

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Journal of the Senate

JANUARY SESSION of the General Assembly begun and held at the State House in the City of Providence on Tuesday, the second day of January in the year of Our Lord two thousand and seven.

Volume 134, No.16

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Sixteenth Legislative Day

The Senate meets pursuant to adjournment and is called to order by the Honorable Joseph A. Montalbano, President of the Senate, at 4:26 o'clock P.M.

The roll is called and a quorum is declared present with 34 Senators present and 4 Senators absent as follows:

PRESENT – 34: The Honorable President Montalbano and Senators Algieri, Bates, Blais, Breene, Ciccone, Connors, Cote, DaPonte, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gibbs, Goodwin, Issa, Jabour, Lenihan, Levesque, Maselli, McBurney, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Moura, Paiva Weed, Perry, Raptakis, Revens, Ruggerio, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Tassoni, Walaska.

ABSENT – 4: Alves, Badeau, Lanzi, Pichardo

INVOCATION

The Honorable President, by unanimous consent, presents Senator Issa, to deliver the invocation.

(See Appendix for Invocation)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

The Honorable President, by unanimous consent, presents Senator Issa, to lead the Senate in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

GUESTS

Upon suggestion of Senator McBurney and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the Honorable Bruce Q. Morin, a former State Senator.

COMMUNICATION

The Honorable President presents the following communications:

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
STATE HOUSE**

February 26, 2007

Honorable Joseph A. Montalbano
President of the Senate
318 State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear President Montalbano:

I am writing this letter to respectfully notify you that I will be absent from Senate Session on Tuesday, February 27, 2007 and Wednesday, February 28, 2007.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Beatrice A. Lanzi
Senator – District 26

Read and ordered to be placed on file.

Also:

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
STATE HOUSE**

February 27, 2007

Honorable Joseph A. Montalbano
President of the Senate
318 State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear President Montalbano:

Please accept this letter as notification that I will be unable to attend Senate Session today, Tuesday, February 27, 2007, due to being away on business.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

James E. Doyle, II
Senator – District 8
Pawtucket

Read and ordered to be placed on file.

Also:

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
STATE HOUSE**

February 27, 2006

President of the Senate
318 State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Mr. President:

Please be advised that I will be absent from Senate Session on Tuesday,
February 27, 2007.

I would appreciate you recording my letter in the appropriate Senate Journal.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Maryellen Goodwin
District – 1

Read and ordered to be placed on file.

TRANSFER OF BILLS

Senator Tassoni, in accordance with Senate Rule 6.14, moves to transfer the following bill from the Committee on Housing and Municipal Government, to the Committee on Corporations:

Senate Bill No. 182

BY Senators McCaffrey, Walaska

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- SEWER CHARGE REGULATED
(subject city and town sewer fees to the approval of the public utilities commission)

Read and referred to the Committee on Corporations.

**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
COMMITTEE ON RULES**

Senator Connors, from the Committee on Rules, reports back, with recommendation of passage of the following measure:

Senate Bill No. 147 SUB A as amended

BY Senator Connors

ENTITLED, AN ACT ADOPTING THE RULES OF THE SENATE {LC1024/2/A}

Read and ordered to be placed on the Calendar

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator McCaffrey, from the Committee on Judiciary, reports back, with recommendation that advice and consent of the Senate be given to the following:

Appointment of William E. Carnes, Jr. of Pawtucket as Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court.

Read and ordered to be placed on the Calendar.

FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

A message from the House of Representatives transmits with announcement of passage, of the following measure:

House Resolution No. 5530

BY Fox

ENTITLED, JOINT RESOLUTION INVITING HIS HONOR, THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, AND THE HONORABLE SENATE TO JOIN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN JOINT SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING THE STATE OF THE JUDICIARY ADDRESS OF THE HONORABLE CHIEF JUSTICE FRANK J. WILLIAMS {LC2418/1}

Senator Paiva Weed requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

Unanimous consent for immediate consideration is granted.

