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**Virginia Senator Tim Kaine discusses strategies for promoting innovation, the importance of career and technical education in meeting our nation's workforce demands, and the Commonwealth's role in America's defense and foreign policy.**

**By Allison Gilmore**

**nvtc** **What are the most important issues impacting America's future defense strategies and what do you expect the Commonwealth's role will be in meeting the country's future defense needs?**

I think that we face a couple of different challenges. It's an interesting and challenging time for our defense strategies. We face significant budgetary challenges. We face enormous strategic challenges driven by the emergence of new global players, including non-state actors like Al Qaeda and all these splinter groups. We face the challenges of new technological threats like cybersecurity.

We are also in a period of soul-searching about what the nation's foreign policy will be. We had a definitive foreign policy, the Truman Doctrine, that lasted from the late 1940s through the early 1990s that basically involved checking off against the Soviet Union. For about 10 years after that, we went into an ad hoc case-by-case foreign policy. After 9/11, the foreign policy became driven by the war on terror. But, as we end the war in Afghanistan, that is not a big enough idea to motivate American foreign policy.

So now we are trying to balance military strength, diplomatic strength, economic strength and strength of our moral example. The American foreign pol-

icy going forward is going to try to take all those four spheres and be strong.

Virginia has much to do with all four of them. Military strength: we are the most connected state to the United States military, both in our history and in the economic impact of military spending, but also in terms of who our people are. So mili-

Airport, because of the Port of Virginia. We embrace aggressive globalism in our economic relations and that is something that we can offer as an example to the country and to other states that are grappling with what they think about a global economy.

And finally, America's moral example is still very important and many of the best ideas about America are the ideas that

were written by Virginians, like Jefferson who wrote about freedom of religion, or Madison, the great drafter of the Constitution who put into place systems of checks and balances and a Bill of Rights to protect minorities against a majority will that could run roughshod over their rights.

So whether it's military strength, diplomatic strength, economic strength or strength of the moral example, Virginia has played a key role and is poised to continue to play a key role in sort of a new definition of American strength into the 21st Century.

