

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 thirteen.

Volume 140, No.1

Tuesday, January 1, 2013

First Legislative Day

In accordance with Chapter 22-3-2 of the General Laws of the State of Rhode Island, the Honorable Senate is called to order at 2:14 o'clock P.M., by the Honorable M. Teresa Paiva Weed, being the senior member, in continuous service from the City of Newport, on the first Tuesday in January, A.D.2013 (being the first Tuesday of the Month).

The Honorable Senate appoints Senators Cool Rumsey, Hodgson, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, O'Neill, Raptakis and Sheehan to escort His Excellency, the Governor, Lincoln D. Chafee to the rostrum.

The members attend.

The Honorable Senate appoints Senators Ciccone, Cote, Crowley, Ottiano, Pearson and Satchell to escort the Honorable A. Ralph Mollis, Secretary of State, to the rostrum.

The members attend.

SPECIAL GUESTS

The Honorable Senator, by unanimous consent, presents His Excellency, the Governor, to address the body.

The Honorable Senator presents the Honorable A. Ralph Mollis, Secretary of State.

As provided in Article III of the Constitution, the roll of the Senate, pursuant to Law, is read by the Honorable Secretary of State as follows:

January 1, 2013

To the Honorable Senate:

I, A. Ralph Mollis Secretary of State, hereby certify the following list of members elected to the Senate in the General Assembly, in accordance with the certificate of election filed in this office by the Board of Elections on the eighteenth day of November, 2012, as provided by Section 22-3-13 of the General Laws of 1956:

1. Maryellen Goodwin
2. Juan M. Pichardo
3. Gayle L. Goldin
4. Dominick Ruggerio
5. Paul Jabour
6. Harold M. Metts
7. Frank A Ciccone, III
8. James E. Doyle II
9. Adam J. Satchell
10. Walter S. Felag, Jr.
11. Christopher Scott Ottiano
12. Louis P. DiPalma
13. M. Teresa Paiva Weed
14. Daniel DaPonte
15. Donna M. Nesselbush
16. Elizabeth A. Crowley
17. Edward J. O'Neill
18. William J. Conley, Jr.
19. Ryan William Pearson
20. Roger A. Picard
21. Nicholas D. Kettle
22. Stephen R. Archambault
23. Paul W. Fogarty
24. Marc A. Cote
25. Frank Lombardo III
26. Frank S. Lombardi
27. Hanna M. Gallo
28. Joshua B. Miller
29. Michael J. McCaffrey
30. William A. Walaska
31. Erin P. Lynch
32. David E. Bates
33. Leonidas P. Raptakis
34. Catherine Cool Rumsey
35. Dawson Tucker Hodgson
36. James C. Sheehan
37. V. Susan Sosnowski
38. Dennis L. Algieri

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Seal of the State of Rhode Island on this first day of January, A.D. 2013.

Respectfully Yours,
A. Ralph Mollis
Secretary of State

Received and ordered to be placed on file.

OATH

The Oath of Office is administered to the foregoing Senators-elect by the Honorable A. Ralph Mollis, Secretary of State.

ROLL CALL

The roll is called and a quorum is declared present with 38 Senators present and 0 Senators absent as follows:

PRESENT – 38: The Honorable President Paiva Weed and Senators Algieri, Archambault, Bates, Ciccone, Conley, Cool Rumsey, Cote, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goldin, Goodwin, Hodgson, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Nesselbush, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

ABSENT – 0:

INVOCATION

The Honorable Senator Paiva Weed, by unanimous consent, presents His Excellency, the Most Reverend Robert C. Evens, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Providence to deliver the invocation.

PRESENTATION OF COLORS

The Presentation of Colors is performed by members of the historic Artillery Company of Newport.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

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

GOD BLESS AMERICA

God Bless America will be performed by Saint Patrick's Church Choir.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

The Senate is at a moment of silence for the children and teachers of Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

RETIREMENT OF COLORS

The Newport Artillery Company retires the colors.

SPECIAL GUEST

Governor Lincoln D. Chafee addresses the Chamber.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Senator Goodwin, seconded by Senator DaPonte, moves that the floor be open to nominations.

The motion to open nominations prevails on a voice vote.

The Honorable Senator Paiva Weed declares that nominations for the office of President of the Senate are now in order.

Senator McCaffrey nominates Senator Paiva Weed. The nomination is seconded by Senator DiPalma.

Senator Felag, seconded by Senator Sosnowski, moves that nominations be closed.

The motion to close nominations prevails on a voice vote.

The Honorable Senator directs the Reading Clerk, to call the roll of the body.

The motion to elect Senator Paiva Weed as President of the Senate is read and passed, upon a roll call vote with 37 Senators voting in the affirmative and 1 Senator voting in the negative as follows:

YEAS - 37: The Honorable President Paiva Weed and Senators Algieri, Archambault, Bates, Ciccone, Conley, Cool Rumsey, Cote, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Nesselbush, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

NAYS – 1: Senator Hodgson.

The Honorable Senator Paiva Weed announces that Senator Paiva Weed has been elected President of the Rhode Island Senate for the years 2013 and 2014.

The Honorable Senate appoints Senators Archambault, Conley, Goldin, Jabour, Miller and Picard to escort the Honorable Colleen M. Hastings, Associate Judge of the Rhode Island District Court, to the rostrum.

The members attend.

OATH OF OFFICE

The Honorable Senator introduces the Honorable Colleen M. Hastings, Associate Judge of the Rhode Island District Court, to administer the oath of Office to the Senate President.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS

The Honorable President, Paiva Weed, addresses the members of the Senate and their special guests.

(See Appendix for Presidential Remarks)

ELECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

The Honorable President declares that nominations for the office of Secretary of the Senate are now in order.

Senator Gallo nominates Joseph R. Brady of Newport as Secretary of the Senate for the 2013 and 2014 sessions. The nomination is seconded by Senator Fogarty.

The motion to elect Joseph R. Brady of Newport as Secretary of the Senate for the 2013 and 2014 Sessions is read and passed, by unanimous consent, upon a roll call vote with 38 Senators voting in the affirmative and 0 Senators voting in the negative as follows:

YEAS - 38: The Honorable President Paiva Weed and Senators Algieri, Archambault, Bates, Ciccone, Conley, Cool Rumsey, Cote, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goldin, Goodwin, Hodgson, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Nesselbush, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

NAYS – 0:

ELECTION OF THE READING CLERK

The Honorable President declares that nominations for the office of Reading Clerk of the Senate are now in order.

Senator Doyle nominates John S. Baxter of Pawtucket as Reading Clerk for the 2013 and 2014 sessions. The nomination is seconded by Senator Nesselbush.

The motion to elect John S. Baxter of Newport as Reading Clerk of the Senate for the 2011 and 2012 Sessions is read and passed, by unanimous consent, upon a roll call vote with 38 Senators voting in the affirmative and 0 Senators voting in the negative as follows:

YEAS - 38: The Honorable President Paiva Weed and Senators Algieri, Archambault, Bates, Ciccone, Conley, Cool Rumsey, Cote, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goldin, Goodwin, Hodgson, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Nesselbush, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

NAYS – 0:

OATH

The Honorable A. Ralph Mollis, Secretary of State, administers the Oath of Office to the Secretary of the Senate-elect, Joseph R. Brady of Newport and Reading Clerk of the Senate-elect, John S. Baxter of Pawtucket.

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The Honorable President declares that nominations for the office of President Pro Tempore of the Senate are now in order.

Senator Lynch nominates Senator Walaska, as President Pro Tempore of the Senate for the 2013 and 2014 Sessions. The nomination is seconded by Senator Bates.

The motion to elect Senator Pichardo as President Pro Tempore is read and passed, by unanimous consent, upon a roll call vote with 38 Senators voting in the affirmative and 0 Senators voting in the negative as follows:

YEAS - 38: The Honorable President Paiva Weed and Senators Algieri, Archambault, Bates, Ciccone, Conley, Cool Rumsey, Cote, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goldin, Goodwin, Hodgson, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Nesselbush, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

NAYS – 0:

The Honorable President Pro Tempore, William A. Walaska addresses the body.

