

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 third day of January in the year of Our Lord two thousand and seventeen.

Volume 144, No.1

Tuesday, January 3, 2017

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 4:19 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.2017 (being the first Tuesday of the Month).

The Honorable Senate appoints Senators Goodwin, Miller, Felag, Nesselbush, Gallo and DiPalma, to escort Her Excellency, the Governor, Gina Raimondo, to the rostrum.

The members attend.

The Honorable Senate appoints Senators Satchell, Pearson, Kettle, Lombardo, Ciccone and Goldin to escort the Honorable Nellie Gorbea, Secretary of State, to the rostrum.

The members attend.

The Honorable Senate appoints Senators McCaffrey, Lynch Prata, Lombardi, Archambault, Conley and Jabour, to escort The Honorable Paul A. Suttell, Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court to the rostrum.

The members attend.

SPECIAL GUEST

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 3, 2017

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 fourteenth day of December, 2016, as provided by 22-3-13 of the General Laws of Rhode Island:

1. Maryellen Goodwin
2. Ana B. Quezada
3. Gayle L. Goldin
4. Dominick J. Ruggerio
5. Paul V. 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. James Arthur Seveney
12. Louis P. DiPalma
13. M. Teresa Paiva Weed
14. Daniel DaPonte
15. Donna M. Nesselbush
16. Elizabeth A. Crowley
17. Thomas J. Paolino
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. Jeanine Calkin
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 third day of January, A.D. 2017.

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, Calkin, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, Nesselbush, Paolino, Pearson, Picard, Quezada, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Seveney, Sheehan, Sosnowski.

ABSENT – 0:

INVOCATION

The Honorable Senator Paiva Weed, by unanimous consent, presents His Excellency, the Most Reverend Robert C. Evans Auxiliary Bishop 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.

MUSICAL SELECTION

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 M. Raimondo addresses the Chamber.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Senator Ruggerio, seconded by Senator Algieri, 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 Gallo nominates Senator Paiva Weed. The nomination is seconded by Senator McCaffrey.

Senator Sosnowski, seconded by Senator Coyne, 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, Calkin, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, Nesselbush, Paolino, Pearson, Picard, Quezada, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Seveney, Sheehan, Sosnowski.

NAYS – 0:

The Honorable Senator Paiva Weed announces that Senator Paiva Weed has been elected President of the Rhode Island Senate for the years 2017 and 2018.

OATH OF OFFICE

The Honorable Senator introduces the Honorable Paul A. Suttell, Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme 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 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 2017 and 2018 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 2017 and 2018 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, Calkin, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, Nesselbush, Paolino, Pearson, Picard, Quezada, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Seveney, Sheehan, Sosnowski.

NAYS – 0:

OATH

The Honorable Nellie Gorbea, Secretary of State, administers the Oath of Office to the 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 Lombardi nominates Senator Harold Metts of Providence, as President Pro Tempore of the Senate for the 2017 and 2018 Sessions. The nomination is seconded by Senator Jabour.

The motion to elect Senator Metts 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, Calkin, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, Nesselbush, Paolino, Pearson, Picard, Quezada, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Seveney, Sheehan, Sosnowski.

NAYS – 0:

ELECTION OF DEPUTY PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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

Senator Goodwin nominates Senator Elizabeth A. Crowley of Central Falls, as Deputy President Pro Tempore of the Senate for the 2017 and 2018 Sessions. The nomination is seconded by Senator Cote.

The motion to elect Senator Crowley as Deputy 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, Calkin, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, Nesselbush, Paolino, Pearson, Picard, Quezada, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Seveney, Sheehan, Sosnowski.

NAYS – 0:

COMMUNICATIONS

The Honorable President presents the following communications:

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

January 3, 2017

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 8, 2016, have organized the Democratic Caucus for the Senate's 2017-2018 term.

As part of the organizational meeting, held in the Senate Lounge at the State House on November 10, 2016, the thirty-three members of the caucus elected Honorable Dominick J. Ruggerio of the Fourth Senatorial District, as the Senate Majority Leader for the 2017-2018 terms.

Sincerely,

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

Received and ordered to be placed on file.

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

January 3, 2017

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 Thursday, November 10, 2016 to elect their leadership for the 2017-2018 legislative sessions. The leadership is as follows:

Honorable Dennis L. Algieri, Senate Minority Leader
Honorable Nickolas D. Kettle, Senate Minority Whip
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.