Senator Paiva Weed moves passage, seconded by Senator Algieri.

The resolution is read and passed, in concurrence, upon a voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS**Senate Resolution No. 782**

BY Senators Ruggerio, Montalbano J, Ciccone

ENTITLED, SENATE RESOLUTION SENATE RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING LISA M DIPRETE ON HER RETIREMENT AS CHEERLEADING COORDINATOR FOR THE NORTH PROVIDENCE JETS {LC2426/1}

Senator Ruggerio requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

Unanimous consent for immediate consideration is granted.

Senator Ruggerio moves passage, seconded by the entire Senate.

The resolution is read and passed, upon a voice vote.

CONSENT CALENDAR

In order for the day is taken up as follows:

Upon motion of Senate Majority Leader Paiva Weed, seconded by Senator Algieri, the following measure on today's Consent Calendar, by unanimous consent, is read and passed, upon a voice vote:

1 2007-S 780**BY Sosnowski****ENTITLED,** AN ACT TO VACATE FOR THE FORFEITURE OR REVOCATION OF THE CHARTER OF VIEIRA MARINE CONSTRUCTION, INC.**CALENDAR****IN ORDER FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2007:****1 2007-S 9****BY Paiva-Weed****ENTITLED,** AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION

Committee on Finance recommends passage.

Senator Paiva Weed moves passage, seconded by Senators Perry, Jabour, Ruggerio, Walaska, Moura, Sosnowski, Algieri, Gibbs, Miller, Felag and Sheehan.

The act is read and passed, by unanimous consent, upon a roll call vote with 30 Senators voting in the affirmative and 0 Senators voting in the negative as follows:

YEAS- 30: The Honorable President Montalbano and Senators Algieri, Bates, Blais, Breene, Ciccone, Connors, Cote, DaPonte, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gibbs, Issa, Jabour, Lenihan, Levesque, Maselli, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Moura, Paiva Weed, Perry, Revens, Ruggerio, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Tassoni, Walaska.

NAYS- 0:

2 2007-S 16**BY Ciccone****ENTITLED,** JOINT RESOLUTION MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO PAY CERTAIN CLAIMS

Committee on Finance recommends passage.

Senator Ciccone moves passage, seconded by Senators Moura, Maselli, Blais, Breene, Bates and Levesque.

The act is read and passed, by unanimous consent, upon a roll call vote with 30 Senators voting in the affirmative and 0 Senators voting in the negative as follows:

YEAS- 30: The Honorable President Montalbano and Senators Algieri, Bates, Blais, Breene, Ciccone, Connors, Cote, DaPonte, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gibbs, Issa, Jabour, Lenihan, Levesque, Maselli, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Moura, Paiva Weed, Perry, Revens, Ruggerio, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Tassoni, Walaska.

NAYS- 0:

3 2007-H 5143 SUB A

BY Costantino

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION

Committee on Finance recommends indefinite postponement of the original bill and passage of Substitute A in concurrence.

Upon suggestion of Senator Ruggerio, and without objection, ordered to be placed on the Calendar for Tuesday, March 6, 2007.

TRANSMITTAL

By unanimous consent, all matters on the Secretary's desk are ordered to be transmitted to His Excellency, the Governor, the Honorable Secretary of State or to the Honorable House of Representatives forthwith.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Senator Bates announces that the Committee on Corporations will meet today, at the rise of the Joint Session, in Room 212 of the State House.

Senator Sosnowski announces that the Committee on Environment and Agriculture will meet tomorrow, at 1:30 o'clock P.M. in Room 313 of the State House.

Senator Sosnowski announces that the Committee on Government Oversight will meet tomorrow, at 1:30 o'clock P.M. in Room 313 of the State House.

Senator Levesque announces that the Committee on Health and Human Services will meet tomorrow, at the rise of the Senate, in Room 212 of the State House.

Senator Ciccone announces that the Committee on Labor will meet tomorrow, at 2:30 o'clock P.M. in Room 212 of the State House.