The members attend.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Honorable President presents the following communications:

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AN PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
SENATE CHAMBER**

January 1, 2013

The Honorable M. Teresa Paiva Weed
President of the Senate
318 State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear President Paiva Weed:

The Senate Republican caucus met on November 8, 2012 to elect their leadership for the 2013-2014 General Assembly sessions. It is as follows:

Honorable Dennis L. Algieri, Senate Minority Leader
Honorable David E. Bates, Senate Minority Whip
Honorable Dawson Hodgson, Deputy Minority Leader
Honorable Christopher S. Ottiano, Deputy Minority Leader
Honorable Nickolas D. Kettle, Deputy Minority Whip

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely, Dennis L. Algieri
SENATE MINORITY LEADER

Received and ordered to be placed on file.

Also:

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
SENATE CHAMBER**

January 1, 2013

The Honorable Senate
Senate Chamber
State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

To the Honorable, the Senate:

This is to inform you that the Democratic Senators elected on November 6, 2012, have organized the Democratic Caucus for the Senate's 2013-2014 term.

As part of the organizational meeting, held in the Senate Lounge at the State House on November 8 2012, the thirty-two members of the caucus elected Honorable Dominick Ruggerio of the 4th Senatorial District, as the Senate Majority Leader for the 2013-2014 term.

Sincerely,

Roger A. Picard
Senator, District 20
Secretary, Democratic Caucus

Received and ordered to be placed on file.

Also:

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AN PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
SENATE CHAMBER**

January 1, 2013

The Honorable M. Teresa Paiva Weed
President of the Senate
318 State House
Providence, RI 02903

To the Honorable, the Senate:

I have the honor to inform you that on this first day of January A.D 2013 the oath of engagement was administered as President of the Senate for the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations to the Honorable M. Teresa Paiva Weed.

Yours sincerely,

A. Ralph Mollis
Secretary of State

Received and ordered to be placed on file.

Also:

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
SENATE CHAMBER**

January 1 2013

To the Honorable Senate:

I have the honor to inform you that I administered this first day of January, A.D. 2013 the oath of engagement to Joseph R. Brady of Newport as Secretary of the Senate for the years 2013 and 2014.

Respectfully yours,

Ralph Mollis
Secretary of State

Received and ordered to be placed on file.

Also:

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
SENATE CHAMBER**

January 1, 2013

To the Honorable Senate:

I have the honor to inform you that I administered this first day of January, A.D. 2013 the oath of engagement to John S. Baxter of Pawtucket as Reading Clerk of the Senate for the years 2013 and 2014.

Respectfully yours,

Ralph Mollis
Secretary of State

Received and ordered to be placed on file.

INTERIM RULES

Upon suggestion of Senator Ruggerio seconded by Senator Algieri the Senate will adopt temporary rules, the rules under which it operated during the 2011-2012 session, pending the report of the rules committee and the adoption of a resolution embodying permanent rules for the 2013-2014 session, by unanimous consent, upon a roll call vote with 38 Senators voting in the affirmative and 0 Senators voting in the negative as follows:

YEAS - 38: The Honorable President Paiva Weed and Senators Algieri, Archambault, Bates, Ciccone, Conley, Cool Rumsey, Cote, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goldin, Goodwin, Hodgson, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Nesselbush, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

NAYS - 0:

GUESTS

Upon suggestion of Senator Ruggerio and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Doyle, Jaclyn Doyle, wife, Jamie Doyle, son, Paige Doyle, daughter, James Doyle, father, Joan Doyle, mother and his mother-in-law Sandra and also the family of Senator Goodwin, Thomas N. Goodwin, father, Sheila Connelly, sister, Paul Connelly, brother-in-law, Liam Connelly, nephew, Jeffrey LaRocque, Marggrace and Teresa LaRocque Miles, Kristen Catanzaro North Providence Town Council President and Dino Autiello, North Providence Town Councilman.

