

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 sixth day of January in the year of Our Lord two thousand and fifteen.

Volume 142, No.1

Tuesday, January 6, 2015

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 4:09 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.2015 (being the first Tuesday of the Month).

The Honorable Senate appoints Senators Sosnowski, Felag, Jabour, Picard, Archambault, Conley, Lombardi, Ottiano and Gee to escort Her Excellency, the Governor, Gina Raimondo, to the rostrum.

The members attend.

The Honorable Senate appoints Senators Cote, Raptakis, Sheehan, Pichardo, Miller, Crowley, O'Neill, Kettle and Morgan to escort the Honorable Nellie Gorbea, Secretary of State, to the rostrum.

The members attend.

SPECIAL GUEST

The Honorable Senator, by unanimous consent, presents Her Excellency, the Governor, Gina Raimondo, to address the body.

The Governor delivers her remarks.

The Honorable Senator presents the Honorable Nellie Gorbea, 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:

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

January 6, 2015

To the Honorable Senate:

I, Nellie Gorbea 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 third day of December, 2014, as provided by Section 22-3-1 and 22-3-13 of the General Laws of Rhode Island:

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. Cindy A. Coyne
33. Leonidas P. Raptakis
34. Elaine J. Morgan
35. Mark W. Gee
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 six day of January, A.D. 2015.

Respectfully Yours,
Nellie M. Gorbea
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 Nellie Gorbea, 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, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, 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, Rabbi Wayne Franklin, Rabbi of Temple Emanu-El, 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.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

The National Anthem is performed by the Newport, Rhode Island Division 1, Ancient Order of Hibernian Men's Singing Group.

RETIREMENT OF COLORS

The Newport Artillery Company retires the colors.

SPECIAL GUEST

Governor Gina Raimondo addresses the Chamber.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Senator Goodwin, seconded by Senator Fogarty, 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 Ruggerio nominates Senator Paiva Weed. The nomination is seconded by Senator Algieri.

Senator Satchell, seconded by Senator Pearson, 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 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, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, Nesselbush, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

NAYS – 0:

The Honorable Senator Paiva Weed announces that Senator Paiva Weed has been elected President of the Rhode Island Senate for the years 2015 and 2016.

The Honorable Senate appoints Senators Archambault, Conley, Goldin, Jabour, Miller and Picard to escort the Honorable Alice Gibney, Presiding Superior Court Justice, to the rostrum.

The members attend.

OATH OF OFFICE

The Honorable Senator introduces the Honorable Alice Gibney, Presiding Superior Court Justice, 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 PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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

Senator Lombardo nominates Senator Walaska, as President Pro Tempore of the Senate for the 2015 and 2016 Sessions. The nomination is seconded by Senator Ciccone.

The motion to elect Senator Walaska 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, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, 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.

NEW BUSINESS**Senate Resolution No. 0001**

BY Goldin, Miller, O'Neill, Lombardi, Gallo

ENTITLED, SENATE RESOLUTION EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF THE HONORABLE LILA M. SAPINSLEY

{LC141/1}

Senator Goldin requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

Unanimous consent for immediate consideration is granted.

Senator Goldin moves passage, seconded by Senator Metts.

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

COMMUNICATIONS

The Honorable President presents the following communications:

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

January 6, 2015

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 4, 2014, have organized the Democratic Caucus for the Senate's 2015-2016 term.

As part of the organizational meeting, held in the Senate Lounge at the State House on November 6, 2014, the thirty-two members of the caucus elected Honorable Dominick Ruggerio of the 4th Senatorial District, as the Senate Majority Leader for the 2015-2016 terms.

Sincerely,

Michael J. McCaffrey
Senator, District 29
Secretary, Democratic Caucus

Received and ordered to be placed on file.

Also:

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

November 12, 2014

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

Dear President Paiva Weed:

The Rhode Island Senate Republican held a caucus on Monday, November 10, 2014 to elect their leadership for the 2015-2016 legislative sessions. The leadership is as follows:

Honorable Dennis L. Algieri, Senate Minority Leader
Honorable Nickolas D. Kettle, Senate Minority Whip
Honorable Christopher S. Ottiano, Deputy Minority Leader
Honorable Elaine Morgan, Deputy Minority Whip
Honorable Mark W. Gee, Deputy Minority Leader

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 6, 2015

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 sixth day of January A.D 2015 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,

Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State

Received and ordered to be placed on file.

GUESTS

Upon suggestion of Senator Metts and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Pichardo, Janet Pichardo, wife, Cristian Pichardo, son, Tiffanie Pichardo, daughter and Emilio Pichardo, son.