Senator Lenihan announces that the Committee on Government will also meet tomorrow, at the rise of the Senate, in Room 313 of the State House.

RECESS

Upon motion of Senator DaPonte, seconded by Senator Algieri, the Senate stands at recess at 4:40 o'clock P.M.

CALLED TO ORDER

The Senate is called to order by the Honorable Joseph A. Montalbano, President of the Senate, on Wednesday, February 28, 2007, at 4:23 o'clock P.M.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Senator DaPonte, seconded by Senator Algieri, the Senate adjourns at 4:24 o'clock P.M.

Appendix**INVOCATION****SENATOR DANIEL J. ISSA**

Almighty Father, let your spirit of wisdom transcend upon the leaders of our State. Tonight, as Chief Justice Williams delivers his Sixth Annual State of the Judiciary, we look to you to guide his heart and the hearts of all the members of this legislature as we strive to work for justice and equality for all the citizens of Rhode Island. Amen.

Appendix**CALENDAR****IN ORDER FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 2007:**

- 1 Appointment of William E. Carnes, Jr. of Pawtucket VICE Associate Justice William Dimitri, Jr. as Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court.**

Committee on Judiciary recommends that the Senate give its Advice and Consent to this appointment.

- 2 2007-S 147 SUB A as amended**

BY Connors

ENTITLED, AN ACT ADOPTING THE RULES OF THE SENATE

Committee on Rules recommends indefinite postponement of the original bill and passage of Substitute A as amended.

IN ORDER FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 6, 2007:

- 1 2007-H 5143 SUB A**

BY Costantino

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION

Committee on Finance recommends indefinite postponement of the original bill and passage of Substitute A in concurrence.

RAYMOND T. HOYAS, JR.
Secretary of the Senate

PROCEEDINGS IN JOINT SESSION

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

The Honorable President of the Senate, Joseph A. Montalbano, in the Chair.

CALLED TO ORDER

The Joint Session is called to order at 4:47 o'clock P.M.

Upon suggestion of the Honorable President, and by unanimous consent, the reading of the roll of the Senate and the roll of the House of Representatives is dispensed with, there being a quorum of the Senate and a quorum of the House of Representatives present, therefore a quorum of the Joint Session.

Upon suggestion of the Honorable President, and by unanimous consent, the reading of the Resolution (07-H 5530) of invitation is dispensed with.

The Honorable President, by unanimous consent, appoints Senators Bates, Gallo, McCaffrey, Metts, Moura and Tassoni and Representatives Gorham, Jackson, Jacquard, Lewiss, Mattiello, O'Neill, Rice and Ucci, as a Committee, to escort the Honorable members of the Judiciary to the Chamber.

Joint Session attends while members of the Judiciary enter the Chamber.

The Honorable President, by unanimous consent, appoints Senators Blais, Breene, Connors, Jabour, Maselli and Sosnowski and Representatives Dennigan, DeSimone, Flaherty, Lally, Petrarca, Wasylyk, Watson and Williamson, as a Committee, to escort the Honorable Chief Justice to the Chamber.

Joint Session attends while the Honorable Chief Justice, Frank J. Williams, enters the Chamber.

The Honorable President presents the Honorable Chief Justice, Frank J. Williams, to the Joint Session.

The Chief Justices delivers his State of the Judiciary Address.

(SEE APPENDIX FOR SPEECH)

Upon suggestion of the Honorable President, and by unanimous consent, the Joint Session attends while the committee escorts the Honorable Chief Justice Frank J. Williams, and invited guests from the Chamber.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Speaker Murphy, seconded by Senate Majority Leader Paiva Weed and House Majority Leader Fox, and by unanimous consent, Joint Session adjourns and the two Houses separate at 5:20 o'clock P.M.

RAYMOND T. HOYAS, JR.
Secretary of the Senate

**Sixth Annual State of the Judiciary
Chief Justice Frank J. Williams**

(This address was delivered to the Rhode Island Senate and the House of Representatives in Joint Session on February 27, 2007.)

