

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 seventh day of January in the year of Our Lord two thousand and fourteen.

Volume 141, No.1

Tuesday, January 7, 2014

First Legislative Day

The Senate meets pursuant to adjournment and is called to order by the Honorable M. Teresa Paiva Weed, President of the Senate, at 4:17 o'clock P.M.

The roll is called and a quorum is declared present with 37 Senators present and 1 Senator absent as follows:

PRESENT – 37: The Honorable President Paiva Weed and Senators Algiere, 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, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

ABSENT – 1: Senator Nesselbush.

INVOCATION

The Honorable President, by unanimous consent, presents the Reverend Monsignor Albert A. Kenney, to deliver the invocation.

(See Appendix for Invocation)

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.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

The National Anthem is performed by the East Providence High School Vocal Ensemble.

APPROVAL OF RECORD

The Senate Journal of the Sixty-ninth Legislative Day of the 2013 proceedings is read in part.

Upon suggestion of Senator Ruggerio and by unanimous consent, further reading of the Journal is dispensed with and the Journal approved as recorded.

SENATE PRESIDENT REMARKS

(See Appendix for Remarks)

GUESTS

Upon suggestion of Senator Ciccone and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Dr. & Mrs. Patrick T. Conley, Carolyn Conley, Coleen Conley, Anthony Marandola and Owen Trainor.

Upon suggestion of Senator Ruggerio and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the Honorable Peter F. Kilmartin, Attorney General of Rhode Island.

Upon suggestion of Senator Pichardo and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Dayus Metts, wife of Senator Metts, Debrah Tunstall, sister-in-law and Leah Williams, cousin of Senator Metts and Community Youth Advocate.

Upon suggestion of Senator Ruggerio and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Jonathan Boucher.

NEW BUSINESS

Senate Resolution No. 2001

BY Paiva Weed, Ruggerio, Goodwin, Algiere, Metts

ENTITLED, SENATE RESOLUTION EXPRESSING ITS DEEPEST CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF MARY "AUNTIE BABE" EVANGELISTA

{LC3289/1 }

Senator Ruggerio requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

Unanimous consent for immediate consideration is granted.

Senator Ruggerio moves passage, seconded by Senators Algiere, 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, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

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

Also:

Senate Resolution No. 2002

BY Paiva Weed, Ruggerio, Goodwin, Algiere, Felag

ENTITLED, SENATE RESOLUTION EXPRESSING ITS DEEPEST CONDOLENCES ON
THE PASSING OF EVANGELIA PETER (VALMAS) RAPAKIS

{LC3287/1}

Senator Ruggerio requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

Unanimous consent for immediate consideration is granted.

Senator Ruggerio moves passage, seconded by Senators Algiere, 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, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

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

Also:

Senate Resolution No. 2003

BY Paiva Weed, Ruggerio, Goodwin, Algiere, Sheehan

ENTITLED, SENATE RESOLUTION EXPRESSING ITS DEEPEST CONDOLENCES ON
THE PASSING OF NANCY CAROL (FELAG) THREADGILL

{LC3294/1}

Senator Ruggerio requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

Unanimous consent for immediate consideration is granted.

Senator Ruggerio moves passage, seconded by Senators Algiere, 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, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

The resolution is read and passed, upon a rising 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.

(See Appendix for List)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Senator Ciccone welcomes Senator Walaska back to the chamber from recovery.

Senator Goodwin announces the unveiling of the Thomas Dorr statue outside the Senate Chamber at the rise.

Senator Goodwin invites all the members of the senate tomorrow to the House Lounge at the rise for a screening of the film "Inequality for All."

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Senator Goodwin seconded by Senator Algiere and upon suggestion of Senator Goodwin the Senate adjourns at 4:44 o'clock P.M. in memory of Senator Raptakis' Mother, Evangelia Peter (Valmas) Raptakis, Senator Lombardi's Aunt, Mary Evangelista and Senator Felag's sister Nancy Carol (Felag) Threadgill.

JOSEPH R. BRADY
Secretary of the Senate

Appendix

INVOCATION

REVEREND MONSIGNOR ALBERT A. KENNEY

We pray to you, O God of might, wisdom, and justice, source of all legitimate authority, assist with your gifts of counsel and fortitude the members of the Rhode Island State Senate, that their legislative efforts may be conducted in righteousness, and truth by encouraging due respect for virtue and the practice of religion; by a faithful execution of the laws in justice and mercy. Let the light of your divine wisdom direct the deliberations of our elected officials, and allow that light to shine forth in all its proceedings and daily responsibilities so that they may tend to the preservation of lasting peace and the promotion of true happiness. We pray for the Executive officials of the state of Rhode Island, for all the members of the assembly, for all judges, magistrates, and other officers who are appointed to guard our political welfare, that they may be enabled, by your powerful protection, to discharge the duties of their respective stations with honesty and integrity. We recommend likewise, to your infinite providence, all our fellow citizens throughout the State of Rhode Island, that we may be blessed in the knowledge and sanctified in the observance of most holy law; that we might persevere in our call to promote unity through the gift of holy charity and after enjoying the many blessings of this life, we pray that we may be admitted to those which are eternal. Grant this, we beseech you, O Lord in whom mercy and justice find perfect fulfillment. Amen.

