

**State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations**

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**JOURNAL**  
-OF THE-  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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**JANUARY SESSION** of the General Assembly begun and held at the State House in the City of Providence on Tuesday, the second day of January in the year of Our Lord two thousand and seven.

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Volume 134, No. 1

Tuesday, January 2, 2007

First day

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The House of Representatives meets at the State House in Providence, Tuesday January 2, 2007 and is called to order at 4:15 o'clock P.M., by the Honorable Paul W. Crowley, the Senior Member from Newport.

**APPROVAL OF RECORD**

By unanimous consent, the House Journal of Friday, June 23, 2006 is approved as printed.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**House Resolution No. 5000**

**BY** Fox, Watson

**ENTITLED**, JOINT RESOLUTION OF ADJOURNMENT {LC210/1}

Majority Leader Fox requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

There is no objection.

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

The 2006 Session is adjourned, Sine Die.

**TRANSMITTAL**

By unanimous consent, (07-H 5000), on the Clerk's desk is ordered to be transmitted to the Honorable Senate, forthwith.

**INVOCATION**

The Honorable Paul W. Crowley presents the Most Reverend Thomas J. Tobin, Bishop of the Diocese of Providence who delivers the Invocation.

(For Invocation, see Appendix, this Journal.)

**POSTING OF COLORS**

The Honorable Paul Crowley requests the West Warwick Police to post the colors.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Honorable Representative Crowley introduces Elliott Palumbo to lead the membership in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**NATIONAL ANTHEM**

The Honorable Representative Crowley calls on John Britto to sing the National Anthem.

**COMMUNICATION**

The Honorable Representative Crowley announces the receipt of the following communication:

**Ralph Mollis**

**Secretary of State**

**State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations**

January 2, 2007

A. Ralph Mollis  
Secretary of State

To the Honorable House of Representatives:

I, A. Ralph Mollis, Secretary of State, hereby certify the following list of members elected to the House of Representatives in the General Assembly, in accordance with the certificate of election filed in this office by the Board of Elections on the seventh day of December revised on the eleventh day of December 2006 as provided by Section 22-3-13 of the General Laws of 1956:

Representative	District
John J. McCauley, Jr.	1

David A. Segal	2
Edith H. Ajello	3
Gordon D. Fox	4
John J. DeSimone	5
Peter N. Wasyluk	6
Joanne M. Giannini	7
Steven M. Costantino	8
Anastasia P. Williams	9
Thomas C. Slater	10
Grace Diaz	11
Joseph S. Almeida	12
Steven F. Smith	13
Charlene Lima	14
Nicholas Anthony Mattiello	15
Peter G. Palumbo	16
Robert B. Jacquard	17
Arthur Handy	18
Joseph McNamara	19
Alfred A. Gemma	20
Eileen Slattery Naughton	21
Peter T. Ginaitt	22
Robert E. Flaherty	23
Joseph A. Trillo	24

Timothy A. Williamson	25
William J. Murphy	26
Patricia A. Serpa	27
Victor G. Moffitt	28
Raymond J. Sullivan, Jr.	29
Robert A. Watson	30
Kenneth Carter	31
Laurence W. Ehrhardt	32
Donald J. Lally, Jr.	33
David A. Caprio	34
John Patrick Shanley, Jr.	35
Donna M. Walsh	36
Peter L. Lewiss	37
Brian Patrick Kennedy	38
Joseph H. Scott	39
Nicholas Gorham	40
Carol A. Mumford	41
Stephen R. Ucci	42
Deborah A. Fellela	43
Peter J. Petrarca	44
Rene R. Menard	45
William J. McManus	46
Edwin R. Pacheco	47

Raymond C. Church	48
Lisa Baldelli-Hunt	49
Jon D. Brien	50
Roger A. Picard	51
Richard W. Singleton	52
Thomas J. Winfield	53
Gregory J. Schadone	54
Arthur J. Corvese	55
Agostinho F. Silva	56
Kenneth A. Vaudreuil	57
William San Bento, Jr.	58
J. Patrick O'Neill	59
Elaine A. Coderre	60
Peter F. Kilmartin	61
Elizabeth M. Dennigan	62
Henry C. Rose	63
Helio Melo	64
John A. Savage	65
Susan A. Story	66
Jan Malik	67
Douglas W. Gablinske	68
Raymond E. Gallison, Jr.	69
Joseph N. Amaral	70

John J. Loughlin, II	71
Amy G. Rice	72
J. Russell Jackson	73
Bruce J. Long	74
Paul W. Crowley	75

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Seal of the State of Rhode Island on this second day of January, A.D. 2007.

