

**The Remarks of**  
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**and**  
**Head of the International Practice Group**  
**Hunton & Williams**

**before the**

**Sixteenth Forum on Education**

**Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center**  
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Thank you for the introduction and the invitation to be a part of your annual Southwest Virginia Education Conference.

It is good to be back in Southwest Virginia. I recall with great fondness the many friends and supporters I first met years ago during my campaigns for Attorney General and Governor.

Across the region I have been in many homes, visited a lot of businesses, stopped at schools and colleges, brought business prospects and jobs, opened business parks and, importantly, fished many of your rivers and streams.

I was here quite often and, frankly, I miss it. So I'm glad to be invited back and pleased to be a part of your conference on education.

Let me begin with some general observations about the subject of education and then turn to my concern about the critical need for rural areas to see and employ education as an economic development initiative.

Here in Virginia, where change has become an enduring constant, we know that our Commonwealth's future is inevitably and inextricably tied to learning.

We know that students entering the first grade this year will graduate in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and we pause when we recall the admonition that education is the debt due future generations.

We ask ourselves: are we doing well enough?

Are we inculcating in our children an understanding of our political and cultural history and our intellectual heritage?

Are we giving them the skills that are requisite for survival in a highly competitive, technological world?

And so you gather here this afternoon for this annual forum at a time when education -- its adequacy, its quality, its funding and its future -- from kindergarten to graduate school -- has attracted renewed analysis, discussion and debate. It goes without saying that you play a profoundly important role in the development and implementation of Virginia's educational policies in Southwest Virginia.

Now, I have been in public life long enough to know that public sentiment can be volatile and fickle, even for something as important and as vital as education.

Further, when the public, including politicians and the press, suddenly focus on a problem area, there is a tendency to exaggerate and generalize.

So, even though there may be a genuine problem -- and I agree that America has one in education -- it is not as bad as it is made out to be.

Personally, I believe there is both reason for concern and hope.

I am concerned because our fortunes in the world will rise or fall according to our ability to teach and train our students. And, over the years, there has been ample evidence to suggest that America could be doing a much better job in education.

But, I think there is genuine reason for hope, particularly in Virginia, because we have come so far in a relatively short period of time. And, I am convinced that we can continue to take constructive action in the years ahead.

Consider, first, the problem.

The essential nature of education -- its role as a bridge between what we are and what we may be -- is not new. Nor, is the call for reform a novelty.

Allow me to read you a brief quotation:

“[America’s] once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world.

“...[T]he educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and as a people... We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.”

Those penetrating, disturbing words are from the opening paragraphs of A Nation at Risk, a watershed report published 21 years ago -- in 1983 -- by the National Commission on Excellence in Education.

Of course, the report was written with the intent of jolting the public and its political institutions out of their complacency, and the inertia of the status quo.

And, to a notable extent, it has worked.

By 1984, some 41 states, consistent with the report's recommendations, had toughened high school graduation requirements, 35 states had raised teacher certification standards, 20 states had increased instructional time and 19 had improved school discipline policies.

In the years since, more proposals and more reforms have followed -- including the more recent Virginia SOLs and the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

In 1986, for example, the National Governors' Association published a Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education, which proposed actions over a five-year period to strengthen teaching, increase the use of technology, and raise the level of local educational standards. Many of those recommendations were instituted in school systems across America.

And, yet, despite all these laudable efforts, over the better part of the past decade, America still hears the calls for reform and accountability. And there's good reason.

We read news stories that thousands of adult Americans think that the sun revolves around the earth, contrary to what Copernicus discovered some nearly 500 years ago.

Far too many Americans know little geography and even less history. These facts became very clear to me when, early in my term as Governor, I chaired a study on International Education for the Southern Governors' Association.

Ironically, we found that in this nation of nations, where nearly every citizen has an immigrant for an ancestor, a great many Americans do not appreciate the diversity of our planet - - the vast variety of people, economies, cultures, beliefs and languages, all of which inhabit an ever shrinking world.