Upon suggestion of Senator Kettle and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Gee, Dana Warren Gee, wife, Zing Gee, son, Hope Gee, daughter and Griffin Gee, son.

Upon suggestion of Senator Kettle and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family and guests of Senator Morgan, Ed Morgan, husband, Ian Morgan, son, Bernard Eaton, father, Joy Eaton, mother, Lillian Morgan, mother-in-law, Scott Bill, Hopkinton Town Mediator, Cathie Larkin and her son Sam Nenzi, Barbara Capalbo, Hopkinton Town Council, Susan Sisson, North Kingstown, Kim Walker, Warwick, Tina Levigie, Hopkinton, Ester Baldesimo, sister, Ray Morrissey, Exeter Town Council and Lynn Hawkins, Exeter Town Council.

Upon suggestion of Senator Satchell and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Goldin, Jeff Levy, husband, Zack and Johan Levy, sons and David Allard, friend.

Upon suggestion of Senator Goldin and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Satchell, Kayla Satchell, wife and Morgan Satchell, daughter.

Upon suggestion of Senator Algiere and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family and guests of Kettle, Michele Kettle, mother, Bill May, grandfather, David Kettle, grandfather and Nicholas Gorham, former House Minority whip.

Upon suggestion of Senator Ruggerio and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Goodwin, Thomas N. Goodwin, father, Sheila Connelly, sister, Paul Connelly, brother-in-law, Liam and Jack Connelly, nephews, Maureen LaRocque, sister, Jeffrey LaRocque, Marygrace and Teresa LaRocque.

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 Daniel Fogarty.

Upon suggestion of Senator Goodwin and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family and guests of Senator Ruggerio, Barbara Santilli, girlfriend, Amanada Fallon, daughter, PJ Fallon, son-in-law, Jonathan Boucher, Peter Baptista and Derek Silva, friends.

Upon suggestion of Senator Nesselbush and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family and guests of Senator Miller, Nancy Miller, wife and Suzanne McFadden, sister-in-law.

Upon suggestion of Senator Lombardi and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family and guests of Senator Coyne, Jerry Coyne, husband, Katie and Megan Coyne, daughters, Patrick and Ian Coyne, sons, Judy Armour, mother, Stephanie Wirth, friend, Joanne Judge, friend, Linda Green, friend, Anthony Arico and his wife Joan Arico.

Upon suggestion of Senator Sosnowski and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the guests of Senator Crowley, Lisa Lavoie and Lynn Boisclair, Campaign Committee.

Upon suggestion of Senator Crowley and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family and guests of Senator Sosnowski, Michael Sosnowski, husband, and Leanne Peckham, Secretary of the District 37 Senatorial District Committee.

Upon suggestion of Senator Archambault and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Lombardi, Ann Lombardi, wife.

Upon suggestion of Senator Archambault and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator DiPalma, Margaret DiPalma, wife and Abigail DiPalma Isom, daughter.

Upon suggestion of Senator Goodwin and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family and guests of Senate President Paiva Weed, Arthur and Marie Paiva, parents, Joan Heald, mother-in-law and Nicole Beede, stepdaughter, Kathleen Silva, friend & newly elected school committee member of Newport, Leanne Marie Napolilamo, Mayor of Newport and Judge Coleen Hastings.

Upon suggestion of Senator O'Neill and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family and guests of Senator Raptakis, Dr. Donna Raptakis, wife, Alexandra Raptakis, daughter, Nicholas Raptakis, son, and Erin Arcand.

Upon suggestion of Senator Walaska and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator McCaffrey, Deirdre McCaffrey, wife, Brenna and Deirdre McCaffrey, daughters.

Upon suggestion of Senator Picard and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Deborah Kent, William Kent, Cala Kent, former Senator Sandra Hanaway, Cristie Hanaway and John Morghan

Upon suggestion of Senator Pearson and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family and guests of Senator DaPonte, Manuel DaPonte, father, Antonio and Sofia DaPonte, children, Maria Sousa Vice Council of Portugal and Providence.

Upon suggestion of Senator Pearson and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Picard Diane Picard, Caitlyn Picard,

Upon suggestion of Senator McCaffrey and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Felag, Mark Felag, brother, Mary Johns, sister, Jayne Balasco, sister and Allie Threadgill, neice.

Upon suggestion of Senator Lynch and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Gallo, Russell Gallo, husband, Laura Gallo, daughter.

Upon suggestion of Senator Lynch and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Doyle, Jacklyn Doyle, wife, Joan Doyle, mother and James Doyle, father & former Mayor of Pawtucket.

Upon suggestion of Senator Jabour and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the wife of Senator O'Neil, Carol O'Neil.

