

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

JOURNAL
-OF THE-
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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 four.

Volume 131, No. 24

Tuesday, March 9, 2004

Twenty-fourth Day

The House of Representatives meets at the State House in Providence, Tuesday, March 9, 2004 and is called to order at 4:16 o'clock P.M., by the Honorable William J. Murphy, Speaker

The roll is called and a quorum is declared present with 70 members present and 4 members absent as follows:

PRESENT – 70: The Honorable Speaker Murphy and Representatives Ajello, Almeida, Amaral, Anderson, Anguilla, Aubin, Benson, Brien, Callahan, Caprio, Carter, Cerra, Coderre, Coogan, Corvese, Costantino, Dennigan, DeSimone, Enos, Faria, Flaherty, Fox, Gallison, Giannini, Ginaitt, Gorham, Handy, Jacquard, Kennedy, Kilmartin, Lally, Landroche, Laroche, Lewiss, Lima, Long, Lowe, Malik, McCauley, McHugh, McManus, McNamara, Menard, Moffitt, Montanaro, Moran, Moura, Mumford, Naughton, Palumbo, Petrarca, Picard, Rose, San Bento, Savage, Schadone, Shanley, Shavers, Slater, Smith, Story, Tejada, Trillo, Voccola, Wasylyk, Watson, Williams, Williamson, Winfield.

ABSENT 4: Representatives Crowley, Harwood, Reilly, Scott.

INVOCATION

The Honorable Speaker presents Representative Almeida who delivers the Invocation and leads the membership in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

(For Invocation, see Appendix, this Journal.)

APPROVAL OF RECORD

By unanimous consent, the House Journal of Thursday, March 4 2004, is approved as printed.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Representative Moran congratulates Bruce and Karyn Ogni, proud parents of twin boys Dylan John Ogni, 7lbs 6oz. and Tyler Nicholas Ogni, 5lbs. 15oz. on March 4, 2004.

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Representative Flaherty, for the Committee on Judiciary, reports back the following measure, with recommendation of passage:

House Bill No. 7465**BY** Moura

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES {LC1582/1}
03/09/2004 Placed on House Calendar

House Bill No. 7529**BY** Shavers, Crowley, Gallison, Carter, Dennigan

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES {LC1405/1}
03/09/2004 Placed on House Calendar

House Bill No. 8045**BY** Gorham

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES {LC2670/1}
03/09/2004 Placed on House Calendar

House Bill No. 8143**BY** Amaral

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES {LC2729/1}
03/09/2004 Placed on House Calendar

NEW BUSINESS**House Bill No. 8246****BY** Ajello, Slater

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- SALES AND USE TAXES -- LIABILITY AND COMPUTATION {LC1522/1}
03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Finance

House Bill No. 8247**BY** Moura, Ajello, Slater

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION - PROPERTY SUBJECT TO TAXATION {LC2186/1}
03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Finance

House Bill No. 8248**BY** Moura, Slater**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- REAL ESTATE CONVEYANCE TAX
{LC1777/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Finance

House Resolution No. 8249**BY** Slater, Moura**ENTITLED**, JOINT RESOLUTION CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES IN PROVIDENCE, NORTH PROVIDENCE, EAST PROVIDENCE, CENTRAL FALLS, PAWTUCKET, WOONSOCKET AND WARWICK AND MAKING AN APPROPRIATION THEREFORE OF THE SUM OF THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$375,000) {LC1737/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Finance

House Bill No. 8250**BY** Slater, Ajello**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO MOTOR VEHICLES - ABANDONED CARS {LC2240/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Finance

House Bill No. 8251**BY** Winfield, Menard, Crowley, Costantino**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION {LC2896/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Finance

House Bill No. 8252**BY** Ajello**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS {LC2492/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Finance

House Bill No. 8253**BY** Ginaitt, Handy**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY {LC1759/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Finance

House Bill No. 8254**BY** Moura, Slater**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- COLLECTION OF TAXES GENERALLY
{LC1739/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Corporations

House Bill No. 8255**BY** Ajello**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS - LAUNDRIES
{LC2498/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Corporations

House Bill No. 8256**BY** Costantino, Slater, Ajello**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- TOWING STORAGE ACT {LC2465/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Corporations

House Bill No. 8257**BY** Costantino, Moura, Slater**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS -- PAWNBROKERS {LC2499/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Corporations

House Bill No. 8258**BY** Moura, Slater, DeSimone**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO THE NARRAGANSETT BAY COMMISSION {LC2238/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Corporations