Scientific illiteracy ... geographic illiteracy ... cultural illiteracy ... all present at a time when the era of sheltered industries and self-sustaining domestic markets has ended.

Changes in international circumstance, in economic standing, in technological prowess, in industrial productivity -- all have combined to create a world that alters daily, never pausing, never glancing back.

So, the essential nature of American education -- as a bridge between what we are and what we could be -- is not new.

But, clearly, education has become the new national imperative as we face an international economy and a century of new conditions.

Of course, by force of funding, education retains its Jeffersonian orientation. As you well know, the majority of the funds which support public education are derived from state and local sources.

And, as a direct result, the policies and administration of our schools have been essentially determined at the state and local level.

But, that is beginning to change, even though the preference for local control is still strong and traditional.

Still, the public support for national standards has become significant.

To put it in the words of Henry Thoreau you “usually only hit what you aim at.”

The Education Summit, held in Charlottesville in 1989, convened by the first President George Bush and which I hosted, took up the need for establishing the first national targets.

We recognized that the ammunition would still be loaded at the state and local levels, but the implication was that we would start examining the results as a nation and measure those results against other nations.

In sum, we said that there should be an accounting. We recognized that we would be examined on the progress our students achieved -- or failed to achieved.

We said in the future that change would be swifter and more compelling, and the pressures on education would be greater than ever.

We said that these are not times for extended reflection; these are times for action.

And the goals we established for education, we felt, reflected the urgency of our times.

Indeed, our goals for the 1990s, we said, should be forthright and explicit.

— We knew that every child deserves an even start. So, our goal, we said, should be to provide early childhood development programs to ensure that children will be prepared to learn.

— We knew that we need benchmarks to motivate and compel excellence. So, our goal, we said, should be to improve student achievement in all subjects and grades to levels that exceed or equal the 60<sup>th</sup> national percentile -- and to equal or exceed those of other countries.

— We knew that the best of our students should be given every chance to accelerate their schooling. So, we said, our goal should be to require that every high school provide advanced placement courses for college credit and, where practical, dual enrollment in college courses.

— We knew that school dropouts are usually the first in line for welfare or incarceration. So, we said, our goal should be to decrease the dropout rate by one-half, with the result that nine out of 10 students who begin high school receive a diploma.

And, it did not stop there.

— We knew that in the computer age, a high premium will be placed upon specific skills and technical prowess. So, we said, our goal should be to increase high school graduation requirements to allow students to choose either an advanced academic studies diploma or an applied academic diploma. Let them choose the path. Let us clear the way.

— But, we also knew that technology will impose new demands on all society. So, we said, our goal should be to increase the percentage of students taking algebra or applied algebra in grades 8-12. At the time we noted that 29% did; we said that our goal should be 100%.

— At the same time, we said that we should increase the percentage of high school students taking at least three years of science or applied science. Currently, we noted that only 50% did; we said our goal should be 100%.

Those, we said, must be our goals. But, whatever else happens at the national level, we must be committed to Virginia's objectives. All of that occurred fifteen years ago.

Just as we did during the 1980s, governors and presidents since then have made similar declarations of intent for the 1990s. Other reforms have continued to be proposed and many adopted, both at the state and local level. Standards of learning and standards of quality have been part of the education lexicon. Literacy passports and funding standards have generated debate and controversy. And the beat goes on with the controversial features of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation.

And, just as we did during the 1980s and 1990s, we must now make a declaration of intent for the new century. We should resolve to do all we can to make Virginia's schools better and, of course, that will require a strengthened commitment of the Commonwealth's financial resources, scarce though they may appear to be.

In other words, the realization of our goals will take money. You know it and I know it - - everybody knows it. Unfortunately, if recent trends holds, the national and state legislatures may not be ready to fully fund their requirements. They talk the talk, but they won't walk the walk.

Still, I am convinced that, regardless of what the budget holds in store, at this point in Virginia's history, we must not falter.

After all, education has been a vital and characteristic part of the Virginia impulse from the beginning.

We have always believed that we can, by the force of our own imagination and determination, improve tomorrow by improving ourselves and our children.