Respectfully Yours,

A. Ralph Mollis  
Secretary of State

Received and ordered to be placed on file.

#### **ROLL CALL**

The roll is called and the Clerk informs the Chair that a quorum is present:

PRESENT - 73: The Honorable Speaker Murphy and Representatives Ajello, Almeida, Amaral, Baldelli-Hunt, Brien, Caprio, Church, Coderre, Corvese, Costantino, Crowley, Dennigan, DeSimone, Diaz, Ehrhardt, Fellela, Flaherty, Fox, Gablinske, Gallison, Gemma, Giannini, Ginaitt, Gorham, Jackson, Jacquard, Kennedy, Kilmartin, Lally, Lewiss, Lima, Long, Loughlin, Malik, Mattiello, McCauley, McManus, McNamara, Melo, Menard, Moffitt, Mumford, Naughton, O'Neill, Pacheco, Palumbo, Petrarca, Picard, Rice, Rose, San Bento, Savage, Schadone, Scott, Segal, Serpa, Shanley, Silva, Singleton, Slater, Smith, Story, Sullivan, Trillo, Ucci, Vaudreuil, Walsh, Wasylyk, Watson, Williams, Williamson, Winfield.

ABSENT - 2: Representatives Carter and Handy.

The Honorable Representative Crowley addresses the members of the House.

#### **APPOINTMENTS**

The Chair appoints Representatives Edith Ajello, David Caprio, Arthur Corvese, John DeSimone, Raymond Gallison, Joanne Giannini, Peter Ginaitt, Jan Malik, John McCauley, Joseph McNamara, Peter Palumbo, William San Bento, Gregory Schadone, Peter Wasylyk, and Thomas Winfield to escort the Honorable Secretary of State to the rostrum of the House.

**OATH OF OFFICE**

The Representatives-elect rise, as Secretary of State, A. Ralph Mollis, administers the Oath of Office.

The Secretary of State, A. Ralph Mollis, addresses the House Chamber.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE****House Resolution No. 5001**

**BY** Murphy, Watson, Fox, Kilmartin, Costantino

**ENTITLED**, HOUSE RESOLUTION EXPRESSING PROFOUND SYMPATHY ON THE PASSING OF PRESIDENT GERALD RUDOLPH FORD {LC228/1}

Majority Leader Fox requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

There is no objection.

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

The Honorable Representative Crowley asks all members to stand for a moment of silence in memory of President Ford and the 3,000 troops killed in Iraq.

**ELECTION OF SPEAKER**

Representative Crowley calls for nominations.

Majority Leader Fox nominates Representative William J. Murphy of West Warwick, to be Speaker of the House of Representatives for a 3<sup>rd</sup> term. Majority Leader Fox discusses the nomination.

The nomination is seconded by Representative Williamson. Representative Williamson offers his remarks.

Representative Crowley asks if there are any other nominations.

Representative Mumford nominates Minority Leader Watson to be Speaker of the House. Representative Mumford offers her remarks.

Minority Leader Watson addresses the members of the House and withdraws his nomination.

Representative Kilmartin, seconded by Representative Lima, moves that nominations be closed.

The motion to close nominations prevails, on a voice vote.

The election of Representative William J. Murphy as Speaker of the House prevails, on a roll call vote, 72 members voting for Representative Murphy and 1 member voting in the negative.

MURPHY 72-Representatives Ajello, Almeida, Amaral, Baldelli-Hunt, Brien, Caprio, Church, Coderre, Corvese, Costantino, Crowley, Dennigan, DeSimone, Diaz, Ehrhardt, Fellela, Flaherty, Fox, Gablinske, Gallison, Gemma, Giannini, Ginaitt, Gorham, Jackson, Jacquard, Kennedy, Kilmartin, Lally, Lewiss, Lima, Long, Loughlin, Malik, Mattiello, McCauley, McManus, McNamara, Melo, Moffitt, Mumford, Murphy, Naughton, O'Neill, Pacheco, Palumbo, Petrarca, Picard, Rice, Rose, San Bento, Savage, Schadone, Scott, Segal, Serpa, Shanley, Silva, Singleton, Slater, Smith, Story, Sullivan, Trillo, Ucci, Vaudreuil, Walsh, Wasyluk, Watson, Williams, Williamson, Winfield.

