

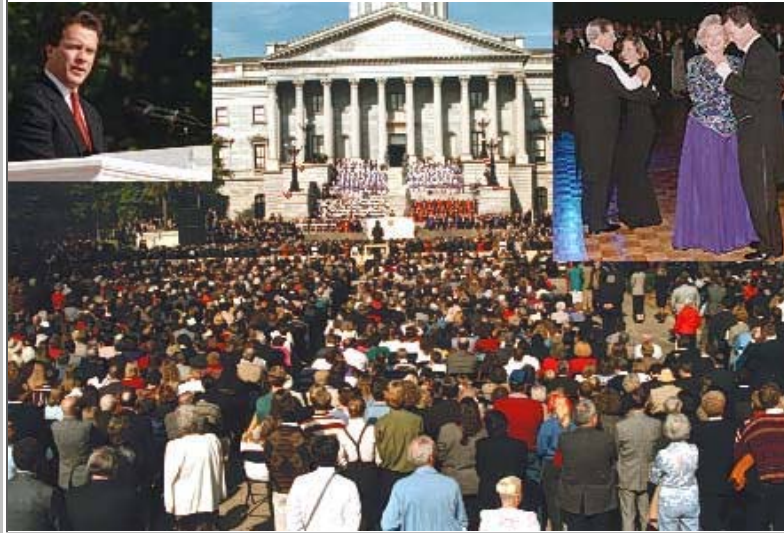
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1995 Inaugural Address

South Carolina Governor David M. Beasley



I stand before you today humbled by the awesome responsibility of this office, but confident in the system and the people of South Carolina. Standing at the top of these grand stairs moments ago, my mind raced through South Carolina history. I thought about the 112 people who came before me. Some during wars. Others during economic uncertainties. But through it all, they and their people persevered. They did it with hard work, with vision and with boundless faith in their destiny as a people. A people called South Carolina.

Our rich heritage of leaders is unbroken. For about three decades one man has served the people with dedication and integrity and his wife has been right there all along. I want to thank Nick and Emilie Theodore for their fine contributions to our state and ask that you join me in thanking them.

There's another couple I want to recognize. Two teenagers from Greenville discovered each other some time back. I dare not say how long ago it was. But time has been good to them, and to the people they served in the legislature, Congress and the Governor's office. Carroll Campbell is leaving office the highest rated Governor in America. He has taken us to new economic heights. His leadership saved lives. His stewardship reformed government. Because of programs he and Iris championed, fewer babies are dying at birth and more children are being immunized. There's not a person in this state who has not been touched by their leadership. To Carroll and Iris Campbell, I say the people of South Carolina love you dearly and on behalf of them, thank you for everything you've done.

The last two years were a wonderful education for Mary Wood and me. Ours was the privilege of getting to know South Carolina one community, one street, one family at a time. Yes, we are a diverse lot, we South Carolinians. But, even though we are of different religions, races and politics, we can agree that before the institution of government, there was another institution already created. It was the institution of family. Let us agree that it's time to put families first in South Carolina. We will put families first by declaring that government exists to serve them, not vice versa. We will put families first by making sure that decisions made around government conference tables do not conflict with decisions made around family dinner tables.

Our highest calling is not to perpetuate bureaucracy, but to offer opportunity. State government is poised to provide such opportunity as never before. For the first time, some of the most important agencies in government are directly accountable to the people because they answer to the governor elected by the people. We have initiated fundamental change in the structure of our government. Now we must initiate fundamental change in our philosophy of governing. I have instructed

every agency under my direction to examine every policy and program with several questions: are they needed? how can they be carried out more efficiently? and, the most important question, is every program and policy pro-family and pro-business? We will reject policies that hurt our efforts to create jobs and rebuild families.

There are other changes in which agencies under my direction do business. As a legislator, I was appalled by turf protecting and narrow-minded bureaucrats who competed for scarce tax dollars. The big picture did not seem to matter to some. Elected officials were constantly thwarted by special interest groups promoting their own agendas. This often led to overlap and duplication. No longer. Agencies under my direction will work together. They will work for the people, not themselves. They will be in tandem with the governor in providing opportunity, and they will get out of the way as individual initiative flourishes. That's a promise.