But, never has it been more important that our traditional convictions give rise to deliberate action.

Accountability and the measurement of student performance must be an integral part of our educational process.

We have said as much in Virginia.

And, we must be prepared to make the same commitment as a nation.

But these demands for accountability and measurement of student performance must now require a legislative financial accountability to fund those requirements and expectations imposed upon our schools and local governments.

For we know that existing financial circumstances present challenges no less demanding than other challenges faced in earlier times.

And the consequences for our country are not any less significant than in previous times of financial challenge.

Here is why.

Today, in Virginia, we find ourselves in the midst of a second revolution -- a revolution in learning.

As no time before, we face vast changes in the way we live and work.

As no time before, our economy faces challenges from around the globe.

As no time before, Virginia must draw its citizens together in common purpose.

In recent years other nations have discovered what we first taught the world: that education is the key to prosperity.

Accordingly, they are ready and willing to invest -- and invest greatly -- in education, and they have done so.

Can we afford to do less?

Hardly.

We must understand that we cannot secure the quality of education needed without substantial public investments.

And, as with other prudent investments, the rewards are clear and substantial.

Why?

Because investments in education yield results.

Still, it must be equally well understood that money alone will not secure the educational excellence we seek.

We must adopt a new attitude -- both towards learning and towards teaching.

We must restore the joy of education in our children, so that they see education as a window to the world -- so that they want to learn.

Education must be viewed as more than the best route to employment ... but also as the means by which we advance our society, especially in the rural regions of our country and Commonwealth.

And the key is commitment -- the sort of commitment that brings all of you here today.

We can have a new generation of excellence in Virginia, if we are willing to do what is necessary.

We can inspire our children with the joy and benefits of learning.

There is an old saying that if you want to plan for a decade, plant a tree.

But, if you want to plan for a century, teach the children.

I believe leadership forums, such as yours, are important opportunities to reflect on your key issues in Southwest Virginia, to think about ways to address critical challenges and also offer important opportunities to build and strengthen networks and relationships.

There's a reason why this is important, especially now.

The rural areas of this country and Commonwealth are in trouble, and their future is at risk.

There was a time when many areas of rural Virginia thrived as agricultural communities. People lived off the land -- by the sweat of the brow, the flexing of the muscle. Physical labor was the capital required for success. Small manufacturing facilities added to the mix, increased the rural tax base along with other employment opportunities.

But times change. So do economies. Time and distance have been so telescoped that billions of dollars can be transferred in seconds from Zurich to Tokyo, from New York to Singapore.

The automobile has changed the landscape but information technology has changed the face of our economy, one that has shifted from a dependence on physical labor to one that is driven by intellectual capital -- brainpower.

Information technology today produces efficiencies through increased productivity, and in the process creates new wealth, new jobs, new opportunities, but also involves certain economic disruptions, closures of inefficient facilities, and with it the loss of jobs and companies that can no longer compete. Some communities have been transformed dramatically. In rural areas, the local economies of mining, timber, textiles or tobacco are pale shadows of their former selves.

While the world has been shifting under our feet, there has been a clustering of knowledge, technology and capital in key areas of the world. Rural areas are not among them, and one of the reasons is education. It is not enough now to work harder, one has to "think smarter" and "work smarter."

In too many rural areas of the country and Commonwealth, education has been left behind. Local budgets have often been balanced at the expense of educational investments in school buildings, teachers' salaries and advanced curriculum programs.

Too many rural areas today pursue economic development with more emphasis on shell buildings and declarations about the quality of life than on education. Shell buildings are necessary and good, and I helped bring some of them to this region, but they are no longer enough. Education is increasingly the key to economic growth, because there is an undeniable link between education and economic growth.

There may be temporary comfort and satisfaction in securing another textile mill, call center or manufacturing facility, but in a global economy, if it can be made in Marion, it can probably be made cheaper in Malaysia.

Think about this: if every county has a shell building adjacent to a four lane highway and a general aviation facility, how does one locality stand out among the rest?

How does a rural area compete in the future for employment growth and a sustained quality of life?

