, overcoming Republican efforts during the '90s to slash funding for both programs.

Now, national Republicans have endorsed massive, untargeted tax cut proposals for wealthy Americans which will jeopardize attempts to fully fund the Social Security Trust Fund as well as endanger funding needed to modernize and continue Medicare as a comprehensive benefit program.

Virginia Democrats believe that we must honor our values and continue to protect and provide for the economic security of our parents, grandparents and family members. All Virginians deserve fair treatment so that they can maintain an adequate standard of living upon retirement.

We call on Congress to support President Clinton's plan to dedicate to the Social Security Trust Fund the savings achieved from paying down the national debt so that Social Security can be preserved for future generations. We further call on Congress to reject the Republicans' dangerous tax plans which would jeopardize Social Security and Medicare.

### *Transportation and Growth*

The purpose of transportation is to move people and goods safely and efficiently. A balanced, comprehensive multi-modal transportation system is vital to the future well-being of the Commonwealth and essential to economic development. In addition, inadequate transportation infrastructure constitutes an important quality of life issue for thousands of Virginia citizens who are forced to spend hours stuck in their vehicles in traffic jams, time that would be better spent with their families.

The Allen administration not only ignored the state's growing transportation shortfall, it actually exacerbated the problem with deep personnel cuts at the Virginia Department of Transportation. Furthermore, the Allen administration took funds from previously approved projects to use on the Governor's initiatives, funds that had to be repaid this year by the General Assembly. The Gilmore administration failed to address the transportation issue until it was raised by Democratic legislators.

In order to provide a good transportation network to support our growing economy and to improve the quality of life for Virginians besieged by traffic and congestion, it is time for Virginia to address this serious issue that confronts the Commonwealth. More needs to be done to meet the state's current and future transportation needs, including providing a stable, long-term, significant stream of revenue dedicated to transportation projects.

Along with building roads, Virginia needs to increase investment in alternative modes of transportation such as rail and public transportation, telecommuting, car and vanpooling, and other forms of ridesharing. All have an important role to play in reducing congestion and increasing mobility. Attention should be given to offering incentives to encourage commuters to use mass transportation as the primary means of commuting.

Managing growth is another way to maximize the state's investment in transportation infrastructure. By placing new development near existing or planned transportation facilities, congestion can be minimized, sprawl diminished, and open space preserved. These advantages of smart growth should be promoted as land use planning policies and practices developed by the local jurisdictions and they need to tools to manage them. Localities should have the necessary authority to implement land use policies that are appropriate to their communities.