

Speaker 1:

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Governor of Virginia, Glenn Youngkin, accompanied by his wife Suzanne Youngkin.

David Trulio:

Good evening. Welcome to the Reagan Library. My name is David Trulio and it's my privilege to be the president and CEO of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute. We start all of our programming here with the Pledge of Allegiance, so I ask that you please stand and join me in honoring our flag and all those who serve under it.

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Before we go further, there are a few people in the audience I'd like to recognize. The first is the First Lady of Virginia, Suzanne Youngkin, former congressman Elton Gallegly and his wife Janice, and presenting underwriter of the special exhibit Auschwitz. Not long ago, not far away, former ambassador to the European Union, Gordon Sandlin.

So once upon a time there was a conservative Republican, a man of deep faith who built a career outside of politics. Eventually after careful reflection and introspection, he spoke out on political issues. He captured the attention of his party, earned the nomination of his party for governor, and he won. He ran a campaign that was reasonable and focused on solutions. He spoke calmly and clearly on the kinds of issues that parents talk about around their kitchen tables.

And not only did he win, he defeated a prominent opponent who'd been victorious statewide before. This winner made national headlines in the process and no sooner had this Republican won the governorship and gotten to work that people started talking. He has a bright future. Maybe he should run for higher office. Now of course, if you think I'm talking about Ronald Reagan, you're right, but if you think I'm talking about Governor Glenn Youngkin of Virginia, well, you're also right.

With President Reagan, we know the rest of the story, but the rest of the governor Youngkin's story is yet to be written as is the next chapter of the political party of which he is a member. We named our speaker series A Time for Choosing after the October, 1964 speech on behalf of presidential candidate Barry Goldwater that catapulted Ronald Reagan into political stardom.

For the last two years, we here at the Reagan Foundation and Institute have invited leading nationally prominent leaders to answer critical questions facing the conservative movement and the Republican party as they face their own time for choosing, for example, with huge challenges facing the country, huge challenges ahead of us with the midterms behind us, the presidential race underway. Where will the focus be? What foreign and domestic policy positions are critical to take into the years ahead? More fundamentally, what are Republican philosophies all can agree upon?

Now, I'm especially pleased to introduce our guest of honor this evening for a reason that doesn't necessarily meet the eye. As someone who is in the process of moving permanently back to California, I spent the last 19 years in Virginia, I can tell you firsthand that Governor Youngkin is governing effectively in a purple state with a divided legislature.

He exudes happiness, a healthy sense of urgency, and a can-do spirit. He brought a palpable sense of optimism to the state's top office and in that context, he has been vocal about attracting smart and good people to public service. Separately, and of note, he twice recognized February 6th as Ronald Reagan Day in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and I recommend that anyone seeking a powerful and succinct articulation of the president's journey and accomplishments, you should read those, either of those two or both of those proclamations.

As he was on the basketball court as a college athlete, he's also a formidable competitor on behalf of Virginia's economy, not simply when it comes to neighboring states, but also internationally. Governor Youngkin, a former Co-CEO of one of the world's top investment firms, concluded last week an international trade mission where he visited Taiwan. He signed an executive order establishing a Virginia Taiwan trade office. He discussed opportunities with business and government leaders in Japan and in South Korea, and he visited American service members.

All in all, our special guest this evening brings a remarkable and timely perspective on the issues at hand, and we are fortunate to have him and the First Lady of Virginia here tonight. So ladies and gentlemen, please join me in giving a very warm Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute welcome to the 74th Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Glenn Youngkin.

Glenn Youngkin:

Well, good evening. Thank you all for coming this evening. And David, thank you for that amazingly kind introduction that no, my wife did not write, and I do want to congratulate you on your new role here at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute. You see as Virginia's governor, it's really disappointing to lose you to California, but given the great work you're doing here, we'll consider you on loan. And it is comforting to know that the custodians of President Ronald Reagan's legacy had the good sense to hire a Virginian.

