



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor

Executive Order

NUMBER SIXTY NINE (2017)

ESTABLISHING THE COMMONWEALTH COMMISSION ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Importance of the Commission

This Commonwealth is home to people from every race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity. That diversity is an essential element of what makes Virginia a great place to live, work, and raise a family, but like much of the nation, the Commonwealth has an unreconciled relationship with its past.

Since the beginning of my administration, we have worked every day to make Virginia a more open and welcoming place for families and businesses from every walk of life and we are proud that those efforts have resulted in greater equality and prosperity in every corner of the Commonwealth. We must continue to address poverty, educational inequality, housing disparity, environmental injustice, religious intolerance, LGBT discrimination and many other important issues, but every Virginian can be proud that their Commonwealth is moving forward rather than standing still.

From record investments in education, to significant reforms in Virginia's criminal justice system, to expansions of health care access and efforts to protect the right to vote, this administration and our partners have made real progress to break down barriers to opportunity for every community across the Commonwealth. We have restored the rights of over 161,000 Virginians – more than any other Governor in the history of the United States. And, we have put a stop to divisive legislation that would have limited the rights of women and LGBT Virginians, and would have further restricted the right to vote in Virginia.

However, as the ugly and tragic events of August 11th and 12th in Charlottesville demonstrated, we still have work to do to confront hatred, bigotry, and violence. The Neo-Nazis and white supremacists who incited violence, injury, and death in one of Virginia's great cities, did so to advance racism and discrimination against people based on their race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.

If Virginia is to heal and move past those terrible events, we must evaluate the circumstances that led to them and identify the steps that we can take together to stamp out hatred and violence before they reach a dangerous boiling point again. These issues are not exclusive to Virginia, and the vast majority of Virginians reject the actions and the ideology that were on display in Charlottesville. However, in the wake of these events, we have a responsibility and an opportunity to examine and learn from them. By asking tough questions, embracing perspectives that are different than our own, and leaning on the wisdom of experts, we can better understand the impediments to inclusion and equality that exist in our society today and make recommendations for how to knock them down.

We can have an honest discussion about the history of our Commonwealth and our country and the way it is taught in schools and represented in the public square.

We can evaluate how technology and our modern culture of political division and social alienation may be contributing to the radicalization of people from all walks of life.

We can work together to show the world that, as the place where the ideals of our nation were born, Virginia is perpetually engaged in the difficult work of extending true equality under the law to all of our citizens, no matter their race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. Our history stands as a complicated story, along with the rest of our great Nation, with many triumphs and yet many sins that remain unreconciled.

It would be naïve to think that any one commission can solve the problems of inequality, intolerance, and violence that this nation has wrestled with throughout its existence. However, by focusing narrowly on the circumstances that led to the events in Charlottesville, we can develop actionable proposals to bolster the many other efforts happening across this government and this Commonwealth to erase hatred, bigotry, and intolerance in Virginia and replace them with diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Establishment of the Commonwealth Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Accordingly, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth, and pursuant to Article V of the Constitution of Virginia, I hereby direct the Secretary of the Commonwealth to establish the Commonwealth Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Commonwealth Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Commonwealth Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (the Commission) shall be responsible for promoting civil rights and fostering an environment of reconciliation and healing throughout the Commonwealth. Moreover, the Commission shall place an emphasis on implicit bias and cultural sensitivity by focusing on community relations and economic justice.

More specifically, the Commission is charged with:

- Identifying any Virginia laws, regulations, and agency procedures that perpetuate racial, ethnic, or religious intolerance or divisions, as well as recommending changes in law that can better promote tolerance and diversity.
- Identifying and recommending ways to partner with non-governmental organizations working to promote a culture of diversity and inclusion. Such organizations shall include nonprofits, foundations, and faith and community organizations.
- Identifying policy changes at the federal level, including funding priorities within the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, that will better equip state and local governments to combat domestic terrorism and unlawful conduct arising from hatred.
- Supporting local government and community efforts by identifying and creating resources including grant opportunities, best practices, and guidelines for social media initiatives. Resources will include guidance for the renaming of schools, highways and other public spaces. Resources will also include guidance on the relocation and replacement of monuments.
- Hosting events to promote a public dialogue on unity and reconciliation.

The Commission's work shall also focus on policy and societal factors that drive individuals toward hate-focused extremist groups. The Commission is charged with:

- Identifying reasons individuals join terrorist or extremist groups. The Commission may look at factors leading to feelings of isolation or alienation and the impact of technology and social networking.
- Collecting and recommending best practices on how parents, educators, community and religious leaders can identify individuals at risk of joining terrorist or extremist groups.
- Identifying policies that can be enacted to prevent individuals from engaging with such groups and behaviors.
- Collecting and recommending best practices on assisting individuals who have already succumbed to terrorist or extremist groups.

Composition of the Commission

The Commission shall include individuals representing the faith, advocacy, nonprofit, local and state government, and education communities.

The Commission shall also collaborate with other entities as appropriate and seek participation from relevant stakeholders and state and local officials.

Staffing

Staff support for the Commission will be provided by the Office of the Governor, and any other Secretariats, agencies, or offices as designated by the Governor. The Commission will

serve in an advisory role to the Governor, in accordance with § 2.2-2100 of the *Code of Virginia*. The Commission shall submit an interim report to the Governor no later than November 15, 2017. A final report shall be submitted to the Governor no later than November 15, 2018.

Effective Date

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in force and effect for one year from its signing unless amended or superseded or rescinded by further executive order or directive.

Given under my hand and under the seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia, this 24th day of August, 2017.

Terence R. McAuliffe, Governor

Attest:

Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth