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For Immediate Release

Contact

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Statement of the Governor on the Release of the Report of the Virginia Tech Review Panel

RICHMOND – Governor Timothy M. Kaine released the following statement today as he accepted the Report of the Virginia Tech Review Panel, which he appointed on April 19, 2007 to perform an independent, thorough, and objective review of the tragic events on April 16 at Virginia Tech:

"I charged this Panel with focusing on what went right, what went wrong, what practices should be considered best practices, and what practices were in need of improvement.

"The report we are releasing today meets that charge.

"The level of personal commitment by the Panel members, staff and counsel throughout the process was extraordinary. The report is the product of intense work and deliberation and the Commonwealth stands indebted to all who worked on it.

"While we will spend the coming weeks completing an in-depth review of the report, and making plans to implement its recommendations, there are several issues to which I would like to draw your attention today.

"First, there was an intense awareness within Cho's family, counselors and the Fairfax County School system that he was troubled, had contemplated violence, and needed some fairly intense services to be able to function. The system surrounded him with those services, and he succeeded.

"However, despite serious concerns about whether he would be able to continue to succeed at Virginia Tech, the university never received any information about his challenges and the strategies that had enabled him to succeed up to that point in his life.

"Second, while he was at Tech, many people became aware of Cho's difficulties – students, parents, resident assistants, teachers, administrators, the Tech Police Department, and counselors. But there was not an effective mechanism for compiling information and taking action, either to intervene in an effective way or even to contact Cho's family.

"Third, the response of the state mental health system in the one instance when it dealt with Cho suggests that there are problems concerning the way Virginia implements its mental health laws. In particular, the absence of any official follow-up to determine whether the judicial order for outpatient treatment was complied with is significant.

"Fourth, the confusing nature of privacy laws and significant misunderstandings about what they cover and the circumstances where sharing information is allowed is relevant to these issues. Since violations of the law can create liability, laypeople who do not understand the law may simply default to a position that 'we cannot legally share information.' It is imperative that these laws be explored to give clear instruction to people working in the field about what information may be shared if doing so might keep people safe.

"Fifth, the Report discusses the clear value of campus police operations being managed at the highest standards of professionalism with specific focus on the need to coordinate those operations with other state and local law enforcement agencies. The Virginia Tech Police Department is certified and the report praises their professionalism and the extent of their cooperative relations with Blacksburg, Montgomery County and Virginia state law enforcement agencies. But the report also notes that there is a wide variation of security on our college campuses. This is an important area for further work.

"Sixth, in retrospect it seems clear that, in the immediate aftermath of the first shootings, the campus community should have been notified of the fatal shooting and the fact that the perpetrator was at large. There is no downside to providing prompt and accurate information to a community of adults who have the capacity to make decisions to keep themselves safe.

"The fact that the Virginia Tech Police Department did not have the ability to initiate such notice without convening an administrative committee and working through the wording of the notice was a problem.

"Seventh, most of the emergency response after the shooting was truly heroic. And, there was a tremendous outpouring of effort to help victims, family members and the Tech community in the days and weeks following the shooting. But, in dealing with the aftermath of this unparalleled tragedy, there were communication and coordination issues that created confusion and frustration, especially among the people most affected by the shooting.

"The communication issue between the State Medical Examiner's Office and the families who awaited word about the fate of their spouses and children was the most significant example of this issue. Without taking anything away from those who extended themselves to help, the coordination of services to victims in such instances has to be done in a more thoughtful and comprehensive way.

"As we move forward in the coming weeks, we will closely review all of the recommendations in the report to determine what will be required to implement them.

"The magnitude of the losses suffered by victims and their families, the Virginia Tech community, and our Commonwealth is immeasurable. We have lost people of great character and intelligence who came to Virginia Tech from around our state, our nation and the world.

"While we can never know the full extent of the contributions they would have made had their lives not been cut short, we can say with confidence that they had already given much of themselves toward advancing knowledge and helping others.

"We must now challenge ourselves to study this report carefully and make changes that will reduce the risk of future violence on our campuses. If we act in that way, we will honor the lives and sacrifices of all who suffered on that terrible day and advance the notion of service that is Virginia Tech's fundamental mission."

To view a copy of the report, [go here](#).

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