House Bill No. 8259**BY** Ajello**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO PARKING SURCHARGES IN THE PROVIDENCE PARKING DISTRICT {LC1535/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Corporations

House Bill No. 8260**BY** Moura, Slater**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO THE INDEBTEDNESS OF TOWNS AND CITIES {LC1513/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Corporations

House Bill No. 8261**BY** Anguilla**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES {LC2893/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Judiciary

House Bill No. 8262**BY** Slater**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- MUNICIPAL LIEN CERTIFICATES {LC1717/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Judiciary

House Bill No. 8263**BY** Moura, DeSimone**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES AND PROCEDURES -- CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS {LC2236/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Judiciary

House Bill No. 8264**BY Slater****ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO PROBATE PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE -- PRACTICE IN PROBATE COURTS {LC2482/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Judiciary

House Bill No. 8265**BY Slater****ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- TAX SALES {LC1979/1}

03/09/2004 Introduced, referred to House Judiciary

House Resolution No. 8266**BY Fox****ENTITLED**, HOUSE RESOLUTION EXTENDING CONGRATULATIONS {LC2927/1}

Representative Fox requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

There is no objection.

Read and passed, on a motion of Representative Fox seconded by Representative Watson and by unanimous consent, on a voice vote.

House Resolution No. 8267**BY Fox****ENTITLED**, HOUSE RESOLUTION EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES {LC2926/1}

Representative Fox requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

There is no objection.

Read and passed on a motion of Representative Fox seconded by Representative Watson and by unanimous consent, on a rising vote.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Honorable Senate transmits with announcement of passage, of the following measures:

Senate Bill No. 2957**BY Paiva-Weed****ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- ABRAHAM LINCOLN BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION {LC2898/1}

03/09/2004 Referred to House Judiciary

Senate Bill No. 2096**BY** Polisen, Damiani**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT {LC9/1}

03/09/2004 Referred to House Labor

Senate Bill No. 2803**BY** Badeau**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- WORKERS' COMPENSATION
INSURANCE FUND {LC2613/1}

03/09/2004 Referred to House Labor

Senate Bill No. 2256 SUB A as amended**BY** McCaffrey, Issa, Celona**ENTITLED**, AN ACT RELATING TO DOMESTIC RELATIONS -- SOLEMNIZATION OF
MARRIAGES {LC704/1/A}

03/09/2004 Referred to House Judiciary

CALENDAR

From the Calendar are taken:

IN ORDER FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 2004:**1 2004-H 7286****BY** Gallison**ENTITLED**, AN ACT CREATING THE PRUDENCE ISLAND WATER DISTRICT

Committee on Corporations recommends passage.

Representative Kennedy moves passage of the act, seconded by Representatives Gallison, Enos, Malik, Long, Coderre and Faria.

Read and passed on a roll call vote, 52 members voting in the affirmative and 0 members voting in the negative as follows.

YEAS - 52: The Honorable Speaker Murphy and Representatives Ajello, Almeida, Anderson, Anguilla, Aubin, Benson, Carter, Cerra, Coderre, Coogan, Corvese, Dennigan, DeSimone, Enos, Fox, Gallison, Giannini, Ginaitt, Gorham, Handy, Jacquard, Kennedy, Kilmartin, Landroche, Laroche, Lewiss, Lima, Long, Lowe, Malik, McHugh, McManus, McNamara, Menard, Moffitt, Montanaro, Moran, Moura, Mumford, Petrarca, Picard, Rose, San Bento, Savage, Schadone, Shavers, Story, Trillo, Voccola, Wasylyk, Williams.

NAYS - 0.

2 2004-S 2468**BY Montalbano J****ENTITLED, AN ACT TO VACATE THE FORFEITURE OR REVOCATION OF
THE CHARTER OF GREENVILLE INSULATION CO., INC.**

Committee on Corporations recommends passage in concurrence.

Representative Kennedy moves passage of the act, seconded by Representatives Voccola, San Bento, Benson, and Corvese.

Read and passed, in concurrence, on a roll call vote, 53 members voting in the affirmative and 0 members voting in the negative as follows.