Appendix

Opening Day Remarks
Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed
Rhode Island Senate
January 7, 2014

My colleagues in the Senate and the distinguished guests who have joined us today: it is my privilege to welcome you to the 2014 session of the Rhode Island Senate. Everyone has worked hard during the summer and fall, in your districts, on special commissions, and in many other ways. We return today eager to build upon the progress we have made and address the challenges our state continues to face.

There is no doubt in my mind, that for each and every one of us the economy is our top priority. Rhode Island continues to struggle with an unacceptably high unemployment rate. Working together with the House, the Administration, the business community, labor, academia and the non-profit sector, we have taken many steps in recent years to improve the business climate. We reformed the income tax and put into place the Office of Regulatory Reform. We enacted and funded the education funding formula. We instituted workforce development programs to help the unemployed improve their job skills.

In 2013, this Senate, working with our partners, led the way towards enactment of more than two dozens bills known as "Moving the Needle." This legislative package of bills was aimed at improving Rhode Island's economic competitiveness. Many of those initiatives are just now going into effect. These new laws change the state's very approach to economic development, enable bi-weekly pay, provide incentives such as historic tax credits and a statewide sales tax exemption on arts, and much, much more.

A critical area of our economic development efforts which the Senate will continue to focus on in this session is workforce development. Despite today's high unemployment rate, businesses continue to tell us that they struggle to find qualified candidates to fill some job openings. It is imperative to our efforts to address the unemployment rate, retain existing companies and attract new entrepreneurs that we continue to focus our energies on workforce development.

Last year we took some important steps, such as enacting the Back to Work RI program, which allows job seekers to collect unemployment benefits while receiving job training, and providing child care for participants in job and skill training programs.

This year, the Senate is developing a report on Rhode Island's workforce and what additional steps can be taken to close the skills gap.

One example of the kinds of things we are looking at is the Job Development Fund, which provides needed training for the Rhode Island workforce. The state's Indirect Cost Recovery scoops about \$1.2 million each year from the Job Development Fund. Rhode Island would be better served if these funds were invested in immediate training programs. This is an initiative both business and labor can get behind, and it will deliver immediate results.

We must continue to invest in education, from pre-k and full-day kindergarten, through the secondary and post-secondary levels, to prepare the workforce, enhance Rhode Island's attractiveness to businesses and residents, and ensure the state's overall future prosperity.

We continue to work with the arts community to build Rhode Island into the "State of the Arts."

We will also work on initiatives to strengthen the defense economy which is so important to Rhode Island. The Defense Economy Planning Commission meets regularly, and many senators joined us on tours of Naval Station Newport and Quonset. There is potential for strategic state investments and partnerships that will boost economic activity in the defense industry.

Rhode Island's tax competitiveness remains an important discussion. Should Congress enact the Marketplace Fairness Act, current state law ties enactment of the federal Act to reduction in the Rhode Island sales tax rate to 6.5 percent. In the context of overall budget discussions in the Senate Finance Committee, I believe we should have a dialogue about whether, rather than a half percentage point on the sales tax, it would be more effective to our economic development efforts to address the estate tax or the corporate tax.

In another challenge that is not unique to Rhode Island, it is imperative that we develop a sustainable system for funding road and bridge maintenance. We have taken steps to move away from borrowing to fund projects, but the challenge of a sustainable, statewide funding system remains.

I am grateful to the active residents of the East Bay who have made their voices heard and brought this issue to the forefront. I look forward to the findings of the commission examining Sakonnet River Bridge tolls and how we fund our infrastructure statewide.

The challenges any legislature faces are many and varied, and this year will certainly be no exception. There are environmental issues which will need to be addressed – from distributed generation to stormwater management; health care issues such as the Exchange and oversight of limited health insurance networks; and public safety issues such as those being examined by the Behavioral Health and Firearms Safety Task Force.

We are fortunate to have a membership dedicated to learning the nuances of every issue that comes before us, bringing parties together for the greater good, and delivering solutions that benefit the state.

I feel very fortunate to serve alongside such a dedicated and talented team:

Majority Leader Ruggerio, always steady and fair-minded;
Minority Leader Algieri, a thoughtful and insightful leader;
Majority Whip Goodwin, a hard working and talented leader;
the committee chairs; and each and every member of this Senate.

Each of you continues to serve with the passion and dedication that led you to seek office in the first place, for the good of your district and the entire state. It is an honor to serve with you all.

When the session concludes, Governor Chafee will be unveiling a remarkably-crafted statue of Thomas Wilson Dorr outside the entrance to the Senate Chamber, where the 1663 Charter used to stand. I want to thank Dr. Patrick Conley and Gail Conley for their generous gift of the statue.

It is a fitting way to begin the 2014 legislative session. Thomas Dorr faced challenging times in Rhode Island. He agitated and persisted to correct injustices, at heavy personal cost.

Thomas Dorr truly believed in equality for all citizens.

His courage and determination to bring about a better and more just society resonates today as we begin the 2014 legislative session. Like him, let each of us strive to be selfless and courageous, to correct injustice wherever we may find it, and to leave our state better than we found it.

It is my pleasure to welcome you back. I look forward to working together during another busy and productive legislative session.