

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 first day of January in the year of Our Lord two thousand and eight.

Volume 135, No.29

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Twenty-ninth Legislative Day

The Senate meets pursuant to adjournment and is called to order by the Honorable Joseph A. Montalbano, President of the Senate, at 4:18o'clock P.M.

The roll is called and a quorum is declared present with 37 Senators present and 0 Senators absent as follows:

PRESENT – 37: The Honorable President Montalbano and Senators Algieri, Alves, Bates, Blais, Breene, Ciccone, Connors, Cote, DaPonte, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gibbs, Goodwin, Issa, Jabour, Lanzi, Lenihan, Levesque, Maselli, McBurney, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Moura, Paiva Weed, Perry, Pichardo, Raptakis, Revens, Ruggerio, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Tassoni, Walaska.

ABSENT – 0: (insert vote)

INVOCATION

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

(See Appendix for Invocation)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

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

GUESTS

Upon suggestion of Senator Gibbs, and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Norman Champagne and his daughter Lauree from Middletown.

Upon suggestion of Senator Moura, and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Matthew D. Weldon of the Rhode Island Superior Court, Adult Drug Court Manager.

COMMUNICATION

The Honorable President presents the following communication:

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

March 26, 2008

TO THE HONORABLE, THE SENATE:

I am hereby withdrawing, the April 11, 2007 appointment of Chief Richard Petrin to the Fire Education and Training Coordinating Board.

Sincerely,



Donald L. Carcieri
Governor

Read and ordered to be placed on file.

Also:

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

March 26, 2008

TO THE HONORABLE, THE SENATE:

I am hereby withdrawing, without prejudice, the January 11, 2008 appointment of Donald Goodrich to the State Housing Appeals Board.

Sincerely,



Donald L. Carcieri
Governor

Read and ordered to be placed on file.

**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
COMMITTEE ON CORPORATIONS**

Senator Walaska, from the Committee on Corporations, reports back, with recommendation of passage of the following measures:

Nomination of George Nee (Representing Labor) (reappointment) of Cranston to the Rhode Island Human Resource Investment Council for a term expiring January 1, 2011

Read and ordered to be placed on the Calendar.

Also:

Nomination of Lorna Ricci (Representing Small Employer Specializing in Employing the Disabled) (reappointment) of Warwick to the Rhode Island Human Resource Investment Council for a term expiring January 1, 2011

Read and ordered to be placed on the Calendar.

Also:

Nomination of Joseph J. MarcAurele (reappointment) of Warwick as Chairman to the Rhode Island Human Resource Investment Council for a term expiring January 1, 2011

Read and ordered to be placed on the Calendar.

Also:

Nomination of Michael Isaacs, Chairman (reappointment) of East Greenwich to the Rhode Island Public Telecommunications Authority for a term expiring January 31, 2011

Read and ordered to be placed on the Calendar.

Also:

Nomination of Lisa A. Pelosi (reappointment) of East Greenwich to the Rhode Island Public Telecommunications Authority for a term expiring January 31, 2011

Read and ordered to be placed on the Calendar.

NEW BUSINESS

Senate Resolution No. 2898

BY Senators Levesque C, Fellela, Bates

ENTITLED, SENATE RESOLUTION HONORING COLONEL RUSSELL S. SERPA ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT AS CHIEF OF THE BRISTOL POLICE DEPARTMENT

Senator Levesque requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

Unanimous consent for immediate consideration is granted.

Senator Levesque moves passage, seconded by Senator Felag.

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

CONSENT CALENDAR

In order for the day is taken up as follows:

1 2008-S 2433

BY Sosnowski

ENTITLED, SENATE RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE REPORTING DATE OF
THE SPECIAL SENATE COMMISSION TO STUDY STATE
TRADES CLASSIFICATIONS

2 2008-S 2787

BY Levesque C

ENTITLED, SENATE RESOLUTION RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THE
UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO EXPEDITE CITIZENSHIP
APPLICATIONS FOR OUR COUNTRY'S VETERANS AND
MEMBERS OF THE ARMED SERVICES

3 2008-S 2789

BY Levesque C

ENTITLED, SENATE RESOLUTION RESPECTFULLY URGING THE
INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE TO RETHINK ITS
2006 DECISION NOT TO INCLUDE WOMEN SKI JUMPING IN
THE 2010 OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES IN VANCOUVER