YEAS - 53: The Honorable Speaker Murphy and Representatives Ajello, Almeida, Anderson, Anguilla, Aubin, Benson, Brien, Carter, Cerra, Coderre, Coogan, Corvese, Dennigan, DeSimone, Enos, Faria, Fox, Gallison, Giannini, Ginaitt, Gorham, Handy, Jacquard, Kennedy, Kilmartin, Landroche, Laroche, Lewiss, Lima, Long, Lowe, Malik, McHugh, McManus, McNamara, Moffitt, Moran, Moura, Mumford, Petrarca, Picard, Rose, San Bento, Savage, Schadone, Shavers, Story, Trillo, Voccola, Wasyluk, Watson, Williams.

NAYS - 0.

TRANSMITTAL

By unanimous consent, all matters on the clerk's desk, are ordered to be transmitted to His Excellency, the Governor, to the Honorable Secretary of State, and the Honorable Senate forthwith.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Representative Kennedy announces that the Committee on Corporations will meet today, and tomorrow at the rise of the House, in Room 203 of the State House.

Representative Flaherty announces that the Committee on Judiciary will meet today, at the rise of the House, in Room 205 of the State House.

Representative Corvese announces that the Committee on Labor will meet today, and tomorrow at the rise of the House, in Room 201 of the State House.

GUESTS

The Honorable Speaker Murphy welcomes to the House Chambers the members of the Rhode Island Judiciary and Chief Justice Frank J Williams.

At 4:33 o'clock P.M. the Honorable Speaker yields the rostrum to Chief Justice Frank J. Williams.

By unanimous consent, Chief Justice Williams addresses the members of the House and delivers the State of the Judiciary Address. (For State of the Judiciary Address see appendix of this journal.)

At 4:49 o'clock P.M. the Honorable Speaker returns to the rostrum.

ADJOURNMENT

At 4:50 o'clock P.M. on motion of Representative Carter, and as a further mark of respect to the memory of William Hunter Hood, seconded by Representatives Fox and Watson the House adjourns, on a unanimous rising vote.

Linda M. McElroy

Recording Clerk

APPENDIX

INVOCATION

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPH S. ALMEIDA

Dear God, we are grateful for the privilege of serving in this House of Representatives. Keep us ever mindful that we are here to serve those who elected us and all of the people of Rhode Island. Amen.

APPENDIX

CALENDAR

IN ORDER FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 2004:

1 2004-H 7465

BY Moura

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES

Committee on Judiciary recommends passage.

2 2004-H 7529

BY Shavers

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES

Committee on Judiciary recommends passage.

3 2004-H 8045

BY Gorham

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES

Committee on Judiciary recommends passage.

4 2004-H 8143

BY Amaral

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES

Committee on Judiciary recommends passage.

Louis D'Antuono
Clerk of the House

Tuesday, March 9, 2004

APPENDIX

Chief Justice Frank J. Williams

State of the Judiciary
Full House of Representatives
March 4, 2004

To the Honorable House of Representatives, thank you for inviting me. Speaker William Murphy, Majority Leader Representative Gordon Fox, Minority Leader Representative Robert Watson, and my colleagues from the Rhode Island Judiciary, this is my third appearance before the General Assembly to deliver this address.

The Judiciary remains consistent in the pursuit of its core goal – the administration of justice with uncompromising honor and unquestioned judicial independence.

We are strong, productive, and accessible. And we are confident. That is the state of the Judiciary.

But if anyone expects just a proud recitation of our accomplishments, I say let us leave that to history. We are not finished yet. So my message to you tonight is we are still at work; we are still on the job. We are on the long patrol.

We are armed with a freshly sharpened dynamic that demands efficiency, accountability, and innovation. A dynamic that demands we:

Think smart,

Think creative, and

Think outside the box.

A dynamic that finds answers and asks questions.

- Is it time to finally provide certified interpreters in our court system?
- Is it time to expand our investment in courts that put kids back in school?
- Is it time to enlist military demolition experts to save taxpayer's money?
- Is it time to treat the Judiciary as a third, independent branch of government?

I say to you the time is now. We cannot afford to wait.

We owe nothing less to those Rhode Islanders whose lives are touched every day, directly or indirectly, by decisions made within our courthouse walls.

The Judiciary continues to cultivate a culture of efficient justice while disposing of hundreds of thousands of cases each year. In 2003, we disposed of over 230,000 cases – a jump of 9% from the previous year.

- 80% of criminal felonies were disposed of within 180 days;
- 88% of misdemeanors were disposed of within 60 days;
- Civil cases were disposed of at a rate four times faster than a year ago;
- Every single one of the 8,775 injured workers who came before our Workers' Compensation Court saw a judge within 21 days.