Upon suggestion of Senator Algiere and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber family of Senator Kettle, Mathew and Michele Kettle, parents, and the family of Senator Ottiano Bernadette Ottiano, wife, Raymond Ottiano, son.

Upon suggestion of Senator DiPalma and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Archambault, Gigi Rodriguez Archambault, wife, Claire Arnold, aunt, Michaela Gardner, cousin, Bill Gardner, cousin, Suzy Alba, Councilwoman, Thomas Howard, Jr., friend, Debbie Howard, friend, Tom Howard III, friend, Nick Howard, friend, Bob Walker, friend, Diane Walker, friend, David Tassoni, campaign manager and the family of Joseph R. Brady, Kathryn Brady, daughter, Joseph Brady III, son, and Sheila Dunn, friend.

Upon suggestion of Senator Goodwin and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Kathy and Kelly McDonough, Margie and Maggie Hurley, Colleen Helena, Jack and Justin McCarthy, and former Lieutenant Governor Charles Fogarty.

Upon suggestion of Senator Metts and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Dayus Metts, wife, Deborah Tunstall, sister-in-law, Deacon Nicholas Walker and Mrs. Betty Walker.

Upon suggestion of Senator Gallo and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Kaitlin Glynn, Michael Glynn, Emily Cipriano, Anthony Cipriano and Bethany Beretta and the family of Senator Lynch John and Pat Lynch, parents Susan and Jamie McKnight, sister and brother-in-law and the family of Senator DaPonte Marcia DaPonte, wife, Antonio DaPonte, son and Sofia DaPonte, daughter.

Upon suggestion of Senator Ciccone and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Anita Collazo, Oscar Vargas, Nicholas Simone, Joseph Fratus, Peter Marinucci, Bernard Treml, Robert DiMaio, Joseph Spremulli, and Gina Sabitoni Arakelian.

Upon suggestion of Senator Picard and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber family of Senator Pearson, Frances Pearson, Robert Pearson, Deborah Kent, Mary Aveno, Ashley Manley, Brett Hosney, Adam Bonner, Amanda Clarke and Blake Collins.

Upon suggestion of Senator Lynch and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Germaines Picard, Diane Picard, Nicole Picard, Brian Frankoff Kristen Picard, Josh Hann, Caitlyn Picard, Russell Gallo and Karen Yakavonis.

Upon suggestion of Senator Cote and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber family of Senator Raptakis, Dr. Donna Raptakis, wife, Alexandra Raptakis, daughter, Nicholas Raptakis, son, Adam Dunham, family friend of Senator Sheehan, Meredith Sheehan, wife, Colin Devine, stepson, and Liam Sheehan, son.

Upon suggestion of Senator McCaffrey and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Barbara Santilli, Amanda and William Fallon, Daughter and Son-in-law, Lisa and Jim Aceto, Sister and Brother-in-law and family of Senator Felag Mark Felag,

brother, Nick Felag, nephew, Jake Felag, son, Leah Lampa, friend and the family of Senator Walaska, Marsha Walaska, wife, Grad DeMello, granddaughter.

Upon suggestion of Senator Crowley and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Sosnowski Michael Sosnowski, husband, Leanne Peckham, and Geoff Peckham.

Upon suggestion of Senator O'Neill and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Mr. John Hays, Mr. George Hadley, and Mr. John Carroll.

Upon suggestion of Senator Sosnowski and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber friends of Senator Crowley Kathleen Palmer, Betty Lemieux, and Mayor Elect James Diosia.

Upon suggestion of Senator Pichardo and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Janet Pichardo, spouse, Cristian Pichardo, son, Tiffanie Pichardo, daughter, Emilio Pichardo, son, Ron Crosson, Jr., friend, Max Lora, friend and Erick Fernandez, friend.