NAY 1-Representative Menard.

The Chair declares William J. Murphy is elected Speaker of the House for the years 2007-2008.

### APPOINTMENTS

The Chair appoints Representatives Joseph Almeida, Raymond Church, Steven Costantino, Elizabeth Dennigan, Al Gemma, Brian Kennedy, Donald Lally, Helio Melo, Rene Menard, Eileen Naughton, Edwin Pacheco, Roger Picard, Henry Rose, Patrick Shanley, Steven Smith, and Raymond Sullivan as a committee to escort the Speaker-elect, and his family to the rostrum.

The Chair appoints Representatives Grace Diaz, Robert Flaherty, Russell Jackson, Robert Jacquard, Peter Lewiss, Patrick O'Neill, Peter Petrarca, Amy Rice, Joseph Scott, Thomas Slater, Stephen Ucci and Anastasia Williams as a committee to escort the Honorable Joseph F. Rodgers, Jr., Presiding Justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court to the rostrum.

### OATH OF OFFICE

At 5:15 o'clock P.M. the House attends while the Honorable Justice administers the Oath of Office to the Honorable Speaker.

### NOW PRESIDING

At 5:18 o'clock P.M. Representative Crowley turns over the rostrum to the Honorable Speaker William Murphy.

The Honorable Speaker Murphy addresses the members of the House.

(For Speaker Murphy's Address see appendix of this Journal.)

The Honorable Speaker welcomes back John Britto, who will sing "God Bless America."



**NEW BUSINESS****House Resolution No. 5002****BY** Fox, Kilmartin**ENTITLED**, HOUSE RESOLUTION CONTINUING THE 2005-2006 RULES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PENDING THE ADOPTION OF NEW RULES FOR THE 2007-2008 SESSION {LC211/1}

Majority Leader Fox requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

There is no objection.

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

**House Resolution No. 5003****BY** Fox, Watson**ENTITLED**, JOINT RESOLUTION OF ADJOURNMENT {LC227/1}

Majority Leader Fox requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

There is no objection.

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

**ELECTION OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE**

The Honorable Speaker declares the election of Clerk is in order and calls for nominations.

Representative Dennigan, seconded by Representative O'Neill, nominates Frank McCabe of Pawtucket to be Clerk of the House for the Session 2007-2008.

There being no further nominations, Representative Coderre, seconded by Representative Kilmartin, moves that nominations be closed.

The motion to close nominations prevails, on a voice vote.

Representative Coderre moves that Representative Dennigan be directed to cast one ballot for Frank McCabe of Pawtucket to be Clerk of the House for the 2007-2008 Session, seconded by Representative O'Neill..

Representative Dennigan casts one ballot for Frank McCabe for the office of the Clerk of the House for the years 2007-2008. The motion prevails by unanimous consent on a voice vote.

Frank P. McCabe is elected Clerk of the House of the Session 2007-2008.

**ELECTION OF RECORDING CLERK OF THE HOUSE**

The Honorable Speaker declares the election of a Recording Clerk is in order and calls for nominations.

Representative Schadone, seconded by Representative Corvese, nominates Linda McElroy of North Providence to be Recording Clerk of the House for the Session 2007-2008.

There being no further nominations, Representative San Bento, seconded by Representative Rose, moves that nominations be closed.

The motion to close nominations prevails, on a voice vote.

Representative San Bento moves that Representative Schadone be directed to cast one ballot for Linda McElroy of North Providence to be Recording Clerk for the 2007-2008 Session, seconded by Representative Corvese.

Representative Schadone casts one ballot for Linda M. McElroy for the office of Recording Clerk of the House for the years 2007-2008. The motion prevails by unanimous consent on a voice vote.

Linda McElroy is elected Recording Clerk of the House of the Session 2007-2008.

**OATH OF OFFICE**

The Honorable Speaker Murphy administers the Oath of Office to the Clerk of the House Frank McCabe and the Recording Clerk of the House Linda McElroy for the 2007-2008 Session.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Representative Arthur Handy will be unable to attend session Tuesday, January 2, 2007. He is out of town.