Upon suggestion of Senator DiPalma and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Archambault, Gigi Archambault, wife, Valerie Stoeckel, sister, Bruce Stoeckel, brother-in-law, Daniel Stoeckel, nephew.

Upon suggestion of Senator Cote and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Sheehan, Meredith Sheehan, wife, Abigail Sheehan, daughter, Liam and Colin Sheehan, sons, Melissa Jones, mother-in-law, Amanda Kiruthi, sister-in-law, Kiruthi Jenga, brother-in-law and their daughters Dorothy and Lucy.

Upon suggestion of Senator Raptakis and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the friends of Senator O'Neil, Robert Maresca, John Hays, David Ferrante and John Carroll.

Upon suggestion of Senator Gallo and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family and guests of Senator Lynch, John and Pat Lynch, parents, and friends Joe Prata, Denise Finkelman and Jennifer Griffith.

Upon suggestion of Senator Pichardo and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Rafael Blanco, Julius Kolowale, Juan Espinal, Roberto Castellano and Luis Castellanos.

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

Upon suggestion of Senator Conley and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Lombardo wife Patty, son Frank and daughter Victoria Lombardo.

Upon suggestion of Senator Lombardo and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Conley wife Norma, son Brady and his girlfriend Emily Barry and son Dylan and his fiancé Jenica Reed.

Upon suggestion of Senator Ottiano and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber John Vitkevich, from Portsmouth.

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 DiPalma nominates Joseph R. Brady of Newport as Secretary of the Senate for the 2015 and 2016 sessions. The nomination is seconded by Senator Gallo.

The motion to elect Joseph R. Brady of Newport as Secretary of the Senate for the 2015 and 2016 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, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, 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 2015 and 2016 sessions. The nomination is seconded by Senator Nesselbush.

The motion to elect John S. Baxter of Pawtucket as Reading Clerk of the Senate for the 2015 and 2016 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, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, Nesselbush, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

NAYS – 0:

OATH

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

COMMUNICATIONS

The Honorable President presents the following communications:

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

January 6, 2015

Mr. Joseph R. Brady
Secretary of the Senate
318 State House
Providence, RI 02903

To the Honorable Senate:

I have the honor to inform you that I administered this sixth day of January, A.D. 2015 the oath of engagement to Joseph R. Brady of Newport as Secretary of the Senate for the years 2015 and 2016.

Respectfully yours,

Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State

Received an ordered to be placed on file.

Also:

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

January 6, 2015

Mr. John S. Baxter
Reading Clerk of the Senate
318 State House
Providence, RI 02903

To the Honorable Senate:

I have the honor to inform you that I administered this sixth day of January, A.D. 2015 the oath of engagement to John S. Baxter of Pawtucket as Reading Clerk of the Senate for the years 2015 and 2016.

Respectfully yours,

Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State

Received an ordered to be placed on file.

INTERIM RULES

Upon suggestion of Senator Lynch seconded by Senator DaPonte the Senate will adopt temporary rules, the rules under which it operated during the 2013-2014 session, pending the report of the rules committee and the adoption of a resolution embodying permanent rules for the 2015-2016 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, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, Nesselbush, O'Neill, Ottiano, Pearson, Picard, Pichardo, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Walaska.

NAYS – 0:

GOD BLESS AMERICA

God Bless America is performed by the Newport, Rhode Island Division 1, Ancient Order of Hibernian Men's Singing Group.

BENEDICTION

The Honorable Senator Paiva Weed, by unanimous consent, presents His Excellency, Father Bernard Healey, pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Church in East Greenwich, to deliver the invocation.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Senator Metts, seconded by Senator Goldin, and upon suggestion of Senator Metts, the Senate adjourns at 5:35 o'clock P.M. in memory of the Honorable Lila M. Sapinsley.

JOSEPH R. BRADY
Secretary of the Senate

Appendix**INVOCATION****RABBI WAYNE FRANKLIN**

The 1st Century Hellenistic-Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria, once wrote that “The beginning of all participation in good things is hope.” Our State’s founder, Roger Williams, surely understood Philo’s teaching, together with his own religious education, when he anchored his new community in Hope.

As we gather today for the opening of the new session of the Rhode Island State Senate, we ask God’s blessings on the men and women who have been elected as Senators to serve the people of our State. May they be inspired to give us hope through their wise leadership. May they be blessed with vision and wisdom to help lift the spirits of our citizens, as they work to create jobs for more people housing for those who are homeless, food for those who are hungry, safety from violence and prosperity for us all. Help our Senators to bring hope to the students in our schools, so that their horizons will be broadened, that they may realize the potential that resides within them. May the laws our Senators enact bring goodness to our state, adding quality and contentment to our lives.