Should not rural areas focus on the jobs of the future, identify them, determine the needs of those growth industries and prepare for them?

In the course of that search, one will find that 99 times out of a 100, those jobs will require a more educated workforce than ever before. So, if rural areas want jobs in the future, if they want economic growth to sustain their localities in order to meet the needs of their people, doesn't it make sense to take a hard look at education? And shouldn't the focus be on more than just testing students in K-12? What about the entire citizenry -- those who never achieved a high school education, those who want to pursue a vocation, upgrade their work skills or go to college?

Let me tell you what I think is required.

Rural areas must change their culture to the point that education becomes part of every public discussion and decision. Education must permeate the consciousness of the citizenry at large. It must be seen for what it is ... the key to the future.

It will take a while for many rural areas to prepare for that future.

Too many rural counties have too many citizens without a high school education. That was once understandable, even acceptable, but not today. Corporate decision makers look at such numbers.

Too many rural areas do not send enough of their high school graduates to college. That makes a difference to a company seeking an educated workforce.

Too many rural areas do not have a workforce program that is coherent or comprehensible for those who do not choose college or those who want to pursue a vocation or upgrade their work skills. In a number of rural areas there are Workforce Investment Act dollars available, and in some cases the funds are going unspent.

These things are important. They make a difference in getting on the radar screen of companies looking for rural areas in which to locate a business. Those things will be more important five or ten years from now than today.

So what are rural areas doing about it? What can they do about it? What should they do it about it?

In some rural localities there are some educational initiatives of importance and value. They represent commitments of time, effort and money, but too often these efforts are not systemic; they are not comprehensive.

What is required is a sweeping change in the way education is viewed, lifelong in scope for everyone, even though that requires politically difficult decisions and requires significant financial investments often beyond the capabilities of many local governments.

Let me tell you about the emerging efforts of one county, the steps that are being taken in that rural area to change the culture, to promote education and to advance the hopes for economic growth.

It's the area where I grew up, not too many mountains away from here. The county is Patrick, south of Roanoke and just west of the economically devastated areas of Martinsville and Henry County. It has a population of 19,000 of good and proud people, intelligent workers who possess a superior work ethic, a place of scenic mountain beauty and a good place to raise a family. But, it is also a county where for years as many as 45% of its people left the county every day to work elsewhere. Many of those workers were employed for years in nearby Martinsville and Henry County.

In recent years, Patrick's unemployment rate has jumped as high as double digits as the Martinsville-Henry County jobs have disappeared by the thousands. Per capita income is 65% of the state average. It is not just the parents who have been impacted; so have the futures of their children.

Patrick County's students are bright, and they test well, consistently being at the top of the Literacy Passport grades of the 1990s and performing fairly well now in SOLs. This is a good sign for the future, but the County must also live with its past neglect of education.

Today, 43% of Patrick's 19,000 citizens over 21 are without a high school education. The County ranks near the bottom in the number of citizens who possess a high school education. The County also ranks near the bottom in the number of its citizens with college degrees. Its workforce program leaves a lot to be desired.

Let me hasten to add that the demographic information for most of the rural counties represented at this conference today are somewhat similar. Check them out. You may be surprised at where your county stands. Rural counties cannot escape the consequences of those kinds of statistics, and the economic future of such areas lies in the responses those areas take in the near future.

Most rural counties today have an economic development office. Patrick County's economic development program is a good one. Industrial parks, shell buildings on the drawing board, a four-lane highway and a regional general aviation airport are all a part of the assets.

Yet, the recognition that more is required has motivated citizens and government officials to unite in a program to vault Patrick County into the top five rural counties of Virginia during the next ten years. That means in the percentage of citizens with a high school education; the percentage of citizens who attend college; and the implementation of a working and effective program of workforce initiatives.

It is an ambitious undertaking, and the vehicle is the Patrick County Education Foundation. In two years, the Foundation has been organized, hired employees and put in place its three-phase strategy. First is a College Access program for the high school students of the

county. The second initiative is a GED promotion program, and the third initiative involves a series of Workforce Readiness programs.