Representative Kenneth Carter will be unable to attend session Tuesday, January 2, 2007.

Representative Peter Kilmartin will be unable to attend session on Wednesday, January 3, 2007. He will be in Washington DC.

Representative Kenneth Vaudreuil will be unable to attend session on Wednesday, January 3, 2007. He will be in Washington DC.

Majority Leader Fox reminds everyone that the House will convene tomorrow at 4 o'clock P.M.

**GUESTS**

Representative Ucci welcomes to the House Chamber newly elected Representative Debbie Fellela and her guests Henry Fellela, Sr., Henry Fellela Jr., Matthew Fellela, Kyle Fellela, Allie Fellela and Tony Bento.

Representative Brien welcomes to the House as guests the Honorable Charles C. Baldelli, his wife the Honorable Stella Guerra Brien, and his father the Honorable Albert G. Brien.

Representative Picard welcomes to the Chamber newly elected Representative Lisa Baldelli-Hunt and her guests Ed, Gary, Victor and Sam Hunt also Sandrena and Charlie Baldelli. Representative Picard also introduces the children of Representative Brien-Gabriella and Joliana Brien, his wife-Stella Brien, his father-Al Brien.

Representative Walsh welcomes to the House Chamber as guests Catherine Collette, Maureen Martin, Mirja Hanslin and her husband Henry.

Representative Caprio welcomes to the House as guests his brother, the General Treasurer, Frank Caprio, his father Chief Judge of Providence Municipal Court, Frank Caprio and his mother Joyce Caprio.

Representative San Bento welcomes to the House Chamber as a guest his aunt Gloria Sao Bento.

Representative Gorham welcomes to the Chamber as guests his daughter Allejandra Gorham, his son Austin, his nephew Jeffrey Gorham from Germany and his wife Roseanna.

Representative Mumford welcomes to the House as guests her husband Richard, her son Richard Mumford Jr., her daughter-in-law Siobhan and her granddaughters Aislinn and Madeline Mumford.

Representative Giannini welcomes to the House as guests her husband Stephen Giannini, her sister Sue Lennon and brother-in-law John Lennon.

Representative Jacquard welcomes to the House Chamber newly elected Representative Nicholas Mattiello and his family-his wife MaryAnn Mattiello, and sons Nick Mattiello, Jr., Anthony J. Mattiello, his brother Anthony Mattiello, sister-in-law Donna Mattiello, Stephanie Mattiello, David Mattiello and his mother-in-law Mary Montecalvo.

Representative Coderre welcomes to the Chamber her granddaughter Hannah Elaine Coderre.

Representative Williamson and the Honorable Speaker Murphy welcome newly elected Representative Patricia Serpa, her husband Joe, mother Connie, sister Joanne, son Nick and family.

Representative Gallison welcomes to the House Chamber newly elected Representative Doug Gablinske, his wife Patricia, his daughter Lauren, his son Senior Airman Derek Gablinske along

with his fiancé Meaghen, his brother Wayne; Bristol Town Council President-Kenneth Marshall and Bristol Democratic Town Chairman-John Faria. Representative Gallison also welcomes his parents Raymond Gallison, Sr. and Barbara Gallison, his sons Timothy and Nathan Gallison, his wife Diane and Representative Rice's husband Paul and son Stoddard.

Representative Kennedy welcomes to the Chamber the parents of Representative Lewiss-Matthew and Florence Lewiss, newly elected Representative Donna Walsh from Charlestown and Representative Kennedy wishes to congratulate the new Democrat Representative Joseph Scott.

Representative Moffitt welcomes to the House his sister Cathy Moffitt, his father Raymond Moffitt, his daughters Melanie Moffitt and Mary Quackenbush, his Grandson Keegan Quackenbush and his wife Bertha Moffitt.

Representative Mattiello welcomes to the Chamber and extends thanks to his wife Mary Ann, his sons Nick and Tony, his brother Anthony, sister-in-law Donna, niece Stephanie, nephew David and mother-in-law Mary.

Representative Mattiello thanks the following Richard Raspallo, John and Barbara Manni, Charlene and Russ Henry, Peter and Cathy Davey, Mary Parella, Shane Kane, Bob Coffey, Antonio Montecalvo, Saco and Martha Artchian.