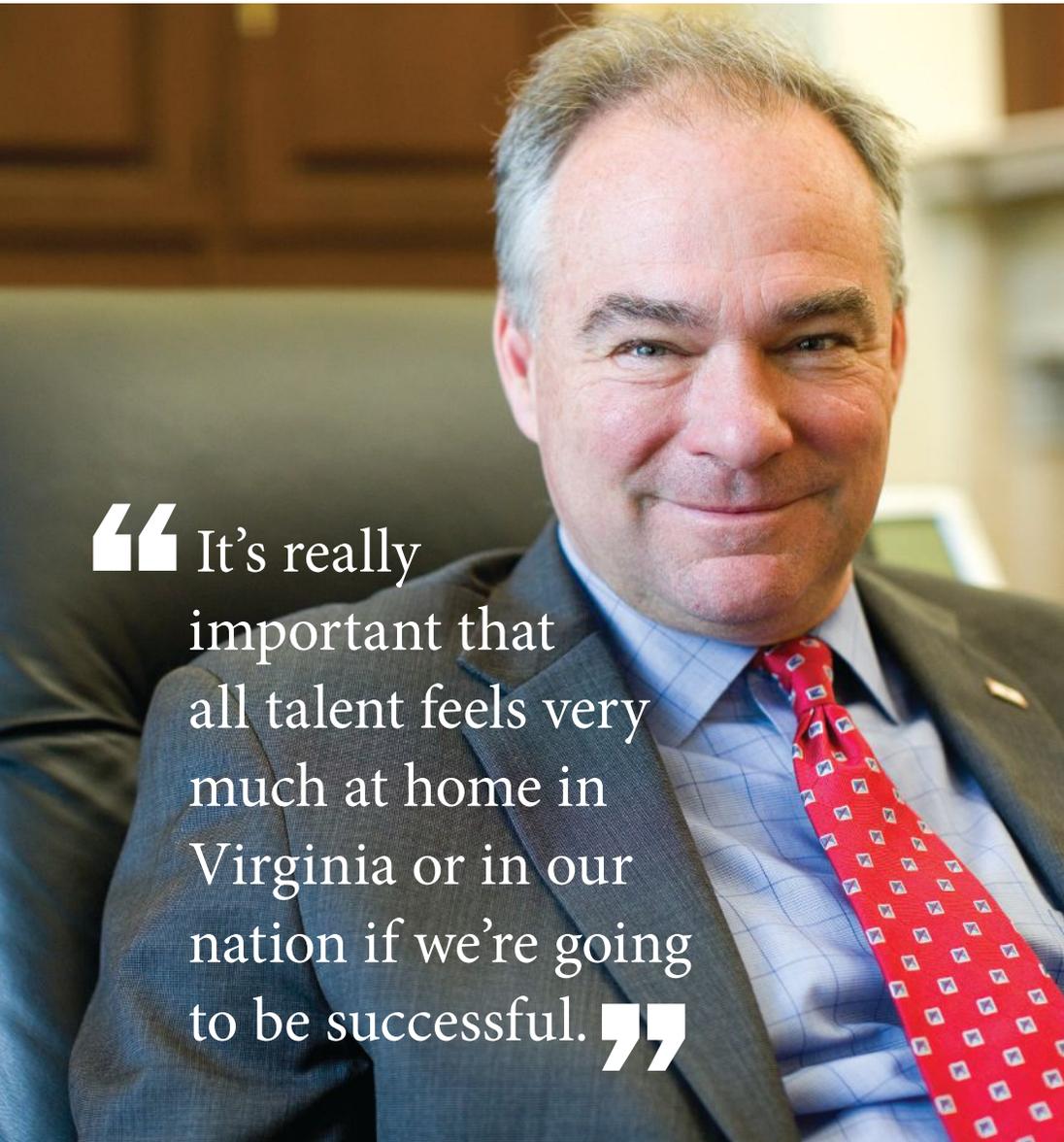
**nvtc** You've spoken about the importance of Virginia's connection to the U.S. Navy. Can you explain?

In 2010, the President talked about a future direction for the American military that leaned pretty heavily on the Navy. As I've come into the Senate and engaged with my Armed Services Committee colleagues, especially serving on the Seapower Subcommittee, I think there is a bipartisan recognition of that.

The challenges that we will face around the globe are challenges that can move and mutate. So what we really need to be militarily strong is what I call flexible force, not fixed

force. The military of the future is going to be less about where your bases are than about having the ability to move force from the Atlantic to the Pacific or from the Indian Ocean to the Gulf of Aden when security situations arise.

And the Navy, which is so critical to Virginia because of the Norfolk Naval Base and allied institutions, is the real key to the flexible force. So I think that it is going to be a number of decades, and maybe even a century, of the Navy again and Virginia is very well positioned because of our strong Navy tradition and the current Navy presence.



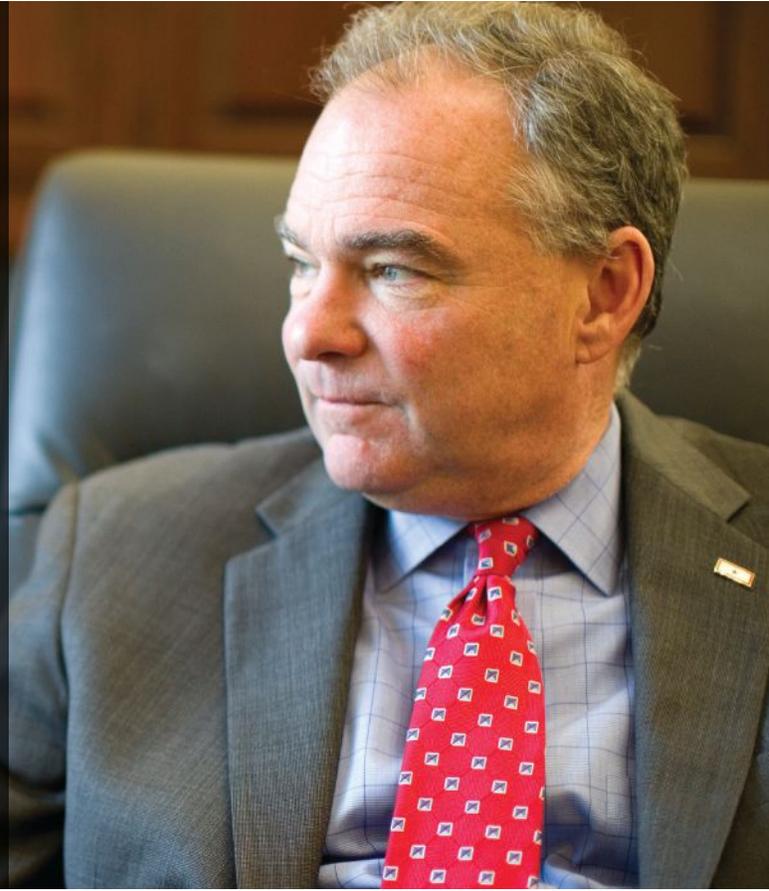
“It's really important that all talent feels very much at home in Virginia or in our nation if we're going to be successful.”