But the mission of the Judiciary is not to indiscriminately churn out a high volume of cases; rather, it is to fairly adjudicate disputes that can change people's lives. The success of the Judiciary is a story told not only with numbers; rather, it is reflected in the eyes of those who come seeking justice.

There are three words in our Rhode Island Constitution that define the heart of our mission – right to justice. The right to justice is not a matter of charity, or of favor, or of grace, or of discretion.

A right to justice – for a child who now sleeps soundly under the protective blanket of a court order which has removed her from an abusive parent.

A right to justice – for a single mother who warms her children by the kitchen stove because her landlord has neglected his duty to provide heat.

A right to justice – for a young father, injured on the job, wondering if he will still have income and health care benefits for his family.

A right to justice – for all Rhode Islanders.

Let me pause here to thank the dedicated jurists and judicial staff who are committed to providing that right to justice. Whatever criticisms and discontents there may be from time to time, the Rhode Island courts handle hundreds of thousands of cases every year - not by accident or magic, but rather with overwhelming skill and efficiency, a fact that I believe deserves public commendation.

I encourage you to come see the work we do each and every day. My door is always open.

I want to thank the Governor and General Assembly for their attention to filling judicial vacancies so we can move quickly to bring your courts up to full strength.

We are moving to construct accessible, safe, and efficient court facilities for the citizens of this state. This overhaul is not to be rushed, but those who come to our courthouses know it is long overdue. Our bricks and mortar must reflect our commitment to justice.

In Kent County, crews are putting the finishing touches on the first phase of a new courthouse - a four deck parking garage. Bids for the courthouse will be opened next week and we should start moving into the new facility by November 2005. We will finally end our occupation of the retrofitted office building fraught with security and infrastructure problems.

We are exploring the option of having Navy Sea-bees take on the demolition of the old courthouse as a training mission. Savings to the state - 1 million dollars. That is our efficiency dynamic working for you.

The Garrahy Judicial Complex, designed to accommodate 1,500 court patrons each day, routinely services twice that number. Courthouse users are subjected to long lines, parking congestion, and mounting frustration.

I support construction of a Garrahy parking garage but that is not the entire solution. We need \$300,000 to move forward with a full service courthouse in northern Rhode Island. Such a courthouse will not only alleviate the strain on Garrahy, but it will also provide more accessible justice to those living in Blackstone Valley. That is our efficiency dynamic working for you.

The approval from you and the Governor last year for a new Traffic Tribunal marked a judicial milestone as we move to replace the non ADA-compliant, aging facility in Providence. The design for the new courthouse in Cranston maximizes efficiency by incorporating room for routine court matters as well as video conferencing. It is state of the art. It is multi-purpose. It is the efficiency dynamic - super sized.

In the Navy, they say the two biggest lies are told when an assessment team comes aboard ship and the team leader says, "We are here to help," and the ship's captain says "Welcome aboard."

The Judiciary is not proprietary in its search for efficiency. We are working with the Department of Administration, the Sheriff's Division, and the Department of Corrections in implementing the fiscal fitness initiative calling for increased video conferencing. When implemented next month, this initiative will minimize crowding at courthouse cellblocks, cut unnecessary prisoner transportation, and alleviate security concerns. It will also save money - something which must be a consideration for all of us as we seek to serve while remaining fiscally accountable.

As to fiscal accountability, the Judiciary has a proven track record. I am proud to report for the second year in a row, *the second year in a row*, we have not requested a supplemental appropriation.

And we raise revenue. Over the last three years, the Judiciary deposited in the state coffers - close to 70 million dollars.

Historically, we have limited our spending to only 1.3% of the state's overall budget. We live within our means. We know that each and every dollar we receive comes from taxpayers and must be managed with care. As the constitutional keeper of the "purse strings," you need to know how your decisions impact the courts. You need to know how the courts impact the public and you need to know the impact of budget cuts on the citizens we both serve.

We recognize that we live in tough financial times and there will be pain for every branch of government.

With that in mind the Judiciary has crafted a frugal budget request for fiscal year 2005 – seeking only to fund services at their current level. Our priorities reflect our citizens' needs. Yet once again, we face a cut – three million dollars slashed from our budget.

We in the Judiciary are not alarmists, nor are we prone to cynicism, but I must tell you that the Judiciary cannot sustain the deep and painful cuts made by the Executive Branch without severely impacting services.