Representative Sullivan welcomes to the House his parents, Maureen and Raymond Sullivan, Sr., his grandmother, Viola McKennedy and his aunt Eileen Hannon.

Representative Kilmartin welcomes to the Chamber newly elected Representative Vaudreuil, his wife Joy Vaudreuil, his son Brett and his two brothers Tom and Bob Vaudreuil.

Representative Rice welcomes to the House Chamber Raylene Allen, Katherine Waters, her husband Paul S. Rice, her son P. Stoddard Rice II and Lori Fortier.

Representative Ucci welcomes to the House his wife Dina Ucci, his mother and father Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Ucci, Sr., sister and brother-in-law Mr. & Mrs. Peter DelPonte, former Representative Paul Santilli and former Representative Mary Cerra.

Representative Diaz welcomes to the Chamber newly elected Representative David Segal, Tania Quezada, Steve Graham, Hilda Myer and family members from the Dominican Republic.

Representative Malik welcomes to the House his wife Mary Malik.

Representative Amaral welcomes to the Chamber his aunt, Maria Ferreira.

Representative Pacheco welcomes to the House Chamber his future wife, Claudia Santana and his mother Cathy Auger.

**BENEDICTION**

The Honorable Speaker Murphy presents the Most Reverend Bernard O'Reilly Pastor of St. Patrick's Parish in Burrillville for the Benediction.

(For Benediction see Appendix of this Journal.)

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 6:25 o'clock P.M. on motion of Representative McNamara, and as a further mark of respect to the memory of Donald J. Brunt; on motion of Representative San Bento, and as a further mark of respect to the memory of Anthony Lanni; on motion of Representative Trillo and as a further mark of respect to the memory of Elenora Garzone; on motion of Representative Jacquard, and as a further mark of respect to the memory of Anthony Mattiello, father of Representative Mattiello; on motion of Representative Church, and as a further mark of respect to the memory of Suzanne O'Neill; seconded by Representatives Fox and Watson the House adjourns, on a unanimous rising vote.

**Linda M. McElroy**  
**Recording Clerk**

**APPENDIX  
INVOCATION**

**The Most Reverend Thomas J. Tobin  
Bishop of Providence**

Prayer for the Opening of the Legislative Session (January 2, 2007)

Almighty and eternal God, You have revealed your glory to all nations. God of power and might, wisdom and justice, through you authority is rightly administered, laws are enacted, and judgment is decreed.

We are grateful for the privilege to serve our community, and we pray that with your help we will do so with generosity, honesty and humility. The gifts and talents and experiences you have given us, we now offer for your service.

Give us the spirit of wisdom, that we will know what is right, and also the spirit of courage, that we will do what is right. Let us never hesitate to do good because of selfishness, anxiety or fear.

Help us to set aside our own needs and agendas to respond to the needs of our brothers and sisters. Inspire us to steadfastly manifest our unity as your children recalling that what we share is far greater than anything that divides us.

Grant us the willingness to be open to each other, to respect each other, to listen to each other, to learn from each other, to be honest with each other, and be supportive of each other for the sake of our community and all those we serve.

Finally, dear Lord, help us to remember that without you, we will labor in vain, but that with you, all things are possible. This we ask, now and forever. Amen.

**BENEDICTION**

**The Most Reverend Bernard O'Reilly  
Pastor of St. Patrick's Parish in Burrillville**

Throughout this Holy Season of Christmas we have experienced again the great joy that the celebration of the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, brings to humanity. His birth is Good News for our world at this time and place, for the celebration reminds us of his purpose in becoming man, namely, to establish God's Kingdom among us for the benefit of every member of His earthly family, especially that the blind will receive the benefit of seeing and the lame walking, that lepers will benefit from being cleansed and the poor share in the blessings of the kingdom.

In the course of his time on earth, Jesus established these promises as the foundation of his kingdom for the Gospels record His restoring sight to the blind, healing lepers, feeding the multitudes, visiting prisoners, forgiving and welcoming sinners. The Gospels also establish that he went to his death for His Kingdom and was confirmed in His actions by His Heavenly Father by being raised from the dead.

In sending the gift of the Holy Spirit upon his collaborators, he guaranteed the full flowing of his kingdom in history where reconciliation and forgiveness, justice and peace, love and compassion will prevail and motivate the actions of the members of His Kingdom.