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

January 3, 2017

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 third day of January A.D 2017 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.

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

January 3, 2017

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 third day of January, A.D. 2017 the oath of engagement to John S. Baxter of Pawtucket as Reading Clerk of the Senate for the years 2017 and 2018.

Respectfully yours,

Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State

Received an ordered to be placed on file.

GUESTS

Upon suggestion of Senator Algiere and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Kettle; Matthew Kettle, Father, Michele Kettle, Mother, William May, Grandfather, Michelle Hevey, Girlfriend.

Upon suggestion of Senator Kettle and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family and friends of Senator Morgan; Edward Morgan, Husband, Bernard Eaton, Father, Frank Landolfi, Scott Bill Hirst, Maria, Christina Lavigne, Russel Taub, Gary Hall, Bernard Eaton, Jr., Brother, Kerri Eaton, Sister in law. Also, Senator Kettle welcomes Joshua Beydoya and Arron Stone, Interns.

Upon suggestion of Senator Kettle and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Gee; Dana Gee, Wife, Zing Gee, Griffin Gee, and Hope Gee.

Upon suggestion of Senator Gee and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family and friends of Senator Paolino; Marie Issa, Mother, Louis Paolino, Father, Austin Paolino, Brother, Marish Paolino, Sister, Nicholas Ricci, and Jon Ricottilli.

Upon suggestion of Senator Ciccone and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Seveney; Val Seveney, Wife, Paul Seveney, Pat, Seveney, Leslie Unangst, John Unangst, Kirtley Seveney, Sharon Walker, John Walker, and Peggy Taylor.

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 Accrino, Sister, Jayne Balasco, Sister, Allie Threadgill, Niece. Senator McCaffrey also welcomes to the chamber The Honorable Associate Judge Colleen M. Hastings.

Upon suggestion of Senator Felag and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator McCaffrey; Deirdre, Wife, Michael, Son, and Daughters Cailin, Brenna and Deirdre.

Upon suggestion of Senator Coyne and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Senator Calkin's Husband Daniel Calkin.

Upon suggestion of Senator Coyne and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator DiPalma; Maragret DiPalma, Wife, Graham Lewis Isom, Grandson, and Anthony Spiratos.

Upon suggestion of Senator Fogarty and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Metts; Dayus Metts, Wife, Darren Metts, Jr., Grandson, Lilliana Metts, Granddaughter, Annisa Metts, Granddaughter and Kaden Pina.

Upon suggestion of Senator Metts and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Senator Fogarty's Son Brendan Fogarty.

Upon suggestion of Senator Picard and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Pearson; John Carlin, Grandfather, Geraldine Carlin, Grandmother, and Kelly Carlin, Cousin.

Upon suggestion of Senator Sosnowski and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Kathleen Palmer.

Upon suggestion of Senator Crowley and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Rev. Justin Lester, Mrs. Courtney Lester, Michael Sosnowski, Franklin Salano, Mayor of Central Falls James Diossa, and Amy Rainone.

Upon suggestion of Senator Satchell and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the wife of Senator Archambault, Gigi.

Upon suggestion of Senator Lombardo and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the wife of Senator Conley, Norma.

Upon suggestion of Senator Ruggerio and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Goodwin; Sister Shelia Connelly and her Husband Paul Connelly with their son Liam, Her Sister Maureen Larocque and her Husband Jeffery and their children Mary Grace, Jack and Teresa. Also, friends Patrick Butler, Kathy McDonough, Margie Hurley and her daughter Maggie.

Upon suggestion of Senator Gallo and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Lynch Prata; Joseph Prata, Husband, Pat Lynch, Mother, Sisters' Karen Lynch Bernard, Bethany Furtado, Kristen Lynch. Also, Jennifer Buckley, Niece, Carly Buckley, Niece, and Raymond Pendergrant.

Upon suggestion of Senator Lynch Prata and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Gallo; Russell Gallo, Husband, Laura Gallo, Daughter and Karen Yakauonis, Sister.

Upon suggestion of Senator Lynch Prata and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Doyle; Joan Doyle, Mother and Jackie Doyle, Wife.

Upon suggestion of Senator Jabour and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Antonelia Lombardi.

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

Upon suggestion of Senator Cote and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Sheehan; Meredith Sheehan, Wife, Colin Devine, Stepson, Liam Sheehan, Son, Abigail Sheehan, Daughter, and Melissa Jones, Mother in Law.