4 2008-S 2717

BY Bates

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES

5 2008-S 2739

BY Felag

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES

6 2008-S 2821

BY Montalbano J

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES

7 2008-H 7031

BY Gallison

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES

8 2008-H 7084

BY McManus

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES

9 2008-H 7086**BY Fox****ENTITLED,** AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES**10 2008-H 7127****BY Serpa****ENTITLED,** AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES**11 2008-H 7136****BY Lally****ENTITLED,** AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES**12 2008-H 7178****BY Rice****ENTITLED,** AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES**13 2008-H 7801****BY Walsh****ENTITLED,** AN ACT TO VACATE THE FORFEITURE OR REVOCATION OF THE CHARTER OF CROSS'S MILLS'S VOL. FIRE DEPT.

Upon motion of Senator Paiva Weed, seconded by Senator Algieri, the measures on today's Consent Calendar, by unanimous consent, are read and passed, upon a roll call vote with 36 Senators voting in the affirmative and 0 Senators voting in the negative as follows:

YEAS- 36: The Honorable President Montalbano and Senators Algieri, Alves, Bates, Blais, Breene, Ciccone, Connors, Cote, DaPonte, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gibbs, Goodwin, Issa, Jabour, Lanzi, Lenihan, Levesque, Maselli, McBurney, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Paiva Weed, Perry, Pichardo, Raptakis, Revens, Ruggerio, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Tassoni, Walaska.

NAYS- 0:

FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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

House Resolution No. 8082**BY Fox, Watson****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

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.

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 Goodwin announces that the Committee on Constitutional and Regulatory Issues will meet today, at the rise of the Senate, in Room 211 of the State House.

Senator Raptakis announces that the Committee on Environment and Agriculture will meet today, at the rise of the Senate, in Room 310 of the State House.

Senator Felag announces that the Committee on Finance will meet tomorrow, at 3:00 o'clock P.M. in Room 211 of the State House.

Senator Sheehan announces that the Committee on Health and Human Services will meet today, at the rise of the Senate, in the Senate Lounge of the State House.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Senator DaPonte, seconded by Senator Algieri, the Senate adjourns at 4:29 o'clock P.M.

RAYMOND T. HOYAS, JR.
Secretary of the Senate

Appendix**INVOCATION****SENATOR JAMES E. DOYLE, II**

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 27, 2008:****1 2008-S 2614****BY Sosnowski**

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY -- PERMANENT
JOINT COMMITTEE ON NAMING ALL NEW BUILDINGS,
BRIDGES, EDIFICES AND OTHER STATE CONSTRUCTIONS

Committee on Constitutional & Regulatory Issues recommends passage.

2 2008-S 2222**BY Tassoni**

ENTITLED, JOINT RESOLUTION CREATING A JOINT TASK FORCE TO
STUDY ALL ASPECTS OF HEALTH CARE REFORM RELATING TO
THE HEALTHY RHODE ISLAND REFORM ACT OF 2008 - PART
VIII

Committee on Health & Human Services recommends passage.

3 2008-S 2026**BY Bates**

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO DOMESTIC RELATIONS -- CHILD
SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Committee on Judiciary recommends passage.

4 2008-S 2317**BY McCaffrey**

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO DOMESTIC RELATIONS --
SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES

Committee on Judiciary recommends passage.

IN ORDER FOR TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2008:

**1 Nomination of George Nee (Representing Labor) (reappointment) of Cranston to
the Rhode Island Human Resource Investment Council for a term expiring January
1, 2011.**

Committee on Corporations recommends that the Senate give its Advice and
Consent to this nomination.

2 Nomination of Lorna Ricci (Representing Small Employer Specializing in Employing the Disabled) (reappointment) of Warwick to the Rhode Island Human Resource Investment Council for a term expiring January 1, 2011.

Committee on Corporations recommends that the Senate give its Advice and Consent to this nomination.

3 Nomination of Joseph J. MarcAurele (reappointment) of Warwick as Chairman to the Rhode Island Human Resource Investment Council for a term expiring January 1, 2011.

Committee on Corporations recommends that the Senate give its Advice and Consent to this nomination.

4 Nomination of Michael Isaacs, Chairman (reappointment) of East Greenwich to the Rhode Island Public Telecommunications Authority for a term expiring January 31, 2011.

Committee on Corporations recommends that the Senate give its Advice and Consent to this nomination.