Upon suggestion of Senator Archambault and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber family of Senator DiPalma, Margaret DiPalma, wife, Kellie Simeone, daughter, Alex Simeone, son-in-law, Abby DiPalma, daughter and Wes Isom, friend.

Upon suggestion of Senator Lombardi and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Antonelia Lombardi, wife, Cassandra and Christine Lombardi, daughters, Mr. and Mrs. Carmine Catalozzi, Melva Catalozzi, Sheila and Robert Capabianco, and Tom DiPaolo.

Upon suggestion of Senator Fogarty and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber friends of Senator Nesselbush Kelly Carse, partner and Al Baldera, friend.

Upon suggestion of Senator Nesselbush and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Fogarty Nancy Fogarty, Patrick Fogarty and Charlie Fogarty, and the family of Senator Miller Nancy Miller, wife and Nick Miller, son.

Upon suggestion of Senator Raptakis and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Satchell, Kayla Satchell, wife, Alyson Satchell, mother, Patricia Ferreira, grandmother, Mark Satchell father, Carole Emmett, grandmother, Warren Emmett, grandfather, Brandon Satchell, brother, Kayley Satchell, sister, John and Casey O'Malley, father and sister-in-law and the Marsh Family, cousins and Frank Faubert, friend

Upon suggestion of Senator Lombardo and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Patty Lombardo, wife, Victoria Lombardo, daughter, Frank Lombardo IV, son, and his Fiancé Ashley Whitaker, Frank Lombardo, Jr., father, and friend Ann May Gomes, and the family of Senator Conley, Norma Conley, Brady Conley, Dylan Conley and his girlfriend Jenica Reed.

Upon suggestion of Senator Cool Rumsey and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Gary Rumsey, husband, Mackenzie Rumsey, Marion Cool, mother, Mark Cool, brother, Tim Cool, brother and Father Brain Cool, brother, Pat Breslin, Campaign Manager, Nancy Joyce and Karen Krigin.

Upon suggestion of Senator Goldin and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Jeff Levy, husband, Zack and Johan Levy, sons, Maureen Goldin, sister, her family David Blair, Sophia and Owen Blair Goldin, Rachel Colaiace, Emily Colaiace, Darlene Allen, Lisa Roth Blackman, Charles Blackman, Sophie Blackman, Alden Blackman, Wendy Beckett, Aidan Beckett and Sally Beckett.

Upon suggestion of Senator DiPalma and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the parents of President Paiva Weed Arthur and Marie Paiva.

Upon suggestion of Senator McCaffrey and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Deirdre McCaffrey, Michael McCaffrey, Cailin McCaffrey, Brenna McCaffrey, Deirdre McCaffrey, friend and former Representative Arthur Simonini.

AULD LANG SYNE

Auld Lang Syne will be performed by Saint Patrick's Church Choir.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Senator Goodwin, seconded by Senator Ruggerio, and upon suggestion of Senator Metts the Senate adjourns at 3:55 o'clock P.M. in memory of the victims of the Newtown, Connecticut tragedy.

JOSEPH R. BRADY
Secretary of the Senate

Appendix**BENEDICTION****FATHER EDWARD CARDENTE**

Lord, our God, send us forth your blessing and give these honorable Senators, returning newly elected your faithful servants, wisdom and strength of spirit to discern and act upon your will. May the light of your confidence shine upon them, that they may be inspired to accomplish what is right and good. From their eyes, may the light shine brightly so that in the darkness they may see the needs of others. Through their ears may they hear beyond the noise of self interest for the calls for help from those in genuine need throughout the State. And may their hearts beat with compassion and love that they be strong in reaching out to lift up those who stumble by enacting just legislation. Guide them always with your grace. And in this New Year, bless them with peace. Amen.

APPENDIX

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS



M. Teresa Paiva Weed
President of the Senate

Opening Day Address
January 1, 2013

Good afternoon and thank you all.

Michael and Lou, thank you for your very kind words; and thank you to the members of the Senate for your support. I am deeply humbled by the honor you have bestowed upon me, and I will continue to do all I can to live up to the trust you have placed in me.