Upon suggestion of Senator DiPalma and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Coyne; Jerry Coyne, Husband, Katie Coyne, Daughter, Patrick Coyne, Son, Ian Coyne, Son, Meghan Coyne, Daughter, Bob Coyne, Brother in Law, and Judy Amour Mother.

Upon suggestion of Senator Raptakis and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Frank Faubert and Gregg Mozzi.

Upon suggestion of Senator Goodwin and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Ruggerio; Charles and Jillian Ruggerio and their daughter Ava and Mia. His daughter Amanda Fallon and her Husband PJ Fallon and their daughter Natalie.

Upon suggestion of Senator Pearson and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Senator Picard's Daughter Caitlyn Picard. Also, Senator Pearson welcomes the family of Senator DaPonte; Marcia, wife, his children Antonio and Sofia and his parents Manuel and Adrianna DaPonte.

Upon suggestion of Senator Nesselbush and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Quezada; Lazaro Quezada, Husband, Leslie Polanco, Daughter, Kayomie Polanco, Daughter, Emanuel Quezada, Son, Rosa Perez, Mother, Jayden Ovalles, Grandson, Luis Estrada and Wilbur Jennings.

INTERIM RULES

Upon suggestion of Senator Ruggerio seconded by Senator Algieri the Senate will reinstate rules 3.5, 4.5, 4.10-1, 4.10-2, 5.6, 6.1, 6.2, 6.4-3, 6.5, 7.6 and adopt temporary rules, the rules under which it operated during the 2015-2016 session, pending the report of the rules committee and the adoption of a resolution embodying permanent rules for the 2017-2018 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, Calkin, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, Nesselbush, Paolino, Pearson, Picard, Quezada, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Satchell, Seveney, Sheehan, Sosnowski.

NAYS – 0:

MUSICAL SELECTION

A musical selection of 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 Rabbi Sarah Mack, of Temple Beth-El in Providence to deliver the invocation.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Senator Picard, seconded by Senator, and the Senate adjourns at 5:32 o'clock P.M.

Appendix**INVOCATION****THE MOST REVERAND ROBERT C. EVANS****Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Providence**

O God, You are our source of wisdom and font of justice, for by your loving plan the world and all that it contains was created. It is fitting then that at the outset of this new session of the Rhode Island State Senate, all turn to You for guidance in studying issues, for impartiality in making decisions and for courage in enacting laws and statutes that reflect Your divine plan for the good of men and women, for we are all created in Your image.

Let the light of Your divine wisdom direct the deliberations of our General Assembly, and shine forth in all the proceedings and laws framed for the progress of our citizens and the good order of society.

We pray for the governor of this state, 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 ability.

Finally, we commend to your unbounded mercy, all our fellow citizens throughout the State of Rhode Island, that we may be preserved in unity and in that peace which the world cannot give; and after enjoying the blessings of this life, be admitted to those which are eternal.

Grant this, we beseech you, O Lord of mercy and justice. Amen.

Appendix**BENEDICTION****RABBI SARAH MACK****Temple Beth-El in Providence**

O Guardian of Life and Liberty, Grant our leaders wisdom and forbearance that they govern with justice and compassion may we all remember that the truly strong are those who raise up the fallen and the truly wise are those who acknowledge the vital work of each and every person that makes our state strong. Teach us your ways so that we learn not give weight that which divides us. Instead finding inspiration in our experience. O source of peace, let discrimination not diminish our vision nor equality extinguish the hope upon which our great state is founded. May our Senators lead us in paths of peace, build a communal cohesion thru word and bring safety and prosperity to all Rhode Islanders so that the words of our prophets shall be fulfilled. Light shall shine in the darkness, we say together in faith. Amen.

Appendix**PRESIDENT'S REMARKS**

Opening Day Address

January 3, 2017

Thank you, Hanna and Michael, for your very kind words, and thank you to the members of the Senate for your support. I am deeply humbled by the honor of serving as your President.

Please join me in welcoming the General Officers who have joined us today...

We look forward to continuing to work together to confront the challenges facing our state.

Chief Justice Suttell, it was an honor to have you here today to administer the oath of office. Thank you, and welcome to the Senate Chamber.

Welcome to all of the family and friends who have joined us. Your support means so much to us and those who cannot be here but we know are with us in spirit. Thank you for your encouragement and your patience.

Let us take a moment to fondly remember Senator Goodwin and Mayor Doyle.

