

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

Timothy M. Kaine
Governor

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**GOVERNOR KAINE ANNOUNCES CREATION OF
POVERTY REDUCTION TASKFORCE**

*~ Group will identify challenges and make policy recommendations to lift
Virginians out of poverty ~*

RICHMOND—Governor Timothy M. Kaine today announced the creation of Virginia’s Poverty Reduction Taskforce, a collection of public and private-sector partners who will make policy recommendations to combat poverty in the Commonwealth. The taskforce, co-chaired by Secretary of Health and Human Resources Marilyn B. Tavenner and Richmond attorney Robert Grey, will present its recommendations in the spring of 2010. The Governor announced the creation of the taskforce at “Rethinking Poverty: Exploring Economic Opportunity for All Virginians,” a summit on poverty in the Commonwealth presented in partnership with the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices.

“Helping Virginians lift themselves out of poverty will not be easy or quick, but it is imperative that we find ways to protect children in poverty and provide economic opportunity for all Virginians,” Governor Kaine said. “With the current economic challenges we face, the work of the taskforce is even more urgent, and I eagerly anticipate positive results.”

Current data show approximately 739,000 people, nearly 10% of all Virginians, live below the federal poverty line, including 232,600, or 12.9%, of Virginia’s children. As of 2007, the federal poverty line was \$10,210 in annual income for an individual or \$20,650 for a family of four. While Virginia’s statewide poverty rates are among the 10 lowest in the nation, certain regions are affected much more dramatically than others, with Southwest and Southside Virginia each having rates over 17%. Research shows that living in poverty can have negative impacts at any age, including poor nutrition during infancy, increased risk for academic failure in school age children, poor overall health in adults, and decreased access to prescription medication for seniors.

The Poverty Reduction Taskforce will identify challenges and opportunities to lift children and families out of poverty. Members have been assigned to three working groups – asset development, individual and community resilience, and workforce training

and education – and will spend a year reviewing research by national, state, and local experts on their policy areas. The Taskforce also intends to hold regional community meetings in partnership with the Family and Children’s Trust Fund of Virginia to obtain the public’s perspectives on poverty in their communities. At the conclusion of its research, the taskforce will make short-term and long-term policy recommendations in its assigned areas, with the overarching goal of finding ways to help Virginians lift themselves out of poverty.

Today’s summit, “Rethinking Poverty: Exploring Economic Opportunity for All Virginians,” brings private and public partners together in the effort to combat poverty in the Commonwealth. Speakers included Dr. Ron Haskins, senior fellow with the Brookings Institution, who discussed national poverty trends, and Michael Cassidy, executive director of The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis, who provided a snapshot of the situation in Virginia.

“We’re reaching out to a diverse group of people to identify solutions and resources that work in Virginia,” said Secretary Tavenner. “What we’re all committed to is making sure that our recommendations result in solid policy proposals for state lawmakers to consider.”

The Taskforce will receive financial support through a grant program funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and administered by the NGA. The NGA Center for Best Practices will also provide technical assistance before, during, and after the summit for activities related to analyzing and implementing comprehensive policies and programs that address short-term and long-term solutions to reduce poverty.

Taskforce members, and assigned working groups, are:

Co-Chairs

- **Marilyn Tavenner**, Secretary of Health and Human Resources
- **Robert Grey**, Attorney

Asset Development

- **Jeff Anderson**, Virginia Economic Development Partnership
- **Richard Grattan**, Wachovia Bank
- **Delegate Jennifer L. McClellan**
- **Marsha Shuler**, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond
- **T.K. Somanath**, Better Housing Coalition

Individual & Community Resilience

- **Dr. Erik Beecroft**, Virginia Department of Social Services
- **Anthony Conyers Jr.**, Virginia Department of Social Services
- **Trisha Ferrell**, United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg
- **Jill Hanken**, Virginia Poverty Law Center

- **Michelle Larkin**, State Board of Social Services
- **Jim Schuyler**, Virginia Community Action Partnership
- **Senator John Watkins**

Workforce Training & Education

- **Peter Blake**, Virginia Community College System
- **Katherine Busser**, Capital One- United Way
- **Brian Davis**, Workforce Systems, Office of the Governor
- **Delegate David L. Englin**
- **Lyn Hammond**, Secretary of Commerce & Trade
- **Scott Hippert**, Virginia Early Childhood Foundation
- **John Morgan**, Voices for Virginia's Children
- **Roberta Schlicher**, Virginia Department of Education

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