Mr. Speaker; Mr. President; Majority Leader Fox; Minority Leader Watson; Majority Leader Paiva Weed; Minority Leader Algieri; Honorable members of the General Assembly; my colleagues in the Judicial branch, and guests. I am also pleased to have with us Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts, General Treasurer Frank Caprio, and Attorney General Patrick Lynch. Thank you for being here today.

Once again, it is my honor and privilege to stand before you in joint session to present my sixth annual State of the Judiciary Address. It was six years ago yesterday that I began working as your Chief Justice after receiving unanimous confirmation from both the House and the Senate.

I am as grateful to you now as I was then for your trust and confidence in me to lead the third co-equal branch of government

I want to extend a special greeting to the new legislators who were elected in November. Thank you for joining us in service to the people of Rhode Island. Several of you participated in our biannual Legislators' Law Day last month, and I hope it provided some insight into the work that our dedicated judges - many of whom are here this afternoon - and court staff do day in and day out to administer justice effectively and fairly. I applaud their commitment and I am proud to be counted among them.

It is appropriate here to pause and comment on the passing of Superior Court Associate Justice William A. Dimitri Jr., who died in 2006 after battling cancer. Bill Dimitri was a luminary among the men and women of the bench and bar. His gentlemanly demeanor, keen perceptions about life and his belief that the law should be tempered by compassion and common sense are his legacy. We miss him.

I also want to say a word of thanks to Superior Court Associate Justice Stephen Fortunato, who retired last month, on his 65th birthday, after many years of service to the state. We wish him well.

We welcome Superior Court Justice-designate Bill Carnes, who will join us to replace Justice Dimitri, and we look forward to an expeditious nomination and confirmation of a successor to Justice Fortunato.

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak to you about our Judiciary and to highlight for you what we have accomplished together this past year, and how we may improve our shared vision of state courts that are accountable, accessible, and efficient in serving our fellow citizens.

It is my belief that when interacting with the courts - whether as jurors, witnesses, the accused, or as a party in a lawsuit - the public expects and deserves judicial excellence. We meet that expectation every day by striving to make our courts affordable, secure, transparent and just. An important first step in this process is a user-friendly courthouse.

In the past year, with your support, Rhode Island witnessed the opening of two new courthouses - the new Kent County Courthouse in Warwick, which opened last August, and our brand new Traffic Tribunal, which opened last month. We are proud of these facilities and grateful for your support and the support of Governor Carcieri and former Governor Almond.

The new Kent County Courthouse will meet our needs for many years to come. In this facility, with its ample and convenient parking, litigants have access to the latest advances in court technology. Jurors, who are essential to our system of justice, have comfortable and secure quarters. Our judges and judicial staff are able to serve the public in a courthouse that supports our mission.

Two weeks from today, on March 13th, we will mark the official opening of the Traffic Tribunal. We request the honor of your presence for this special occasion. We are mindful that the Traffic Tribunal is the arm of the Judiciary that the majority of our citizens first encounter, over 115,000 citizens a year. It was critical that we provide the public with a facility that is efficient and safe, and where free parking is plentiful. I am pleased to report that this facility has given rise to a new atmosphere of civility and professionalism by the litigants, the lawyers and our staff.

In addition to seven courtrooms, the Traffic Tribunal building will be the new headquarters for the Rhode Island Sheriff's Department. By the way, the Judiciary continues to provide permanent office space at all of our courthouses for several other departments in the executive branch, such as the Attorney General, the Public Defender, Probation, and DCYF. Providing this space at our expense is just one way the Judiciary helps to share the costs of our state government.

At the Traffic Tribunal and at Kent County, display monitors have been installed in the lobbies and outside each courtroom to help members of the public find where they need to go. And, as with all of our courthouses, help desks are staffed every morning.

Through the joint effort of our judges and staff, we were able to relocate operations from the old buildings and open these two new courthouses in a five-and-a-half-month span with no disruption in court services. We acknowledge and appreciate the tireless endeavors and countless hours put in by our devoted staff that made this happen so seamlessly.