Congratulations, and welcome back to all of my colleagues in the Senate.

It is a true privilege to serve alongside such a dedicated and talented group of public servants.

We are pleased to welcome four new members to the Senate today.

Let me be the first to officially recognize you as Senators:

- Senator Jeanine Calkin
- Senator Thomas Paolino
- Senator Ana Quezada, and
- Senator James Seveney

Today, you and all of the members of the Rhode Island Senate take our place as part of this Lively Experiment that has endured in part because ordinary citizens, like you, have chosen to step forward and serve our state.

I want to thank Dominick Ruggerio, who has been a steady partner as we work together to improve our state. Dominick is 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 on behalf of our constituents. I am grateful to be able to serve alongside him as our Majority Leader, and to call him a friend.

Dennis Algiere has led with dignity and distinction. He is a strong voice for the minority caucus, while working across the aisle to build upon common ground and achieve progress for our state. We are members of the same incoming class of 1992, and I have been honored to serve alongside him throughout our time in the Senate.

The elections are behind us. Regardless of party affiliation or ideology, I believe that each of us in the Senate shares many common goals.

First and foremost, we all want a thriving economy. We want an excellent education system and safe roads and bridges. We want to insure our children, elderly and disabled are cared for.

These are not progressive or conservative issues, Democrat or Republican issues. Rather issues that all Rhode Islanders care about. By working together, we will address the serious challenges that continue to face our state.

Rhode Island has many strengths upon which to build. We have a great quality of place, with arts, culture and culinary scenes that are second to none. We are ideally situated in the northeast corridor.

We are home to a density of world-class colleges and universities. The natural beauty of our beaches and rural areas, and the historic charm of our cities, are unsurpassed.

The members of this chamber have worked together with other leaders in state government to reform personal and business taxes and to make the necessary investments in education and infrastructure that are fueling the state's economic turnaround.

Rhode Island is gaining momentum. With committed leadership in the executive branch utilizing tools approved by the Legislature, we are attracting investment from world-class companies.

- Virgin
- Wexford and the Cambridge Innovation Center
- Johnson & Johnson
- GE

These global companies could locate offices anywhere in the world, and they have chosen to have a presence in Rhode Island because of the investments we are making, and because of our exceptional quality of place.

We are grateful to them, and to the thousands of local businesses that make Rhode Island home and are committed to our state.

We know that challenges remain, and the urgency with which we must continue to address our economy has not diminished. But as we build upon the progress we have made to put Rhode Islanders back to work, there is good reason to embrace the "Hope" proclaimed in our state motto.

The work of rebuilding our economy extends to the investments we make in public systems. It is wise to invest in effective programs that bring proven results, from education and workforce development, to preventative health care, to rehabilitation services for prisoners.

A priority for the Senate this year is an often ignored issue that impacts many of us personally, and all of us in our communities. We have focused in the past few years on curbing the opioid crisis. We also need to pay attention to mental health issues and their impact on children, families, schools, public safety, criminal justice, human services, and health care systems.

Mental health is critical to physical health and to productivity throughout a person's life span.

There are proven, effective ways to address the challenges of mental illness. The Senate Health and Human Services Committee has conducted a series of hearings, and will be making recommendations to improve mental health services in Rhode Island.

A related and important step is enactment into law of the justice reinvestment reforms passed by this chamber last year. Justice reinvestment:

- saves money through lower incarceration rates,
- makes communities safer by making offenders less likely to reoffend, and
- has the potential to transform the lives of individuals who need treatment, not incarceration.

We are grateful to Justice Suttell and the courts for their work on this important issue, as well as Governor Raimondo for her commitment to these reforms.

We also need to improve compensation for direct care workers, including those who serve the developmentally disabled and those who work in home care.

Stagnant wages in these industries, even as the minimum wage has increased by 30 percent over the past five years, means workers in these critical fields can move to much less demanding lines of work for similar compensation. That increases turnover rates and training costs, and reduces quality of care for those served by direct care workers.

These essential workers should earn more than minimum wage, and the Senate will be working with Governor Raimondo and our colleagues in the House to increase their compensation.

As we embark on the 2017 legislative session, let us work collaboratively, with courage and compassion, to lead our state into a brighter future.

I am very grateful to lead a chamber that is filled with public servants who sincerely desire to improve this state we love for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders.

We bring different talents and perspectives, but working together, we will make this state an even greater place to live and work.

Welcome back, and Happy New Year!