Today, January 2 in the Year of Our Lord 2007, we invoke the same Holy Spirit to dwell upon each member of this newly formed assembly, so that their decisions will be influenced by His guidance, and the fruits of Good News will reach every member of our community, especially the blind and the lame, the lepers and the poor among us.

We ask this blessing on all through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

**THE HONORABLE SPEAKER MURPHY'S ADDRESS****Opening session****January 2, 2007****I. Introduction**

Thank you, Representative Crowley, for presiding. I know that I speak for all when I say it's great to have you back.

To my wife Stacey, you have always been there for me with understanding, love and support.

To my sons Ryan and Kyle, hopefully the work we do in the House of Representatives will allow you and your generation to remain here in Rhode Island when you complete your education and are ready to begin your careers.

I would like to welcome my brother Mike, nephew Sean and Uncle Bill.

I'd also like to thank my Law Partner Mark Fay, Donna Rogers, Kendra Lima, Steve Crawford, Chastity De La Cruz, and Mike Zarrella.

Thank you to our honored guests: Governor Carcieri and First Lady Sue Carcieri, Presiding Justice Rodgers, Bishop Tobin and Father O'Reilly.

There are also 10 very special individuals sitting in this chamber today that I would like to ask to stand and introduce to you for the first time in this chamber.

These are the newly-elected Representatives who worked hard to earn their seats in this House of Representatives.

I would ask for a round of applause for:

Lisa Baldelli-Hunt of Woonsocket – Lisa is the niece of former Representative and former Woonsocket Mayor Charles Baldelli, who is present with us today.

Jon Brien, also of Woonsocket – Jon is the son former Representative Al Brien and husband of former Representative Stella Brien. Both are here today.

Deborah Fellela of Johnston

Douglas Gablinske of Bristol

Nicholas Mattiello of Cranston

David Segal of Providence

Patricia Serpa of West Warwick

Agostinho "Gus" Silva of Central Falls



Kenneth Vaudreuil of Cumberland

Donna Walsh of Charlestown

Congratulations again, and we certainly look forward to working with all of you.

I would also like to acknowledge the leadership teams of both parties in this chamber....

Majority Leader Gordon Fox

Speaker Tempore Charlene Lima

Majority Whip Peter Kilmartin

Deputy Majority Whip Elaine Coderre

Minority Leader Robert Watson

And Minority Whip Nicholas Gorham

## **II. Assembly**

Lastly, I have to thank you, my fellow Representatives, for your support. It is an honor and a privilege and also very humbling to be elected by you to serve as Speaker of the House of Representatives for the 121<sup>st</sup> session of the Rhode Island General Assembly.

All of us have been sent here by the voters of our districts to stand strong and face all the issues that come before us.

Ladies and gentlemen of this House, election season is over and hopefully we will not see it again for 18 months – the rhetoric of blame leveled against the General Assembly was appalling.

However, the voters in Rhode Island are smart and they know better.

The voters know:

That members of the House of Representatives make sacrifices to do our part in serving the public. This great body is filled with decent, hard-working people who get up every day wanting to make life better for Rhode Islanders.

The voters know:

That members of the House of Representatives many times have to miss family events or skip dinner at home because we are here at the State House working to balance the needs of Rhode Islanders with the limited resources we have available to address them.

The voters know we put children first.

Despite dealing with one of the toughest budget environments in the state's history, last year's House budget provided a nearly five percent across-the-board increase in State Aid to Education, helping our cities and towns keep up with the growing cost of teaching our young people.

The voters know we protect our most vulnerable.

Last year the Assembly restored funding to human services, including health care coverage for children, funding for people with disabilities, and senior citizen programs like Meals on Wheels. We provided assistance for women on welfare working to earn their degree. And we supported expanded investment in affordable housing.

The voters know the best economic development program is a good job with good pay, and we're doing all we can to bring those jobs here and keep them here.

Last session we passed the Biotechnology Jobs Growth Act, making the state more attractive for growing biotechnology and biomanufacturing companies. The legislation has already resulted in 450 new high-paying jobs at Amgen, and the promise of more jobs each year. These are exactly the type of jobs and industry investments that Rhode Island needs to attract, and our focus this year will be encouraging smaller biotech companies to stay here and expand here.