Yet, our need to better serve our citizens in northern Rhode Island and decongest the Garrahy Judicial Complex remains as acute today as it was six years ago.

On March 12th, the Judiciary will honor more than 100 members of our staff and several retirees in our fifth annual Employee Awards Ceremony.

I stand here proud to report that our courts have performed admirably:

This year, we will bring Alternative Dispute Resolution and mediation services to our new court buildings, as an expansion of our successful program in Providence. Mediation reduces the cost of continuing litigation, relieves emotional trauma and provides much-needed remedies. Alternative Dispute Resolution works.

At the appellate mediation level, we have reached a resolution rate of 60 percent, up from 50 percent a year ago. Keep in mind, these are cases that have already been tried in the lower courts with judgments and litigants already locked into their points of view.

In the Superior Court, the annual Settlement Week - in which cases are mediated before trial - produced a resolution rate of more than 65 percent.

We have reached these milestones against the backdrop of our total case volume. In 2006, our six state courts took in more than 233,000 new cases and disposed of more than 227,000. That is one case for almost every four Rhode Islanders. And we did this within our budget that comprises only 1.4 percent of the entire state budget.

As our population has changed and become more diverse, so, too, has our need for court interpreter services. With your support, last year our Office of Court Interpreters assisted 6,150 people in its second full year of operation. That is more than double the number of people in the prior year. While most of the need has existed in our Providence courthouses, we have assigned a full-time interpreter to Kent County.

Our Judicial Technology Center had a busy year; the new courthouses are operational with the newest technology and we also completed the conversion of our computer system. With the funds you are providing annually over the next several years, we will be able to continue to update our networks.

We continue to seek grants to supplement our programs and to lower the amount of funds we request from you. We recently received a \$70,000 Champlin grant to restore the dome in the John E. Fogarty Judicial Building on Weybosset Street, or, as we say in Rhode Island, the old Custom House.

When I began my tenure as Chief Justice, I promised an independent, effective and respected Judiciary, and although our task is far from complete, I am pleased to report that all of us - my staff and the hard-working judges you see here today - have worked for cost effectiveness, improved communication, increased education, resolute and effective administration, construction and renovation of our facilities and, of particular importance to me, increased court security. I am grateful for your continued support and encouragement.

On a personal note, I am pleased to report that our state Supreme Court has been blessed with the stability of a full complement of justices for three full terms after experiencing a historic number of vacancies.

The Supreme Court heard 343 cases in 2006. This is more than three times the number of cases heard by the United States Supreme Court during the same period. As we have no intermediate court of appeals, our Supreme Court hears all appeals.

Outreach has remained a priority. The Supreme Court has continued its twice-yearly practice of riding the circuit to hear cases in the counties. Last year we sat at Warwick City Hall and at Providence Country Day School in East Providence. Tomorrow morning, we will sit in Bristol at the Roger Williams University School of Law.

Our Citizens' Summit television program on Channel 36 is now in its third year. In the past year, Citizens' Summit has put the spotlight on our new courthouses, the Superior Court business calendar, and our Justice Rules program. Justice Rules continues its important educational programs, career fairs and the hosting of court tours from schools in your cities and towns.

We are proud of the accomplishments of the Superior Court - dispositions there are up, and civil caseloads have been reduced. The Superior Court business calendar, managed by Associate Justice Michael A. Silverstein, continues to be an efficient alternative for complex business cases. It is a model for the nation. The lead-paint and Station nightclub fire cases brought national media attention to our courts in 2006, and our judges and staff rose to the occasion. We are all grateful for their service, and I wish to extend our appreciation to Superior Court Associate Justice Francis J. Darigan Jr. for his work in the face of such great sorrow and tragedy.

The Family Court has reallocated resources to expand its Domestic Violence Court to Kent County. The Family Treatment Drug Court was expanded to Washington County in 2006.

