

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery
Jay Timmons, President and CEO
National Association of Manufacturers
Virginia Foundation for Research and Economic Education Luncheon
McLean, Virginia
Friday, June 14, 2019

Good afternoon. Thank you, Delegate Hugo, for that kind introduction. You are a true leader for the commonwealth, and my family owes you an incredible debt of gratitude—something I'm going to share with this audience in a few minutes.

It was also great to be with my friend Senator Warner. He's a friend to manufacturers and to our democratic institutions, and you always know you'll get a fair hearing with him.

I want to thank Chris Saxman and Virginia FREE for your work to foster an informed and active business community. And I see plenty of friends in the audience—including friends of the NAM and manufacturing in America.

It's a good time to be a manufacturer in America. Manufacturing is in the spotlight. It's on voters' minds. And we have candidates' attention. The trick is getting them to support the policies manufacturers need—not just the ones they think we need.

But the biggest challenge facing manufacturing today is more about perception than policy. The conventional wisdom is that manufacturing jobs are scarce. The conventional wisdom is that robots are replacing people. And the conventional wisdom is that our jobs are stuck in the past.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, the conventional wisdom is wrong.

The truth is that, as of this week's numbers, we have half a million jobs to fill. And Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute, the NAM's education and workforce partner, have found that we will need to fill about 4.6 million manufacturing jobs over the next decade.

2019 has proven to be a more challenging year, but 2018 was the best year for manufacturing job creation since 1997.

We're hiring. And we can't hire fast enough—because technology isn't replacing people. It's allowing people to do more. The type of work is changing. Now that is true. We need coders and technicians, people ready to dive into the world of artificial intelligence, augmented reality, robotics, 3-D printing and more.

That's modern manufacturing. And that's why we're doing everything we can to inspire a new generation of innovators and creators—and to make our workplaces more diverse and inclusive.

But we do face challenges beyond building our workforce—many of which require serious action by Congress and the administration.

To keep growing, we need to access markets around the world, and the most important trading relationship is here in North America.

That's why we are all-in for the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement. Congress has a responsibility to get this done.

And for manufacturers, it's also time to turn the trade war with China into a trade agreement with China.

The NAM was the first business association to call for a bilateral trade agreement with China, and now, it's time to get back to the negotiating table and hammer out a deal.

But as focused as we are on trade, we can't take our focus off immigration. Immigration is a workforce issue. It's a moral issue. It's a security issue. And with the recent tariff threat, it got mixed in with trade issues as well.

Earlier this year, the NAM put out a comprehensive immigration plan called "A Way Forward"—because manufacturers believe in providing solutions. And solving immigration requires showing compassion, addressing economic realities and providing security.

Yes, our leaders need to be bold on immigration, and they also need to be bold on infrastructure.

With our "Building to Win" blueprint, manufacturers are calling on Congress to make a serious investment in our nation's infrastructure. No action will cost the U.S. 5.8 million jobs by 2040.

But with an injection of \$1 trillion in American infrastructure—or better yet, \$2 trillion as the President has called for—we will create 11 million jobs.

None of this, by the way, is about Republicans or Democrats or independents.

It's not about politics or personality or process. It's about good policy. Which really isn't that different from the way we approached things back when George Allen was governor and I was privileged to serve him and the people of our great commonwealth as chief of staff.

At the NAM, we are driven by four core values, four pillars that have made America exceptional and that ensure our industry's success: free enterprise, competitiveness, individual liberty and equal opportunity.

And in this time of hyper-partisan division, I think all business leaders are being called to unify this country around these values.

Because, left unchecked, both major parties will continue to get pulled to the extremes—limiting the possibility for pragmatic solutions that uphold our shared values.

We've already seen dramatic shifts, and it may be that a third or fourth party emerges in a viable way in the coming years.

But whatever happens, the business community cannot sit on the sidelines. After all, right now, capitalism, the very system that built this nation, this strongest economy in the world, is under attack.

We're hearing people casting free enterprise in a negative light, trying to blame all of society's ills on the system that has made our remarkable success possible in the first place.

And we also have people pushing this idea that the answer is to make the American economy a socialist economy. But we know better. We know history. We know that it is our free enterprise system that turned a colonial outpost into the greatest nation on earth.

So, it's going to be up to us—to manufacturers and the broader business community—to set the record straight.