As a kid who 40 years ago was taken out trash and washing dishes at a diner in Virginia Beach. It's pretty overwhelming to stand here. It's pretty overwhelming to contemplate something that I would've never contemplated and that is talking about the future of America. And so I guess if I do nothing else this evening, I want to thank you. I want to thank you for the tremendous opportunity that you have presented to me, to a kid who grew up in a middle class family in Virginia who saw good times and bad to stand here before you and talk about one of the greatest men ever to live.

It's such an honor, an honor to be here with proud Americans, proud Americans who carry on President Reagan's cherished legacy. So to everyone here today, it's time that we recognize that yes, our nation is deeply divided, but it is also the time for all of you happy warriors.

I just returned, as David said, from my first international trade mission where I was in Asia where I met with a number of business and political leaders from trusted friends and allies, including President Tsai, who was just here at the Reagan library last month. The entire free world stands with the people of Taiwan in their righteous defense of freedom. See, we know that freedom is never guaranteed and it must be protected, and today we honor a leader who did more to advance liberty than almost anyone else in our lifetime.

My amazing wife, Suzanne and I are blessed with four children, and a few weeks ago, our youngest son wrote a paper on leadership and it just so happened that he chose President Reagan to write about. Now, let's be clear, he chose on his own accord and he did not choose me. It made me so proud to read his paper. He wrote that President Reagan built a thriving economy by unleashing free enterprise. He brought peace by projecting strength. He explained that President Reagan knew how to be tough and yet understood how to communicate with warmth.

A high school senior in 2023 understands that this was Ronald Reagan's brilliance. The only match for his vision and courage was his wit and his humor. The only way of making people believe in themselves again was President Reagan's way that he made Americans see a bright future again at a time when it's easy for us to lose faith, to worry that we are indeed that one generation when freedom becomes extinct, there are lights shining across America. I see them every day in Virginia lights of encouragement that the shared values at the foundation of this great American experiment and the policies and decisions informed by them will prevail.

These lights convince me that we can usher in a new era of not just Republican values, but American values that champion a future grounded in the confidence that our best days are indeed ahead of us. Confidence built on restoring safety in our community's sanity in our schools and individual rights to our citizens, especially to our parents. Confidence built on fiscal discipline for taxpayers because it's their money, not the government's. Confidence built on the global stage through strength and support to our friends and allies. Confidence built on unleashing American ingenuity and unbridled opportunity for every man, woman, and child.

Now I'm an unabashedly proud Virginian and I am surrounded by daily reminders, daily reminders, like a capitol that is designed by Thomas Jefferson and a statue of George Washington that stands at its center. Daily reminders like a house that Suzanne and I have the great privilege in living in that was procured by James Monroe and I as I walk out the front door and see our capitol, and I thank the Lord that he's with us. I take a right and I go to work in the Patrick Henry building.

These are daily reminders that this noble republic formed in pursuit of a more perfect union required our founding fathers to confront a time of choosing like none other. A time to choose life, liberty in the pursuit of happiness over oppression and dictatorial rule. The spirit of liberty and freedom that these Virginians and so many others breathed into a new nation requires recommitment time and time again.

Of course, that commitment was reconfirmed during the 1980 election when the United States and the Soviet Union were locked in a cold war. Inflation stood at near record high, gas prices were off the charts, and for the first time in decades, people were beginning to feel that the American dream was out of reach. In that time for choosing, yes, Americans chose a new direction for our country, a new direction based on a course of more jobs, fewer taxes and greater opportunity. A course of speaking truth with refreshing candor and confronting threats to our freedom with strength, it was a choice for courage and conviction.

It wasn't under entirely different circumstances that Virginians chose a new path in the fall of 2021 and that the commonwealth could in fact shine as one of those bright lights of encouragement. You see, for some time, progressive policies had empowered a government to encroach on the freedoms of Virginians, of Virginians, the cradle of American democracy. Tax burdens climbed, jobs disappeared and did not return. Parents lost faith in declining schools', violent crime sword and a growing bureaucracy pushed Virginia off the rails.

