

**Inaugural Address**  
**January 14, 2015**

GOVERNOR NIKKI R. HALEY: Four years ago, I spoke from this very same spot, on this very same occasion.

It's really good to be back!

On this amazing day, I want to take a moment to thank Michael, Rena, and Nalin. They understand that we are a family of service. Service always brings with it some level of sacrifice, but it is my family and their love of South Carolina that motivates me.

Michael and I would also like to thank our parents and families. Their support and strength continues to be the balance we need. We are thankful to each and every one of you for loving us unconditionally.

I'd also like to say a special thank you to the former governors and first ladies who took the time to be here today: Gov. Dick Riley, First Lady Iris Campbell, Gov. and Mrs. David Beasley, Gov. and Mrs. Jim Hodges, and First Lady Jenny Sanford. Michael and I have a great respect for their service, sacrifice, and commitment to our state, and it is on their shoulders that we stand and continue to drive South Carolina forward.

And of course, I want to thank the great people of our state. You made the judgment in November to put me back on this podium today. The trust you have placed in me is something I hold very dear. I will never forget it. I will never take it lightly. And I will again spend each and every day proving to you that you made the right decision.

My friends, it truly is a great day in South Carolina!

I am not unaware that four years ago, when I spoke for the first time as governor, there was some skepticism.

It was not unfounded.

I was young. I was unknown. I was different.

But I knew in my heart then, as I know now, what South Carolina could be.

We are a fiercely proud state, a state with a history as rich as it is complicated, a state where the intensity of our individualism is surpassed only by the shared joy we draw from being, collectively, South Carolinians.

And therein lies our strength.

I long ago learned from my parents the value in bringing people together. Our differences, they taught my brothers, my sister and me, are nowhere near as powerful as what unites us.

Albert Einstein once remarked that "nothing truly valuable can be achieved except by the unselfish cooperation of many individuals."

We have achieved much of great value since I first took the oath of office.

Four years ago, I spoke of serious economic difficulties and the largest budget shortfall in state history.

Today, our economy is among the fastest growing in the nation. Our people have more jobs than ever in our history. Our industries are flourishing, with more new businesses and jobs coming in every week. We're building cars and planes and tires like never before, and there's more of that on the way.

We have created a more responsive, more responsible state government. We have helped our friends and neighbors become less dependent on government assistance. We have changed the way we fund the education of our children. We have stood tall against a federal government insistent on making it harder for our people to achieve the American dream. We have changed the image of South Carolina, not just across the country but around the world.

And we have done it together.

But we aren't finished, not yet, not even close.

On Christmas night, home in his bed, surrounded by love and prayer, Gov. James Edwards passed away.

Gov. Edwards was a kind and gentle man with a deep devotion to South Carolina. He loved this state, and this state, as we do, loved him back. He believed in us, in our future, in our greatness.

During his inauguration as governor, 40 years ago, he read the following quote: "I have dreamed man's dreams that never came true, I have seen them vanish at dawn, but I have realized enough of my dreams, thank God, to make me want to dream on."

And then he asked us to dream on, to "build together for a great tomorrow."

My dreams for South Carolina know no bounds.

They are the dreams of a little girl from Bamberg who would one day grow up to be governor.

They are the dreams of her parents who left everyone and everything they knew in search of a better life.

They are the dreams of a mother who wakes every morning hoping her children's future will be even brighter than her own.

My dreams for South Carolina know no bounds. They are as expansive as my love for this state and for the people who call it home.

In the South Carolina I dream of, a daughter of Dillon starts each day with the same hope and possibility as a son of Greenville.

In that South Carolina, a single mother-of-two feeling stuck in her job knows that if she wants it, a better opportunity is waiting just around the corner.

In that South Carolina, mothers and daughters, sisters and wives, go to bed each night knowing that they are safe, that they are loved and supported, that their community is with them.

In that South Carolina, we are competing not just with North Carolina and Georgia, but with India and China.

And in that South Carolina, every little girl and every little boy dreams as big as I do, and does so knowing every one of those dreams is within reach.

That South Carolina is real. That South Carolina is achievable. That South Carolina is worth fighting for.

But we all know that progress never comes easily. It requires hard work, determination, discipline, and sometimes, it requires us to make changes. As great as our state is, it's not perfect. Far from it. It's our job to keep striving for that perfect goal. We'll never quite reach perfection here on earth, and we know that. But we can make everyone's lives better for trying.

Twenty-five years ago, Gov. Carroll Campbell took the oath I just took and spoke the words I just spoke. Under the looming shadow of Operation Lost Trust, the largest public corruption scandal this state has ever seen, Gov. Campbell knew that South Carolina needed a change. He said, "The very soul of our state is shaken if (the people) perceive their elected leaders as dishonest."

Sadly, our soul is beginning to shake once more.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Everybody can be great . because anybody can serve." Service, he believed, requires not a specific level of education or of sophistication, but only "a heart full of grace," a "soul generated by love."

As I look around me today, I see those who would lay claim to that mantle of service, and to the label of public servant. Legislators and directors, congressmen and commissioners.

And many — most — would be right to make that claim, for your service is true, your motives honorable.

But there is no question that the events of recent times, the revelation of the misuses of public funds, public office, and worst of all, the public trust, have shaken the very soul of our state.

The people of South Carolina deserve more from us. They deserve honest service, the kind of service propelled not by a hunger for self-indulgence but by a heart full of grace.

To date, much of the debate in the chambers behind me has been wrongly focused, with too much concern for the comfort of elected officials and too little for protecting the public interest. The shaken confidence in our government is too large and the opportunity in front of us too great for that to continue.

To accept the challenge of governing is to take in our hands a precious civic responsibility. It is not merely the titles and the pageantry of public office that we accept, but the trust that our friends and neighbors have committed to us.

Some have ignored that responsibility. Some have abused that trust.

It is both our opportunity and our duty to restore to the people of South Carolina their faith in their government. This is not about us. It is about them.

Nineteenth century philosopher Henry David Thoreau believed in dreaming big. "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be," he said. "Now put the foundations under them."

To me, South Carolina has always been a castle in the air. We are a place of unrivaled beauty and profound integrity. A place where the people are as loyal as they are friendly. A place where each day brings a new chance for every man, woman, and child to flourish.

By the grace of God, we have Thoreau's castle in the air. But we must always work to build the foundation beneath it. The last four years have seen challenges. The next four will see more of them. That does not trouble me in the least. There is greatness in our future.

The spirit of our citizens is enduring. The strength of our character is exceptional. And our faith in a just God is unwavering. There is no limit to what lies ahead for South Carolina and her people.

We're just getting started.

Thank you. May God bless South Carolina. And may He continue to bless the United States of America.