There were 69,000 cases heard last year in our District Court, where civil complaints and small claims were up appreciably.

The Workers' Compensation Court saw a slight increase in caseload last year, and broadened its outreach to schools for the benefit of young workers statewide.

I am mindful that it is you, the Honorable members of the General Assembly, who have understood our goals, acknowledged our accomplishments and made commitments to our future. I recognize that the state's finances pose severe obstacles in the current and upcoming fiscal years. One might be tempted to ask: "How much justice can we afford?"

George Washington, who was neither a lawyer nor a judge, said: "The administration of justice is the firmest pillar of government."

The Judiciary and the General Assembly need to continue our very candid dialog about finances in this very difficult year. While the Governor's budget proposals for the Judiciary may be understandable in his effort to curtail spending in all of state government, I respectfully submit they are unnecessary and unworkable for the courts and would in the end prevent the fair administration of justice.

Because our spending represents just 1.4 percent of the entire state budget, our needs are actuarially insignificant. Our budget request of \$87.2 million from general revenues does little more than maintain our current levels of service.

I gave you my word that we would do our part to be fiscally responsible. I say it now from the vantage point of our having lived within our budget for five straight years. That's right; we have not come back to you with a supplemental budget request for five consecutive years. While the Judiciary budget has increased over the years, most of the increase represents fixed costs. We are doing more with less.

Here are some of the additional steps we are taking to keep costs down:

With two new courthouses, we believe our maintenance and repair costs will drop and we have budgeted \$1 million less for these expenses. We have reduced our purchased services by \$300,000; travel and education by \$170,000; we anticipate saving \$175,000 with an improved phone system, and \$100,000 with more efficient contracts for our law libraries. All told, the efficiencies I have just estimated add up to \$1.75 million for the coming fiscal year.

We cannot - and will not - participate in the seven-day furlough proposed for the executive branch, as we are constitutionally and statutorily precluded from closing our courts. To do so would deny our citizens access to justice, including delays in the release on bail of arrestees held at the Adult Correctional Institutions. Nevertheless, I have informed the Governor, as I promise to you now, of our continued commitment to reduce expenses and save costs.

We will continue to run a tight ship, but we will not compromise our duties with respect to our obligations to the public.

We must never lose sight that the effectiveness of our system of justice is measured by its impact on individual lives. A vast number of people come to our courts because their families are troubled. When there are issues such as drug abuse, domestic violence, physical abuse, and dysfunction, we cannot always gauge success in terms of case dispositions. Rather, we must measure success in human terms: a drug-dependent mother reunited with her child after successful treatment, a battered spouse able to start a new life, a willful child saved from the brink of chronic delinquency, and the victim who witnesses a just result.

As an independent branch of government, we remain committed to separation of powers and respectfully request passage of our legislative package.

We again seek to transfer the Domestic Violence Training and Monitoring Unit to the executive branch, where it belongs.

We also seek to transfer responsibility for compensating lawyers for indigent defense services. We are convinced there is an opportunity for real savings if this service was administered by the executive branch. These services are just not a judicial function.

The Senate has already passed our collections bill, which we crafted to enhance our receipts of court fines, fees, and costs, a goal we set with you last year. In 2006, we collected more than \$26 million in this category, and this measure, which has the Governor's and your support, should help us improve our collection rate.

Since then, we have collaborated with the Division of Motor Vehicles and the state Division of Taxation to assist us with a program to intercept tax refunds from people who owe the courts money.

Although we are not the revenue-raising branch of government, we have done well with collections, and we want to do better and raise more money for the state. We recently solicited requests for proposals from private vendors to see how that might help us increase revenues.

It was Henry Ford who said: "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."

In my six years as Chief Justice, there is no doubt that we have forged and maintained a positive working relationship with you that also recognizes our distinct and separate responsibilities. Let us continue this cooperation in these difficult times and work for continued success for the good of the citizens we serve.

Thank you for welcoming me into the people's house this afternoon and for this opportunity to address you in joint session. May God bless you and all the people of our beloved state.