Can dramatic progress be achieved in the next decade? The County has no choice if it is to have a future, so the work has begun.

The Board of Directors of the Patrick County Education Foundation includes five top county officials, five leading current civic and business leaders, and five Patrick County natives who have made their mark elsewhere. The Board's small professional staff members are highly experienced in their fields and others will be added in the near future.

Let's turn to the Foundation's first strategy -- the College Access initiative. Too many rural counties send too few students on to college and university levels of learning. Many rural families believe that they must be well-off for their children to attend college. This misconception, together with a low number of adult parents who went to college themselves, keeps their children's college aspirations limited. That's been true in Patrick.

In Patrick, however, the commitment is there to change all that. The Foundation has stepped forward with a College Access program, one that is based on the experience of similar programs in Norfolk and Cleveland.

The Patrick Foundation has created a validated "College Access program" in the county's high school. It provides a full-time advisor to help students and their families plan for college, qualify for existing federal, state and college sponsored funds, and will offer "last dollar awards" to students and families with unmet needs after regular grants.

Already, the number of students taking the SATs has more than doubled and the number of college applications has increased significantly. We have located more than a million dollars of financial assistance that will enable them to attend college.

Also, the program is now working with ninth graders to persuade them to think about college during the four years of high school education and how to prepare for college. The next phase is to reach down into the middle school levels and to alert families that financial assistance is available and that they should be thinking about college for their children. Experience shows that the money is out there, and we intend to help the students find it.

The second phase of the Patrick County Education Foundation's work involves a GED initiative.

The county has a GED program and it is pretty good. Like many other areas of the Commonwealth, budgets for such programs have remained flat in most counties for a dozen years, and not many citizens avail themselves of the benefits. The Foundation believes that it is not necessary to reinvent the GED program or to create its own. Rather, the Foundation's strategy involves one of "marketing the message."

Patrick's high percentage of 43% of residents over 21 years of age without a high school diploma increasingly impedes the county's employment efforts and hinders the county in its economic development marketing programs for the future.

The challenge is how to reduce by half the high number of citizens without a high school diploma in ten years. That is the goal, and here is how the Foundation intends to reach it.

The Foundation is recruiting retired business leaders and public officials to reach out into the community as ambassadors of education and to bring people in to the GED program, a program that will be offered throughout the County, not just in the schools, but, we hope, in churches, firehouses, places of work, and rescue squad buildings.

The pitch is simple: the County needs to attract the attention of prospective companies and employees. Citizens who participate in and complete the GED program will help the County improve its image and market its potential. Second, GED participants will serve as powerful role models for their children and grandchildren. And, three, participants who complete the GED program will receive from the Foundation \$1,000 to be applied to their local property taxes or help cover additional education costs.

The Foundation is hopeful that this GED initiative will cut the number of citizens without a high school diploma in half in ten years. If it succeeds, the County will leap from near the bottom of all jurisdictions to one of the top five rural counties of Virginia.

The GED initiative, which began last spring with a \$25,000 local advertising campaign, has produced results. Last summer we graduated our first class of 20-some students, the oldest of which was 62 years old, and we awarded each of the graduates the \$1,000 incentive certificates. Funding has been acquired to hire three general recruiters for GED classes. Promotional activities are continuing. Already, enrollment has more than doubled, and the Foundation expects to double, if not triple, the number of graduates. Also, we anticipate that 140 county adults will enroll this fiscal year. The goal next year is 200 and higher after that.

The Foundation's third strategic initiative is workforce readiness. The goal is to make Patrick County one of the top five rural counties in Virginia with a working and effective program of workforce initiatives that can prepare residents for the "new economy" employment opportunities and bring new employers to the area. To accomplish this, the Foundation will pursue programs aimed at enhancing the work skills and employment readiness of the County's adult citizens. These programs are the result of a breakfast meeting and survey of the local business community and to our surprise, we found that their first concern was finding prospective employees who were qualified in basic computer skills and applications. In short, their concern was there was no way to determine whether applicants were as good as they said they were.

