

Inaugural Address of Governor Earl Ray Tomblin

November 13, 2011

Good afternoon, my fellow West Virginians. Thank you for this tremendous opportunity to have been chosen as the chief executive of our Great State. I promise that each and every day, I will honor your trust and build upon the privilege of being your Governor.

To Senator Manchin, thank you for your kind words. All West Virginians are deeply appreciative of your work as Governor and now as Senator following the passing of our beloved Senator Byrd.

I want to extend my thanks to Senator Rockefeller who is unable to join us today. We thank you for all that you have done and continue to do for our state.

I also want to offer my thanks to all of my supporters, who have worked so hard this past year to make today a reality.

I am humbled by the depth and broad base of support that so many of you offered to this effort.

To the hundreds of volunteers who consistently burned the midnight oil with but a single expectation, and that was for a better West Virginia, I thank you.

And a special thank you to Tom Heywood. Tom is a great friend, and I want to thank him for being master of ceremonies for today's event.

Most importantly, I want to thank all of you, the citizens of our great state, who have come here to be a part of this day.

Your presence has made this a special day for my family and me.

To my many family members and dear friends, please know how much I appreciate you being here and I just want to say thank you for your love and encouragement.

To my lovely wife, Joanne and our son Brent, you mean the world to me. Your love, support and belief in me can never be matched or measured. I wouldn't be here today without you.

I stand here today, a proud son of Chapmanville, West Virginia. It was in my hometown and from my dear and wonderful parents, that I learned the values of family, faith, community, and hard work that continue to guide me to this day.

And, I have seen those same deep rooted values in the many people that I have met as I travelled all around our great Mountain State.

Today, I am honored to be sworn in as the 35th Governor of West Virginia.

As your humble servant, I will work every day to bring people together and do what is best for all of West Virginia.

From the Northern and Eastern Panhandles to the Southern coalfields, we are influenced by our geographic locations, but we are united by our desire to move our State forward and make it all that it can be.

Twelve months ago, I started working as your Governor. I focused on creating jobs, lowering taxes, and moving West Virginia forward.

Today, as I officially become Governor my priorities remain clear and steadfast.

I have had the honor to serve as President of the West Virginia Senate for 17 years, and for the past 37 years, serving in the legislature; I have represented the coal miners, shop keepers, teachers, and working people from my district.

During that time I worked with Governors and Legislators of both parties with one common goal: to put West Virginia first.

Over the past year, you have heard me say those four words often, "put West Virginia first". Each day, I rise to lead our state with that intention...to put West Virginia first with every decision I make.

Together we made some tough choices, during some difficult times and those decisions are now paying dividends.

We made sound decisions for the long run, not for the next election. And I will continue leading with that long term view.

When it came to putting our fiscal house in order and tackling issues like worker's compensation reform, keeping our doctor's here in West Virginia, and reforming our tax structure, we had one guiding principle: Put West Virginia First.

Now, as your Governor, I will continue to lead with that focus so that we can build on those sound decisions and make West Virginia an even better place for our citizens.

While there is still work to be done, and the national recession is still present, we have much to be proud of here.

Our state budget is not just balanced; we continue to have a budget surplus! Our credit rating is higher than it has been in decades and our Rainy Day Fund is the envy of the nation.

We are cutting taxes for consumers and businesses alike and I am proud to say that we will completely eliminate the sales tax on food during my time as Governor.

As your Governor, nothing is more important than encouraging and advancing our state's economic future.

Our unemployment rate is below the national average. We have attracted national companies like Macy's and Amazon and I will work hard to attract more.

I want to repeat - that I will go anywhere and do anything to bring even more good paying jobs to West Virginia!

We live in a special place.

We are the hardest working people in America.

We power the world.

Our heritage of being the nation's leading energy provider will continue throughout the 21st Century.

We must continue to promote our energy industries. Our nation, our state, and our great citizens depend on West Virginia to power their future. I will work tirelessly to defend these industries.

I will fight for our state's coal industry, the backbone of our economy. We will continue to take on the federal government and oppose efforts by the EPA and others to stop production of the most efficient fuel our country knows.

Now, we are on the forefront of new energy sources and new technologies with the development of the Marcellus Shale.

Working with members of the Legislature, we will put permanent rules in place to provide certainty to the natural gas industry, while also protecting landowners and our environment.

And with this certainty, we will see our manufacturing sector rejuvenated by taking advantage of natural gas byproducts.

I look forward to, not just one, but hopefully two multi-billion-dollar investments, so our children can stay home, secure good paying jobs and raise their families' right here in West Virginia.

To do this, we must work together.

I am a consensus builder. Business and labor can function harmoniously. Republicans and Democrats can work together. And no one part of the state is more important than another. I will be a Governor for all of West Virginia.

My door is always open. I know that the best solutions come after frank and honest discussions, and I look forward to having those opportunities. And while I am proud to be financially conservative, I am open to new ideas, new technology, and new ways to make our state better.

Over the coming months it is my intention to bring people together around common goals that will better our state: improving our education system, reducing drug abuse, and resolving our OPEB liability.

I pledge to you that I will show West Virginia's can-do spirit, work through any potential gridlock, and make sure we make progress on these, and other, critical issues facing our State.

We must allow ourselves the opportunity to see all sides of the issues and challenges before us.

Because I believe that when we approach our challenges in this manner, we can and we will all, succeed together!

I will represent our state with pride and dignity. I won't let us be taken advantage of and we will take a backseat to no one!

This is a good place to start a business, a great place to raise a family.

We are strong, resilient and resourceful.

West Virginians make things happen.

We are West Virginia.

I stand before you today a common man, upon which, you have bestowed a great honor.

I am a man who works hard, shoots straight, loves his wife and son and wakes up every day thinking about how I can make our Great State even greater.

It takes all of us working together. And with your support and Gods will, I pledge to be the best Governor I can be.

God bless you, God bless America, and God bless the Great State of West Virginia.