5 Nomination of Lisa A. Pelosi (reappointment) of East Greenwich to the Rhode Island Public Telecommunications Authority for a term expiring January 31, 2011.

Committee on Corporations recommends that the Senate give its Advice and Consent to this nomination.

RAYMOND T. HOYAS, JR.
Secretary of the Senate

PROCEEDINGS IN JOINT SESSION

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

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

CALLED TO ORDER

The Joint Session is called to order at 4:40 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 (08-H 8082) of invitation is dispensed with.

The Honorable President, by unanimous consent, appoints Senators Blais, Goodwin, Levesque and McCaffrey and Representatives Gorham, Jackson, Jacquard, Lewiss, Mattiello, O'Neill, Rice and Ucci and Lima 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 Bates, Jabour, Pichardo and Tassoni 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 5:13 o'clock P.M.

RAYMOND T. HOYAS, JR.
Secretary of the Senate

APPENDIX

Seventh 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 March 26, 2008.)

Speaker Murphy; President Montalbano; Leader Fox; Leader Watson; Leader Paiva Weed; Leader Algieri; Honorable members of this General Assembly; my colleagues in the Judicial Branch, and my fellow citizens. I also want to recognize Secretary of State Ralph Mollis and General Treasurer Frank Caprio. I am pleased you are here, and I thank the General Assembly for this opportunity to speak with you this afternoon in the “people’s house.”

This is my seventh annual State of the Judiciary address, and I have much to share with you about our understanding and cooperation in the state’s financial crisis, as well as mention our achievements in 2007 and what we have planned for the days ahead. With your vital support, assistance and understanding of the Judiciary’s mission, there is much that we have accomplished.

But first, we recognize our beloved state is going through sobering financial hardship right now, and I want to bring you up to date about what the Judiciary is doing to assist in this challenging time. All of us in this Chamber – including my fellow judges and my staff who are here this afternoon – know this is a serious problem.

Let there be no mistake – the Judiciary is doing more than its part. We are prepared to sacrifice and will do more with less, but we cannot nor will not compromise our commitment to ensure access to justice for our citizens – your constituents.

For Fiscal Year 2009, we need, in reality, \$90 million from general revenue for our budget to provide the same level of service as the current fiscal year. But we have reduced our request to \$86.1 million, the same amount as the current year. This means level funding with fewer people and resources. No pay increases in the Judicial Branch, even though the Judiciary ranks 38th out of 41 when compared with other departments of state government for personnel cost increases from Fiscal Year 2008 to Fiscal

Year 2009.

This budget request seeks only essential funding for ongoing programs and priorities, plus the fixed costs, which all told represent 80 percent of our budget. We are not asking for more than we need and we hope we will not suffer for running one of the tightest operations in state government. We are committed to doing our part in holding the line. We run the courts like a business and will be frugal through personnel turnover savings, purchasing restrictions, and enhanced use of technology.

In every budget that I have submitted, we have not sought a supplemental allocation, but have lived within our appropriation. And by the way, our budget constitutes just 1.4 percent of the entire state budget.

We are fully aware of the challenges you face as legislators. And it is with the utmost respect for you and what you are confronting that we caution this honorable body that further cuts will limit access to justice. Without access to the courts, access to justice is denied and the rule of law is jeopardized. Laws that you enact and we implement. Felonies, misdemeanors, and traffic offenses. Laws that cover the full spectrum of the human condition in our society today – the people for whom domestic violence, drug addiction, divorce and broken families, juvenile delinquents, child support disputes, and workers' compensation matters are part of everyday life. These are the people whom we serve and you represent.

As part of our fiscal due diligence, we recently identified \$800,000 in arbitration escrow funds that has been turned over to the state treasury. We have also identified \$500,000 in District Court small claims mediation funds that will be turned over as well. In 2007, the Judiciary was able for the first time to enroll with the state Division of Taxation to intercept refunds for people who have failed to pay court costs and fines. We have recovered nearly \$203,000 from that program in 2007, and we expect to recover a half-million dollars in 2008. In this fiscal year, we expect to collect \$24.3 million, which will be deposited into the state's General Fund. These efforts amount to 30 percent of the Judiciary's budget request.

I pledge to you that we will continue to look for cost efficiencies in these austere times, despite the fact that we are asking for no increase when our fixed costs will actually rise by \$4 million.