We knew that the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges had created such a certification program for college graduates. We approached the Foundation and asked if a curriculum could be developed for a non-college, predominantly rural, population where we

could “teach to the test.” We put together such a program, and I am pleased to tell you it’s working.

Last year the Patrick Foundation enlisted the assistance of Patrick Henry Community College to launch the first work force initiative, TekXam II. Its first component, TekAdvantage, provides instruction and certification in basic computer skills and applications. The TekXam certification is recognized by a growing list of prominent employers. By June, the end of our fiscal year, we will have completed a total of 7 separate class enrollments for a total of 248 certified participants in the first year.

The program has succeeded so well that we always have a waiting list for our next round of classes. For your information, the Tobacco Commission has just approved funding for the creation of TekXam programs in a limited number of Southside and Southwest Virginia counties interested in creating similar programs.

In addition, the Foundation is working with county officials to identify, develop and initiate other creative work force programs that can be offered in the coming months and years to broaden the county’s work force skill set and increase job readiness. The next components planned for later this year include training in hospitality and tourism services, and basic work force skills. We think all of this is critical in attracting employment prospects to this small rural county, so we’ve decided to just do it.

In short, the Patrick plan is simple and straightforward. It is focused on changing the culture of the county. It is aimed at improving the educational attainment levels for all of its citizens, young and old alike. It is determined to elevate workforce skills of the County’s population.

If it succeeds in Patrick County, it can work elsewhere. The Foundation is engaged in seeking funds far and wide, from companies and non-profit organizations alike, across the Commonwealth and throughout the country. Its budget is modest for its mission and recognizes that the cost will not be inconsequential during the 10 year period, somewhere in the range of \$10 million.

In two short years, we have raised in operating gifts and pledges from individuals, corporations and foundations approximately \$2 million, with pending grant requests of other corporations and foundations. I might add that members of Congress, especially Congressman Rick Boucher, have expressed support for this pilot project as have representatives of several national foundations. The Virginia Tobacco Commission has made grants of \$181,800 in support of the Patrick County Education Foundation’s program.

I believe that the future of Virginia’s rural areas lies in its commitment to education, and that includes educational opportunities for adults as well as young people. As education goes, so goes the future of rural counties.

The Patrick County Education Foundation’s initiative is, really, an economic development program in which education is the vehicle. The plan calls for maximizing and

mobilizing resources that are already in place in the community. It uses a grass roots approach that is easily within the reach of any community committed to change, regardless of its size, geographic bearers or socioeconomic profile. Though its goal is cultural change, the plan offers benefits that can be both immediate and tangible for individuals and communities.

Finally, this plan can be sustained over the long term in a cost-effective manner as individuals and organizations assume the responsibility for advancing education as a community priority.

So, where are we? And where should we be going?

In light of relentless international competition, the many changes in technology, the demands for increased productivity, the importance of education -- “as a bridge between what we are and what we could be” -- could not be more evident. It is the key to our future, the roadmap to our destination.

It seems to me, in a larger sense, regardless of where we live, our objective must be faith in our future and a willingness to take a giant leap forward for education. That’s true for our country as well as our Commonwealth.

In particular, I believe a rural education action project is needed, particularly across Southside and in Southwest Virginia. In the rural areas where agriculture has long been a way of life, citizens instantly understand that one reaps what one sows. And if more is not invested in education in the rural areas of Virginia, if the seeds of education are not sown throughout the areas for all of its citizens, then where is the harvest and where is the future?

Education of our people requires more than “lip service” in support of education. It requires more than goals, calls for reform and accountability. What is required is a belief in education itself; its value as the glue that holds the fabric of our society together; its contribution to the importance to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and its contribution to the economic development and enhancement of our communities, Commonwealth and country.

All of that takes vision to see, and it takes money to see it through.

In the final analysis, we need people. We need people of action -- leaders willing to stand up and be counted; legislators of courage who are willing to vote for more money for education; and citizens willing to thank them and support them at election time.

In my judgment, the season for planting is upon us, and we must get on with the work required of all of us. I wish you well and join you in the hopes of a bountiful harvest in the years to come.

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