Virginia's economy had stalled, eight years of only growing at 1% per year. People were leaving. For nine straight years, more Virginians moved away than moved to Virginia from the other 49 states. In other states, taxes were lower. Businesses grew faster, opportunities were greater. The erosion of hope came to a head during the pandemic when Democrat leadership locked down schools, businesses, houses of worship, and at one point they kept churches closed while opening liquor stores. Stores in Bristol, Tennessee were open while across the street in Bristol, Virginia, they were locked tight. Parents were told that their children watching a 12 inch screen was a quality education. Virginians were staring the choice in the face.

My opponent made it clear parents should not have a say as to what is being taught in schools. Loudoun County in Virginia became ground zero for the parents movement with school board coverups, parents' labeled terrorists, standards and expectations lowered parents pushed out of their children's lives and out of the most important decisions that they would make. But on November 2nd, Virginians made a different choice. They made a choice for the first time in over a decade to elect a Republican governor, a republican lieutenant governor, Republican Attorney General, and a Republican majority in our house of Delegates.

It was a choice to restore parents' rights because parents matter. It was a choice to reestablish excellence, to honor merit. It was a choice to stop the dangerous rise in crime. It was a choice to back

the brave men and women who serve in law enforcement. It was a choice to lift the burdens on small business and to bring back more jobs. It was a choice for common sense. It was an election, yes, a choice to reject that notion that we are the generation that loses freedom and instead, Virginians turned on that bright light.

Conservative policies win because they are grounded in timeless truths and in common sense, and more importantly, common sense policies work. Virginia's the test case proof positive. A state that Ken Lurch left and was falling behind, made a choice and is now winning. Despite having a divided legislature. We went to work on day one, tax cuts, education reform, public safety, investment, regulatory streamlining, overhauling a deep government bureaucracy, creating jobs. We worked with Republicans and Democrats to pass the largest tax reduction package in our state's history. We can get conservative policies done in a divided government. We can do this.

Today, more than 4.5 million people are now part of Virginia's workforce. The highest number recorded in nearly 50 years. In fact, if you look at U-Haul data... oh, come on, it's extraordinary to look at U-Haul data, I do it all the time. What you'll see is that Virginia was ranked 31st in 2021 with one way moves out of Virginia. And one year later in 2022, we are now ranked fifth with one way moves into Virginia. And we have forbidden David's family from renting a U-Haul.

It may be the businessman and may be the Virginian. I think it has a little bit to do with the basketball player in me, but I love competition and I bring it to governing. If you're resting, someone else is working. If you're raising taxes, putting criminals first and neglecting education, people are going to leave for states with lower cost, better safety and better opportunity. We are seeing across our nation, Republican-led states, the bright lights of state government demonstrate that opening schools faster, bringing back jobs, faster results in states performing better.

These states are the destination for people, American families making the choice every day as to where they want to build their lives. The road to prosperity runs straight through economic freedom, prosperity and economic growth must be fueled, not smothered, and when unleashed, we see success real time, but the future is ultimately built on our youngest generation and we must unleash the inherent greatness, the God-given spark in every Virginia and every American student.

For years, progressive leaders drove the misguided belief that lowering expectations would lead to something other than lowered results and that bureaucrats and politicians should replace parents. We must go back to the basics. The basics of reading, writing in math. We need to prepare our children for lives of unparalleled excellence with parents sitting at the head of the table. In Virginia, we passed the largest K-12 budget in our state's history with a significant focus on improving early literacy and paying teachers more.

We introduced new avenues for choice with tax driven scholarships and innovation lab schools. We're reforming accreditation and restoring high standards. If we erode our educational system and allow the call for all students to have equal outcomes at any cost to prevail, we quickly will see socialism overwhelm our students.

Friends, we are the United States of America and we need to cultivate a vibrant economy. Our adversaries include communist China and they have one goal and that's world domination. We know they will use any tool at their disposal ranging from spy balloons to TikTok, to economic coercion, to military intimidation, to intellectual property theft. We must stand strong.