The foundation of opportunity is an education and a job. You can't have one without the other. To the business community I say that we will continue our efforts to maintain a climate in which you can create jobs and wealth which will benefit all of us. We will give you the skilled work force. We will be your partner to develop rural South Carolina. We will assure you of fair tax policy. We will grow our economy by helping business grow, not by following the pied pipers of higher taxes and gambling. And we must prepare our people to perform jobs the private sector creates. The average person changes jobs seven times in a lifetime. Our technical, vocational and university systems must be retooled to accommodate the demands of an information-based society. Our public schools must be adequately funded, our teachers adequately paid, to prepare our children to enter the world of technology...and we must embrace innovation in the schools.

But opening the school doors to innovation does not require closing the doors on time-tested principles. C.S. Lewis, the Oxford don, wrote, "We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst." Thirty years of value free social experimentation in society at large and the public school system have heaped disaster upon disaster...a virtual moral meltdown. Value free means that nothing is right and nothing is wrong. If, then, there is no right and wrong, no ultimate truth, there are no parameters. And if there are no parameters, then anything goes. Juvenile crime, school violence, educational mediocrity, illegitimate births, deadbeat dads, crack babies...all are logical consequences of a society that accepts anything.

But on November 8th, the people of South Carolina and our nation spoke in one voice. They declared independence from a morally neutral society and they expect government to act nobly and now! Government has been part of the problem, not by what it has said, but by what it has done. We are repulsed by school violence and undisciplined children, yet flirt with new age doctrines that encourage the very habits we detest. We demand character and virtue in our children, yet shrink from character education because a few judge such teaching politically incorrect. We give lip service to reducing government and letting wage earners keep more of what they earn, yet propose tax increases to offset reductions of other taxes. We exalt family, yet promulgate policies which encourage family break-up. We say that personal responsibility and hard work are virtues, yet perpetuate a welfare system in which neither is required. We say it's wrong to have babies out of wedlock, yet financially reward those who do. We say crime does not pay, yet build a prison system in which crime and punishment have little correlation. If ever putting families first is to be more than political rhetoric, if ever society is to reclaim the moral high ground, if ever our children are to walk in goodness, justice and mercy, then our deeds must match our words.

Ladies and gentlemen, today we begin. In a democracy every voice is heard, every right respected. I pledge to you that my administration will reach out to all of South Carolina and seek the best and brightest wherever they may be. Yet, there are some guiding principles. While we reaffirm religious liberty for all, historical truth teaches the Judeo-Christian ethic as the guiding light that made America great, and can make America great once again. We seek not the lowest common denominator, which drags everyone down, but the highest of standards, which lifts everyone up. In South Carolina, we will honor excellence. We will exalt character. We will cherish virtue. We will once again, by words and deeds, place a premium on the individual...each person a unique moral agent, capable of making choices and accepting responsibility for those choices. And most importantly, we will acknowledge the image of God in every man, woman and child.

Government has been part of the problem and it can be part of the solution. But there are limits. Samuel Johnson wrote, "How small, of all that human hearts endure, that part which laws or kings can cause or cure." Many of today's social disorders are matters of the heart, and government can't change a human heart. The answers to the problems vexing society today are in the homes of South Carolina. Homes where children are trained up in the way they should go, where values are taught, where God is worshipped. Homes, to paraphrase the prophet Malachi, in which the hearts of parents have been restored to their children, and the hearts of the children have been restored to their parents.

But human history tells us that no matter how hard we try, loneliness and poverty and hopelessness will be constant companions for many. At all of our inaugural activities we are asking people to bring items needed by children's homes across the state. Those items will meet immediate needs. But I'm doing it for a more important reason. I want every child to

understand something. Regardless of your circumstances, I want you to know that we love you, God loves you and we will do everything within our power to be the family that you don't have.

The French social philosopher, Alexis de Tocqueville, came to America in the 1830s to find out what made this country so great, so fast. He concluded that America is great because America is good. But he warned that if America ever ceases to be good, it will cease to be great. He found the key to greatness not in the halls of government, important as that is, but in the churches, the homes, the communities, the hearts of the people. In so many ways, South Carolina has been at the forefront of American history, but perhaps our most important contribution to the nation is that we have not turned our back completely on family and tradition and faith.

I'm optimistic about the future because we don't have to debate the problems. We know what they are because of the virtues we share as a people. Our challenge is to find solutions. In government. In the family. In the school rooms and board rooms and churches and synagogues. With hard work, cooperation and the grace of God, we will build a South Carolina that is good and strong and noble. We will put families first. Thank you and God bless you.

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