tary strength and the future of our military matter more deeply, I think, to Virginians than anyone else.

Our diplomatic strength: So much of the diplomatic core of the United States lives in Virginia. They have their houses in Springfield and then they work all over the globe. We also have a fast-internationalizing state that cares deeply about diplomatic issues, about trade. So, we have much to contribute in terms of brain power to the diplomatic strength of our country going forward.

Economic: Virginia is a major trade player because of Dulles

“I don’t think there’s such a thing as economic success that is fenced-in or bounded-in. You have to have strong global connections.”



**nvtc Virginia is often considered a prime location to start and grow a business. What are the critical elements to promoting innovation and sustaining a startup-friendly economy?**

I think that the critical elements are good education and workforce training systems. I think relative to other states, Virginia is in a strong position there.

You need to have a climate that welcomes talent of all kinds, with all accents, with all different countries of origin, different gender, different race. It’s really important that all talent feels very much at home in Virginia or in our nation if we’re going to be successful. So, I think business friendly or economically successful begins with taking the broadest possible advantage of the talent pool, attracting talent from elsewhere, attracting institutions that want to be around talent. That’s the most important thing.

The second thing that we need for economic success really ties back to my first answer. You’ve got to have global connections. I don’t think there’s such a thing as economic success that is fenced-in or bounded-in. You have to have strong global connections. Again, whether you look at trade or foreign direct investment into Virginia, infrastructure like a port or an international airport, or our internationalized population, [Virginia is] a global connection point and we need that to be economically successful. Those are the two most important things, human capital and global connections.

Virginia, compared to other states, has never been the state that gives out the biggest tax incentive to a business that wants to come here. There are states that give out more incentives up front. We’ve always done better at creating the climate for new or existing businesses to succeed. So other states give more incentives, but we do a better job at creating the long-term climate of sound fiscal management and workforce training that makes companies feel that they can come here and be successful over a long period of time. And I think the best way to create innovation isn’t just to give the biggest up-front incentive to do it here, it’s to create the stable and predictable and reliable environment that gives people the comfort that they can take a risk and more likely succeed than not.

**nvtc Experts have predicted that Northern Virginia and the country as whole will not have enough qualified workers in professional, scientific and technical fields in the decades to come. Where should workforce development efforts be focused and how can American companies compete in the global battle for talent?**

Well, I think we need to do two things. First, it’s really important to be aggressive about immigration reform because immigration reform will help us meet workforce needs and that’s one of the reasons I support it. That’s one of the reasons that almost all economic estimates indicate that it would increase our GDP and reduce our deficit. That’s why it is supported by such a broad range of stake-

holders: agriculture, chambers of commerce, the technology industry, as well as advocates for new Americans. So one thing we need to do in Northern Virginia and nationally to meet workforce needs is to continue to be aggressive about immigration reform.