Bear in mind we cannot close our doors. Our courts must administer justice no matter how many people walk through the courthouse doors – or arrive in handcuffs and hope to make bail.

Our judiciary is the last refuge of democracy. Those words are inscribed outside the main entrance to our new Kent County Courthouse in Warwick.

The last refuge of democracy guarantees an impartial forum where our citizens who are charged with crimes are presumed innocent. It provides a courtroom where elderly crime victims can safely identify the person who swindled or robbed them. It assures broken families that court-employed advocates will assist our decision-making and help implement our decrees.

From Woonsocket to Westerly, Warren to West Greenwich, each day thousands of families, businesses, and individuals from your communities turn to our courts to resolve civil disputes, respond to criminal complaints, and settle important financial matters. Our high-volume courts regularly help the most vulnerable in our communities, such as battered women seeking protection orders, abused and neglected children, and victims of vandalism and theft. Economic growth and stable business relationships are dependent on a civil justice system that is working at its best. Our courts also handle probate appeals, landlord-tenant disputes, and small claims.

Our court employees are committed to helping the public understand our procedures. They work tirelessly to carry out the promise of justice for all. Let me give you some examples:

It is the court stenographer who records weeks of testimony in the lead-paint case and then transcribes it into 16,000 pages for the only appeal of its kind in the country.

It is the judge and jury who hear the anguished testimony of a young father who comes home unexpectedly to find the baby-sitter molesting his 17-month-old daughter, and the Supreme Court that follows up on the appeal that ensures the defendant received a fair trial.

It is the young woman of 19 whose drug addiction has taken control of her life and transformed her from a teenager with a promising future to an inmate at the Adult Correctional Institutions. After a rocky start with our Adult Drug Court team, she received one final opportunity to enter treatment and become free of drugs and alcohol. It was no picnic, but with time, discipline and court oversight, she turned the corner. She has been clean and sober for three years now.

None of this could happen without our judges, who work 24/7. They take their cases home not only in their briefcases but in their minds and their hearts as they agonize over the evidence or the sentence to impose. It was part of the bargain and the nature of the job. Because what we all want from our system of justice is to know the truth.

Behind every case, behind every statistic, there is a face, and we never forget that. Always remember that everyday liberties and freedoms – the very definition of life in our great nation – are imperiled when the Judiciary cannot function fairly, robustly, and independently. And so I ask you, the honorable members of this General Assembly, what is the price of these liberties and freedoms for our fellow Rhode Islanders? We think it is priceless and well worth just 1.4 percent of the state budget. I hope you will agree.

It is precisely now, in these troubled financial times, that state court services – at a minimum – should be maintained to ensure access to justice for everyone because justice is a promise to all.

And in the midst of this, we have six – soon to be eight – judicial vacancies in our courts. Just today I received official word that Superior Court Associate Justice Vincent A. Ragosta will retire at the end of May.

Four of our vacancies are within the District Court alone, which in this past year saw the loss of District Court Associate Judge Richard A. Gonnella after an illness of several months, the retirements of Associate Judges Patricia D. Moore and John M. McLoughlin, and at the end of this month we will see Associate Judge Walter Gorman retire.

Last year also saw the retirements of Family Court Associate Justice Pamela M. Macktaz, as well as Workers' Compensation Court Associate Judge John Rotondi Jr.

I thank Judges Ragosta, Macktaz, Moore, Gorman, McLoughlin, Gonnella, and Rotondi for their service. You know, I have been practicing this State of the Judiciary address for a week now, and I had been planning to once again urge Governor Carcieri to start putting some people on the bench because it was limiting access to our courts. Earlier today the Governor called to announce the nominations of three great candidates with Bennett R. Gallo to the Superior Court; Magistrate Debra E. DiSegna to the Family Court, and our Supreme Court clerk, Pamela Woodcock Pfeiffer, to the District Court. These nominees were selected from a field of excellent candidates. I urge the Senate to act swiftly on these nominations, and while I thank the Governor for these appointments, I encourage him to continue the process of filling the five remaining vacancies in a timely fashion.

I welcome my fellow judges who have joined us here today. Our judges typically are appointed to the bench some 20 to 30 years into their law careers. The average age of our judges when they take the bench is 46 years old. Judges simply do not have time to accrue the pension benefits as other state employees who may begin their careers in their twenties and sometimes in their teens.