The voters know we hold the line on taxes.

The General Assembly has not raised income taxes in more than 10 years, and has succeeded in lowering property taxes for all Rhode Islanders through the automobile tax phase-out plan. Last year we also worked with the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce and other civic and charitable organizations to lower Rhode Island's highest marginal tax rate and make Rhode Island more competitive with other neighboring states. At the same time, we expanded the earned income tax credit for our low and moderate-income families.

The voters know health care costs are too high.

And we're doing something about it. Last year we passed a bill mandating that insurers create low-cost health plans for small businesses. We will continue our efforts this session to make these options a reality for small businesses.

The voters know us!

Not one sitting member lost his or her general election in November. We are their neighbors, their colleagues, their youth coaches, their fellow parishioners. They know we are

serious about what we do, they know we work hard, and they know we deliver for the people of Rhode Island.

### **III. 2007 Agenda**

Leader Fox pointed out some of the accomplishments of the House of Representatives over the past four years, but there are many more that have to be attained.

Will Rogers once said: “Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there!”

**Rhode Island has great potential, but potential is nothing if you do not live up to it!**

This session we must:

- 1) Promote tax fairness and tax competitiveness.
- 2) Grow our economy.
- 3) Change the image of the House of Representatives.
- 4) Help those Rhode Islanders who can not help themselves.

### **Tax Fairness and Tax Competitiveness**

Let me start by talking about our tax structure, because our efforts to lower taxes last session – while ultimately successful – did cause a great deal of debate and controversy in these halls.

Unless we find ways to boost our state’s overall competitiveness, we’ll see less in personal income tax collections, less in charitable giving, and less in jobs growth.

If we continue to be viewed as a high taxing state, businesses will look elsewhere to expand, and our state’s economy and philanthropy will suffer the consequences.

We can not sit by and let that happen.

We need to be ENCOURAGING economic growth and entrepreneurship, not discouraging it, and both flattening and modernizing our tax structure will be part of the solution. We will continue the work started last session to bring Rhode Island more in line with our neighbors, and we will take steps toward greater tax fairness this session.

All tax policies will be reviewed by the House. It is too early in our budget forecasting to know exactly what is ruled in, but let me tell you what is absolutely, positively ruled out: an income tax increase. I want to see taxes going down, not up, and as long as I’m Speaker, the pressure will all be in that direction.

We will be taking steps this session to assist the small businesspeople of Rhode Island.

### **Growing Our Economy**

During the past four years, this House of Representatives has not stood on the sidelines when it has come to economic development – we have been in the game!

This state is in dire need of good-paying blue collar jobs.

### **Changing the Image of the Assembly**

Transparent process, open inquiry, public debate. That is what marked this body's earliest beginnings, and let me close by sharing a plan for restoring that reputation to the House of Representatives as it exists today.

The fact is, for many Rhode Islanders, the State House can be perceived as an intimidating or inaccessible place and its workings can seem confusing.

To ensure that we are bringing as many voices as possible into government, and creating a legacy of openness, transparency, and responsiveness, I am announcing today an initiative to break down the barriers for every-day Rhode Islanders to make their voices heard, participate in government debate, and better understand what we do.

We call it **“Project Open House.”**

Through “Project Open House,” every standing committee of the House of Representatives will hold a hearing at a site around the state during their normal course of legislative business.

The bills before the committee will be posted in advance, as they are now, and citizens with interest or concerns will be encouraged to come testify, or simply listen and learn.

“Project Open House” will turn community centers, libraries and public schools into mini State Houses for the day. I look forward to officially opening the first hearing next month, and to making these field hearings an important part of the House of Representatives' next chapter.

### **VII. Closing**

That is what we are embarking on today – writing the next chapter of the House – a body that pre-dates the Revolutionary War, the founding of our nation, the Civil War, and all the domestic and international conflicts of the last two centuries. It has spawned many state leaders. In fact, three members of our federal delegation have served in the General Assembly.

Now, it is our turn. Together we can write this chapter with pride and with purpose. It is not easy work, but it is the work our citizens have sent us here to do, and together we can make them proud of us, proud of this body, and proud to be Rhode Islanders.

Governor Carcieri, this House of Representatives is ready to work with you and President Montalbano to ensure that Rhode Island reaches its potential.

Thank you, and God Bless!