We pray that Rhode Island’s motto of “hope” will always be a beacon and a challenge for those who do the people’s business, and for all of us who seek to bring goodness to the life we share in the precious place on earth. Amen

Appendix**PRESIDENTS REMARKS**

Opening Day Address

January 6, 2015

Donny and Dennis, thank you for your very kind words; and thank you to the members of the Senate for your support. I am humbled by the honor of serving as your President, and I will do all that 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.

We look forward to working together with each of you to confront the serious challenges facing our state.

Justice Gibney, it was an honor to have you here today to administer the oath of office. Welcome to the Senate Chamber, and thank you.

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

Welcome back to all of my colleagues. We are pleased to welcome three new members to the Senate today: Senators Cindy Coyne, Mark Gee and Elaine Morgan. I am very fortunate to serve in a chamber comprised of such talented and dedicated public servants. It is my honor to serve alongside you.

I value the partnership of Majority Leader Ruggerio, a leader devoted to the institution of the Senate and the success of its members. He is committed to helping his colleagues achieve their goals as we work together for our shared objective of improving the Rhode Island economy. I am proud to call him a partner in leadership, and a friend.

Dennis Algiere has led his caucus with distinction. He has served as a strong voice for the members of the minority caucus, while also displaying a commitment to working across the aisle to achieve progress for our state. I have been honored to serve by his side throughout our time in the Senate.

I believe that each of us in the Senate, regardless of party affiliation, shares a common goal of building a healthy and thriving Rhode Island economy. The opportunities are tremendous, with a new and energetic governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state and general treasurer taking office today, each committed to working together to improve our state.

Jobs and the economy is a top priority for each of us, and the Senate will work together with the executive branch and the House to make the state a more attractive place to run a business and create jobs.

Last year we began to address the skills gap which businesses advised us was critical to economic growth. One key step we need to take is to make education a priority this session.

We continue to hear from businesses that they struggle to fill certain jobs. The skills gap is not a challenge unique to Rhode Island, but it is particularly troubling here given the state's unemployment rate. We need to ensure that our education system at all levels, and our workforce development programs, are preparing students to succeed in a modern economy.

I am looking forward to working with Governor Raimondo on this important issue.

With the school construction moratorium scheduled to expire in May, Rhode Island stands at a potential crossroads in education. Considerable work has already taken place in the Senate on this issue. It is time to lift the moratorium. However, we need to ensure that, as new schools are built, they meet the modern needs of students.

My own community of Newport recently demonstrated what can be accomplished when local school officials are willing to make difficult decisions and collaborate with state education officials on school construction needs. Our new Claiborne Pell School is energy efficient, includes smart boards in every classroom, and incorporates technology at all grade levels. We are saving money AND improving education.

As more school facilities are improved across the state, we need to ensure that we raise the standards of education in all public schools.

We know the benefits of full-day kindergarten throughout a student's schooling and throughout life. Yet there are still communities, including in some core cities, which do not provide all of their students with access to full-day kindergarten. This has been a priority for the Senate Education Committee, and the Senate will continue our work to encourage all communities in the state to provide full-day kindergarten.

At the other end of the education continuum, too often students are taking three or more years to earn an associate's degree, and five or six years to earn a bachelor's degree. The rate of degree completion within 3 years at CCRI is less than 20 percent.

Higher education performance funding is one means through which we can take action to tie performance to certain outcomes, whether it is graduation rate or ensuring that colleges are graduating students in industry-targeted fields.

It is critical to our overall economic development efforts that we focus on all levels of education and job training, from pre-school through higher education, and from voc-tech to adult literacy and job training programs.

Just as education is the means through which individuals can lift themselves out of poverty, education is also the basis through which we can build a strong economy.

As we work to build our economy and strengthen our education systems, we have an obligation to ensure that the least fortunate among us are not forgotten. It is wise to invest in effective programs that bring results and save the state money in the long-term. The cost effectiveness of providing preventative care and supportive housing have been proven.

It is time for Rhode Island to end veteran and chronic homelessness, and we can start by setting a goal of ending homelessness among the state's veterans this year. This session, we will prioritize the use of the realty conveyance fee funding for veterans' rental subsidies.

As we embark on the 2015 legislative session, let us take up these challenges with strength and compassion, courage and determination. Working together, we will bring Rhode Island into a brighter future. Rhode Island, the birthplace of religious tolerance and American industry, can once again lead the nation as we grow our economy through excellence in education. Let us embrace our state motto and rekindle the hope that makes this state so great.

I look forward to working together with all of you to make our state an even greater place to raise a family and run a business.