We need an American revolution in order to no longer depend on Chinese manufacturing. We need to bring semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, automotive supply chains here to the United States, and we must strengthen our business and diplomatic ties with friends and allies. The stakes are high and the consequences couldn't be greater.

It's why I banned TikTok and WeChat on state-owned devices. And why earlier this year I took Virginia out of the running for an electric vehicle manufacturing plant for batteries because we knew it was a Trojan horse for a company under the Communist party thumb in China. It's also why Virginians should reject our current law that California should write our vehicle laws.

Next year, Virginia faces a mandate to buy electric vehicles. This policy not only attacks our personal freedoms, but it plays into the hands of the CCP. You see, it's forcing an uneconomic shift into another industry that is dominated by companies controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. Our legislature did last year come together to pass a bill preventing the sale of Virginia farmland in real estate to entities controlled by foreign adversaries.

We should own the rich agricultural lands that God has blessed us with, not the CCP. And we must also support our allies. Our allies who share common values, common values of human dignity and freedom. In fact, we must welcome economic cooperation with trusted international companies and countries building a shared and robust economic future together.

As you know, just last week I signed an executive order establishing a Virginia trade office in Taiwan. I also met with leaders in Japan and South Korea to fortify new relationships in building these trusted supply chains in sectors that are critical not just to our economic future, but to our national security future. We must advance peace through a position of strength. Our choice is clear.

Our results prove that our common sense, policies rested in conservative values work. We don't have to rely on who yells the loudest to win. You see, we can win with results and by communicating a message of hope and these results and these messages aren't just Republican values. They reflect Virginia and California and American values.

We together represent hardworking Americans, hardworking Americans like Joe and Shanita Langford, a couple in Virginia who recently celebrated the one year anniversary of their barbershop. Their barbershop, which so appropriately is in the Patrick Henry Mall outside of Newport News, Virginia. They both grew up in broken homes and through their grit determination, they started their own barbershop with plans to turn it into a chain. Joe's a veteran and he has said that he wants every one of his stores to embody loyalty, honor, respect, and integrity just like the military.

See, the future of our country belongs to Joe and Shanita who have the vision and grit to step into the unknown and pursue their dreams. They don't need a handout. All they want is a fair playing field with the government out of their way. The Republican party is a big tent and we're filling it, which we do through addition and multiplication, not through subtraction and division.

Our 2021 election proved this. It proved that Virginians were hungry for change and Virginians elected Lieutenant Governor Winsome Earle-Sears. She's a former business owner, the mother of three, a veteran and the first black female naturalized citizen to be elected to statewide office in the Commonwealth of Virginia. They also elected Jason Miyares, Jason, who's a Cuban American, and the first Hispanic American elected the statewide offices, our attorney general. This is the face of the Republican Party.

The Republican party must be home to Hispanic Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Americans from all walks of life, Americans with a belief that freedom and liberty are at the foundation of our shared future. I was in high school and in college when Ronald Reagan was our president. As I told you, I started out washing dishes and taking out trash, and yet I chased my dreams with confidence without ever being deterred because I had seen my president believe in hard work in a strong country, and he inspired hope for a better future.

President Ronald Reagan changed lives and now it's our turn to do the very same. See, this is beyond Republican politics. This is America's future. And yes, as I warned, it's easy to lose faith and think that we are the one generation that will lose freedom, but there are shining lights. One of those lights is Virginia.

I want to encourage each and every one of you because we can fulfill the opportunity in the march to the destiny that we all feel. We can be the party of education. We can be the party of safe communities. We can be the party of jobs and economic prosperity. We can be the party of unbridled opportunity. We are the party of common sense.

I witnessed this every day as I see the power of the spirit of Virginia, the power of the spirit of America come to life and breathe hope into the American dream. We will chart a future of hope, a vision of optimism and strength of safety and opportunity for all, so that when our children look back, they will say that in our time of choosing together, we like generations before us chose a path that in present President Reagan's own words, not only preserves the flame of freedom, but casts its warmth and light farther than those who came before us.

I have no doubt that our best days are ahead of us. God bless you. Thank you for having me. And may God bless the United States of America. Thank you.