Second, we must continue to work on our education and workforce system to make sure that people are getting the skills that



“My top budget priority is working to reduce the effects of sequester going forward and to continue to promote what I call regular order budgeting.”

are most relevant to today's economy. We have an unemployment rate by most measures that is still too high and yet we also have a lot of well-paying jobs that are going unfilled because we're not training our own students and young adults in the professions where there is the most need. In technology professions and some healthcare-related professions, we're finding shortages.

To tackle this, I have founded a career and technical education caucus with Rob Portman, a Republican senator from Ohio, to shine a spotlight on career and technical education as one of the answers to this skills mismatch, and also to introduce good legislation to advance better career and technical training.

I recently introduced a bill, the Credentialing Improvement for Troop Talent (CREDIT) Act of 2014, that deals with this issue, particularly the issue of people who are transitioning out of military service into veteran status and enabling them to pursue technical careers and use military Tuition Assistance Program benefits for credentialing exams and other things. Right now those benefits

can be used for community college or four-year college courses, but if you want to take a credentialing exam to get your American Welding Society certificate you can't use Tuition Assistance benefits for that. And I want to broaden the use of Tuition Assistance benefits so that career and technical education offerings can be accessed with these benefits. And that's just an example of a whole lot of things we ought to be doing to expand career and technical education access.

**nvtc** You may be familiar with the NVTC Veterans Employment Initiative where we're pulling together our member companies to reach out to the veteran community and bring them into our member companies. What are some other ways Congress and the business community can address the challenge of finding meaningful employment for our nation's veterans, particularly those transitioning out in the next two or three years?

I really applaud the NVTC for this initiative. I think it's really smart because, first, one of my kids is in the military and it's amazing when you get into the Military Occupational Specialties (MOS), how many of them

are really technology MOSs. Many are pure technology MOSs. But my son's an infantry officer. The degree of technology that he uses in a non-technology MOS is pretty significant. So military members use technology in significant ways.

Second, the kinds of skills that employers are looking for beyond technical qualifications: teamwork, flexibility, problem solving, problem solving under pressure, creativity, these are the kinds of skills that are inculcated in the military culture. Veterans tend to have significant experience with technology and they have the kinds of workforce skills that maximize their chance of being successful working with technology companies and others.

So that's why I think the NVTC initiative is so impressive. And some NVTC members, like Oracle for example, have done great work in identifying veterans as a wonderful source for their own technology hiring needs and are working to fill these unfilled positions with people who are exiting military service.

In my role on the Armed Services Committee I'm introducing legislation. My first bill, which passed, called The Troop Talent Act of 2013, was largely about credentialing active duty military members with civilian credentials for the skills that they learn in the military as they learn them. My second bill, The Serve Act, is about raising the standards of educational programs that servicemembers put their GI Bill Benefits toward. I introduced The CREDIT Act, allowing the use of Tuition Assistance benefits for credentialing exams. So this is an area where I'm very focused. I'm happy to see technology companies realizing that there is a tremendous talent pool that can be utilized to meet some of these unfilled positions that need to be filled.

**nvtc** Do you have any other priorities you'd like to share with our readers?

I'm on the Budget Committee as well and my top budget priority is working to reduce the effects of sequester going forward and to continue to promote what I call regular order budgeting. When

I got into the Senate, there hadn't been a budget in four years. In December, we did a two-year budget, and that's the first time that we've done that in federal history. We're trying to take steps back to our regular budget order. Part of that is eliminating as much as I can of this extraordinary sequester, which does across-the-board budget cuts without any regard for strategy or priority. It's not the way any smart organization would approach budgeting and I'm trying to do what I can to reduce the effect of sequester.

And then on the Foreign Relations Committee, I work very hard on issues dealing with two regions of the world, the Middle East, where I'm the Chairman of the relevant subcommittee, and Latin America, where I have a passion because of time I spent as a missionary in Honduras. In both areas, there are some really wonderful opportunities for American businesses and opportunities for foreign direct investment into the United States. I know that there are an awful lot of Virginians who care deeply about these two regions of the world and I'm going to continue to work to deepen our ties in those areas. **nvtc**

*Allison Gilmore is NVTC's vice president of communications and strategic initiatives.*

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