Please join me in welcoming to the chamber the general officers who have joined us today:

- Governor Lincoln Chafee
- Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts
- Secretary of State Ralph Mollis
- General Treasurer Gina Raimondo
- Attorney General Peter Kilmartin

Our success in addressing the challenges we face as a state will require that we continue to work together, and I look forward to continuing to work with each of you to move our state forward.

Judge Hastings, it was an honor to have you here today to administer the oath of office. Welcome back to the Senate Chamber. Thank you.

Welcome to all of the family and friends who have joined us today ... and who have been so supportive through the rigors of campaigns and the demands of public service. Thank you for your encouragement ... and your patience.

I am very pleased to welcome eight new members to the chamber, and to welcome back all my colleagues who were reelected.

I am very fortunate to serve alongside tremendous partners in leadership who have demonstrated time and again their commitment to this institution and to Rhode Island, and have proven that, by working together, we can address the challenges facing our state.

Dominick Ruggerio is a steady and fair-minded leader. He has worked for years to help his colleagues achieve their goals to improve the state. He leads with an open door, and an open mind. I value his partnership and his friendship.

Dennis Algieri is a most distinguished and dignified minority leader. I have been honored to serve by his side for the past 20 years. His insights are valued, as is his commitment to working together. It is a true privilege to work alongside him.

* * *

The Senate reflects the diversity of our state, yet each of us has been entrusted by our constituents with a common, solemn responsibility. Each of us in this chamber – whatever our differences in ideology – shares a common goal of building a prosperous future for Rhode Island.

That future begins with an honest assessment of the challenges we face. That is why I asked the Senate Policy staff to review the underlying factors that are holding our state back in national business rankings, and that work is almost complete.

In this way we can see where the state does well – such as in **broadband technology** – and where we need to improve – such as providing education and training for our workforce. Then we can take the appropriate steps necessary to strengthen areas where we perform well, and improve in areas where we are less competitive.

Working together, with our partners in the public and private sectors, we will focus on economic development with a renewed sense of urgency to ensure families financial security and prosperity.

We will take steps this session to develop a long-term vision for economic success. As a Senate we will focus on initiatives which:

- Better equip our workforce with the skills they need to succeed in today's knowledge economy;
- Reverse Rhode Island's reputation as an over-regulated state;
- Improve education at all levels, from pre-kindergarten through higher education;
- Encourage urban revitalization and bolster the construction industry through a targeted historic tax credit;
- Further economic development through the arts;
- Address budgetary challenges in a manner which preserves essential services upon which Rhode Islanders rely while improving our state's competitiveness; and
- Improve the affordability, quality and transparency of our health care system.

Our goals are significant. So too are the challenges we will face.

Continued vigilance is required to ensure protection of the environment and our most precious of natural resources, Narragansett Bay.

As we celebrate enactment of the new open records act, we will continue to work towards further improvements in government transparency.

Today, the citizens and families of Newtown, Connecticut are in our thoughts and prayers. Public safety in our schools will be a priority as we work with the Attorney General, the State Police and our federal partners to address the many concerns that this tragedy has caused the country to focus on.

These remain difficult times in our state, as they are across the country, and indeed across the globe. Many Rhode Islanders are experiencing financial hardships. While there are many important issues we will address over the course of the session, we as a Senate must remain focused on the paramount issue of economic development.

Working together, with strength and compassion, courage and determination, we can move Rhode Island towards a brighter tomorrow.

Today, as you undertake these challenges, you follow in the steps of many leaders that came before you. Some of those leaders are no strangers to this chamber, such as Senator Thomas Goodwin, Senator Gene McCaffrey, Senator Jack Reed, **and others whose memory we honor by our service:** Governor J. Joseph Garrahy, Senator Robert J. McKenna, Justice Florence Murray, and Chief Justice Joseph Weisberger.

Serving in the Senate is an honor. It will be a challenge, and it is a trust that the people of Rhode Island have placed in you.

I look forward to working with all of you, and wish each of you and your families a Happy New Year.