We have to remind America that our system raises standards of living, unleashes creativity, changes lives and improves the world.

Across America, manufacturers are keeping our promises and investing in our people and our communities—using the tools we've been given with tax reform and regulatory certainty. And we are the ones driving solutions to issues like climate change, sustainability, workplace inclusion and more.

We need to keep telling that story—so that we can restore trust in our economic system among those who feel disillusioned or left behind.

And the people in this room are well-positioned to do that.

You are also well-positioned to speak out on the issues that people don't usually cast as—quote—"business issues" but are still so important to the strength of our workforce and the success of our nation.

I'm thinking about issues of equality, whether it's standing against acts of hate in our communities or working to build a more inclusive society.

And sometimes, that means taking a stand in your personal capacity. And I'll close today with a personal story—the one where Delegate Hugo played an important role.

Four years ago, my husband, Rick, and I, along with our daughters C.J. and Ellie welcomed our third child, a beautiful boy named Jacob, into the world. We rescued an embryo that had been frozen for 15 years and risked being destroyed. Born via surrogacy in Wisconsin, we needed a court order granting us our parental rights. A judge, Sarah O'Brien, did exactly that.

But then on the eve of Jacob's birth, a new judge, Jim Troupis, took the bench. He reopened our uncontested case, suspended our parental rights, and launched us down a painful path of costly and emotionally devastating litigation.

Nearly a year later, he issued a ruling that declared Jacob an orphan, branded us "human traffickers" for saving an embryo from potential destruction, and made it clear that his ruling was not based in law or precedent set by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, but on his own narrow and distorted view of what a family should look like.

Fast forward through the anger,...the sleepless nights,...the sense of helplessness,...the multiple mortgages to pay the legal bills of 14 lawyers...and eventually, thankfully, Judge Troupis resigned.

And his order was reversed by the next judge, who called it "faulty," "harsh" and "weird."

But the appeals and legal process dragged on and on until this year—nearly four years later. Our family survived, and we're lucky because we had access to the resources we needed to fight this battle. Not every family would have. Not every family would have been able to keep their child.

Which is why my delegate, Rip Sullivan, here in Virginia, contacted us to say he wanted to make sure no Virginia family ever had to endure the same nightmare. Our entire family jumped at the chance to make a difference.

Delegate Sullivan introduced and successfully shepherded HB1979 through the legislature, where it would become known as "Jacob's Law." Rick and I, along with C.J., Ellie and Jacob, were proud to testify in Richmond and share our story.

Jacob's Law does one thing, and one thing only: it enables parents of the same gender, and also single parents, to be granted parental rights for any children they bring to life—and into their family—through surrogacy. Previous Virginia law was discriminatory and only granted this right to a married man and woman.

The new law is commonsense. But it wasn't an easy win. The so-called "Family Foundation" blasted the bill by saying it would "create a presumption of parenthood that is not tied to biology." By the way, that's exactly what happens in any adoption.

They tried other tricks, like trying to make the bill about abortion in hopes of derailing it. Of course, the bill had nothing to do with abortion. Quite the opposite in fact. It saved embryos. It saved life.

Delegate Sullivan and I spent countless hours on the phone and on email battling these false narratives. He stood strong. As did Delegate Hugo, when members of his party tried to block the bill at the last minute. As the chairman of the House Republican Caucus, he stood with us. And my family will be forever grateful.

In the end, Jacob's law passed with very strong bipartisan support, all Democrats, one-third of the House Republicans and one-half of the Senate Republicans. Because really, it wasn't a very controversial idea.

But if we hadn't shared our story, the bill wouldn't have come about in the first place.

If we hadn't taken a unifying approach, the extremists would have won the day.

The end of this chapter comes in the next few days when the Governor will come to Northern Virginia to Jacob's pre-school for a signing ceremony to make "Jacob's Law" the law of the land.

Now a new generation of Virginians can live with the confidence that this commonwealth is not only a great place to work and live—but a place where they can start their families with the confidence that a rogue activist judge or bureaucrat won't stand in their way or tell them their family and their child does not even have the right to exist.

I share all this because, well, I was invited to. But more importantly, because it shows we can still get important things done in Virginia, on a bipartisan basis.

And the voices of the business community—in your professional and your personal capacities—are needed...in Virginia and at the federal level to remind our leaders what really matters...and what's possible.

Thank you so much for the chance to be with you.