It was the wisdom of the General Assembly that structured the judicial pension system differently from the rank-and-file state employee system – with good reason. Judicial pensions simply are different and should remain so.

We thank the General Assembly for its support and passage this past January of the revised magistrate legislation. We appreciate everyone's forbearance while constitutional concerns over the selection of Traffic Tribunal magistrates and other issues were addressed to ensure that this process works correctly. We welcome Bill Guglietta as the new Chief Magistrate, as we thank District Court Chief Judge Albert E. DeRobbio for his leadership at the Traffic Tribunal, starting in 1999 when no one else wanted the responsibility.

In these last few minutes, I want to share with you some of the Judiciary's accomplishments in 2007.

We continue to modernize our technology, which is now positioned to move the Judiciary toward a paperless operation with an electronic filing system similar to several other states and the federal court system. This goal will take four years to achieve, but the benefits are many. The Judiciary's 224,000 new cases each year will be filed and heard fairly and expeditiously, and without paper.

We are proud to announce the number of cases resolved in 2007 in each of the counties that you represent. In Superior, Family and District Courts, for Providence and Bristol Counties we resolved 54,000 cases; in Kent County, 22,000 cases; in Washington County, 9,300 cases; and in Newport County, 6,300 cases. This is more than 91,000 cases, a little under half of our total dispositions. Most of the remaining cases were handled in our busiest court, the Rhode Island Traffic Tribunal, which disposed of more than 108,000 cases in 2007.

Another of our new technologies involves the electronic traffic citation pilot program with the State Police and municipal departments in Portsmouth, East Providence, Burrillville, North Kingstown, and Narragansett. A total of 27,250 citations were issued during the pilot project, and the biggest measure of success is the accuracy of the citation compared with tickets that were filled out by hand.

We are forever grateful to the General Assembly for the new Kent County Courthouse in Warwick and the Traffic Tribunal in Cranston. These buildings that you gave to the people have free parking and are more accessible and user-friendly. In addition, they provide a better workplace for our employees and the employees of the departments of Attorney General, Public Defender, Probation, Sheriffs, and the Capitol Police who have offices there.

It is because of these benefits that I advocated – and you approved – construction of a Blackstone Valley Courthouse. While I am sensitive to the state's current financial condition, the need to better serve our citizens in northern Rhode Island and to decongest a severely overcrowded Garrahy Judicial

Complex is not going to go away. The crowding will only become more acute and the construction costs are only going to increase as time passes. Nevertheless, in recognition of the hardship we all face and despite this long-standing need, I have spoken to the Speaker and the President about deferring this project for another year. And the Governor has indicated his support for construction if we wait another year. Therefore, all have agreed to postpone the construction until Fiscal Year 2010.

I am proud to report that we have increased the number of non-English speaking users that the Office of Court Interpreters served last year.

Our interpreters and the Adult Drug Court were among the court programs highlighted last year in our “Citizens’ Summit” television program on Rhode Island PBS. We continued our outreach into our public and private schools with our Justice Rules program, which aims to educate schoolchildren in your cities and towns about the judicial process, promote positive attitudes about this branch of government, and to promote careers in the Judiciary and related fields.

As always, the Supreme Court went on the road twice in 2007 to “ride circuit” and hear cases in our outlying communities, and our Appellate Mediation Program maintained its resolution rate of 60 percent for the third year in a row with the aid of retired judges.

Our Workers’ Compensation Court also expanded its outreach with its YES-RI program to meet even more young workers and to educate them about their right to a safe workplace.

I am committed to outreach. This has been a hallmark of my administration, designed to help the community understand the Judiciary and the depth of our dedication to the citizens we all serve, and most especially those who seek our services.

Former U.S. Senator and basketball star Bill Bradley said: “We need to get beyond the politics of the moment, the deficit of the hour, the military count of the day, the numbers that rarely shape events. Our long-term interests must be in people and in the values of democracy and individual liberty.”

In closing, I can say to you with confidence that the state of our Rhode Island Judiciary is strong.

The beneficiaries of all that we do, and all that you do for us, are your constituents, from our citizens in court for the day to your respective law enforcement agencies who count on an efficient and effective court system. With your help, we will persevere.

The best thing about the future, Abraham Lincoln said, is that it only comes one day at a time. Thank you for your ongoing support of our mission to deliver access to justice to the people – one day at a time.

May God Bless our beloved state.