

The Digital Uniter
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NBC Nightly News anchor Tom Brokaw told attendees at the Commonwealth of Virginia Information Technology Symposium (COVITS) in Norfolk last week that he is “persuaded that we are now one country, two nations, made so by the determination of both parties to divide and conquer.” He asked: “Must it be scorched earth all day, every day?”

Brokaw was as affable at a pre-speech reception as he appears to be each night on television. But he clearly has concerns about the direction of discourse in the political arena in this country. In addition to his nearly 40 years of experience in broadcast journalism, Brokaw brings the perspective of in-depth research for his book on *The Greatest Generation*, those who grew up during the Depression and lived through World War II.

In his speech to the more than one thousand technology and business leaders and policymakers, Brokaw talked about the promise as well as the problems posed by the rapid advances in technology.

“It is a hard, complicated task to be a citizen,” he said. “But it is also an opportunity to define our times. They (the Greatest Generation) didn’t have these tools. But even if they did, they could have told us it does no good to wire the world if we lose our spiritual and secular souls.”

Brokaw cited Democrat Joe Biden and Republican John McCain as having an appropriate attitude toward bipartisanship to resolve issues. And he calls for the use of technology to promote tolerance rather than to divide people. He got a standing ovation at the end of his speech.

Governor Mark Warner, newly installed as chairman of the National Governors Association, had a great deal to crow about at COVITS. Under his leadership Virginia has advanced to third among the states in the effective use of technology in government. And Virginia has received numerous other awards in the technology arena as chronicled in this column recently.

The Governor announced the departure of George Newstrom as Secretary of Technology. Newstrom held several high-level leadership positions at EDS including CEO of the facility on Route 28 before being lured into state government by Governor Warner. His leaving, like that of several persons from the Policy Office, points to one of the problems of the one-term governorship. Staff starts leaving early to ensure their continued employment.

Governor Warner and Senate President John Chichester were recognized recently by *Governing* magazine for their bipartisan efforts to get Virginia on firm financial footing and to pass a biennium budget. This the kind of bipartisan cooperation that Tom Brokaw talked about. And state government is effectively using technology to improve communications as Brokaw suggested it should be used. He must have felt very comfortable in the Commonwealth.