There is no money for court interpreters. The Executive Branch cut the 425,000 dollars which would have paid for six certified court interpreters to begin in September. Interpreters who will soon graduate from a new CCRI program; interpreters whose presence was mandated by you in 1999; interpreters who are desperately needed to serve the diverse, multilingual population of our state. How will we answer those in our minority community when they ask why we have not honored this commitment?

A massive 600,000 dollar cut from Family Court jeopardizes programs that give a voice to the state's smallest. How will we answer them, when they ask why they must stand alone?

A 500,000 dollar cut from Judicial Technology would cripple the statewide criminal information system known as Justice Link. Justice Link enables state and local police, the Department of Corrections, the Attorney General, and others to quickly share information and track criminals via the computer.

Although implemented and maintained by the Judiciary, 60% of those who use this valuable resource are from outside the courts. How will we answer police officers who face needless delays in conducting routine background checks?

We are determined to remain accountable to the citizens of this state but the very definition of accountability means taking responsibility for prioritizing goals and objectives. We are unable to do that under the current budgetary process.

This year, I again ask you to follow the lead of thirty-one other jurisdictions and pass legislation prohibiting the Executive Branch from cutting the Judiciary's budget before passing it to the legislature for action.

We are prepared to defend our spending proposals before this body- without amendments.

The implications of the existing fiscal process go deeper than a yearly budget battle; it goes to the very structure of our democracy and its three branches of government. The present process erodes judicial independence.

We must act to reassure a cynical public that separation of powers applies to all branches of government. We must re-commit ourselves to all aspects of separation of powers. The Judiciary must have its rightful place as an independent body.

Let us determine our fiscal priorities. We will take the responsibility, we will make the cuts, and we will take the heat.

We have been creative in instituting innovative programs which cost little but reap much.

We are reaching out to our youth. I find the words of Robert Kennedy powerful on this point:

"Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope."

Justice Rules, the education initiative we introduced into the school system last year has quickly gathered momentum. If you will recall, *Justice Rules* exposes students to the positive side of the legal system, encourages them to consider careers in the Judiciary, and cultivates a curiosity for how this branch of government works. We are currently reaching 35,000 students with our curriculum and dozens

of attorneys and judges are volunteering to work with classrooms and teachers as part of legal teaching teams. Cost to taxpayers – zero.

When kids go astray, the Judiciary has been there with its Truancy Courts to get them back into the classroom. These Courts are in 53 schools across the state and have become an integral part of reclaiming our youth. The success of these courts is unquestioned - 90% of students arraigned are back in school, back on track, and on their way to graduation. Yet we risk losing these valuable courts because there is no funding to support them.

How will we answer the children, the teachers, the parents, when they ask why these courts have been pulled?

This past fall, the Judiciary hosted its first Citizens' Summit in South Providence, complete with on-site, real time Spanish translation. Representatives of the Workers' Compensation Court joined Interim Chief Judge George Healy to hear citizens concerns, answer questions, and explain the legal and medical processes. Cost to taxpayers – zero.

We have initiated the Appellate Mediation Program in our Supreme Court. We hope that we will be able to resolve at least one half of the civil appeals through this program. Alternative Dispute Resolution works - it achieves a lasting peace among parties, it saves time, and it saves money. While litigation certainly retains a place in society, sometimes justice requires a diversion from the traditional adversarial proceedings. Cost to taxpayers – zero.

We are working to make jury service less intimidating. Not only are we paying for jurors parking and trying to raise their daily pay, but we are also using a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation to produce a video which will explain the process to jurors. The film will also be shown to members of the public including schools, community organizations, and public television viewers. Cost to taxpayers – zero.

What is next for the Judiciary? I have established a Future of the Courts Committee and instructed it to plot a strategy for our courts, as we face the challenges ahead.

Among the items the Committee is exploring:

Flexibility in court scheduling. Can we accommodate citizens who have jobs and family obligations by structuring our court hours differently? Just think what it will mean to your constituents if they can pay fines and make court appearances and have their matters heard at a more convenient time?

We are also exploring the establishment of a statewide Domestic Violence Court and a system wide Drug Court. Violence and drugs have far reaching tentacles that contribute to increased crime rates, rip families apart, and twist the lives of children, adults, employers, and employees.

Of course, I will share with you the Committee's recommendations when I receive its final report this May.

Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund, said that service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living. I wholeheartedly share that belief.

We have begun well. But it is only a beginning. We are not here to congratulate ourselves on what we have accomplished. We are here to challenge ourselves to finish what remains to be done. We cannot stop at the foothills when Everest beckons.

May God bless you and the great state of Rhode Island.