

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 nine.

Volume 136, No.1

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

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 4:25 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.2009 (being the first Tuesday of the Month).

The Honorable Senate appoints Senators Algiere, Ciccone, Lynch, and Tassoni to escort the Honorable Maureen McKenna Goldberg, Acting Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court to the rostrum.

The members attend.

The Honorable Senate appoints Senators Blais, DiPalma, Felag, Maher, and O'Neill to escort His Excellency, the Governor, Donald L. Carcieri to the rostrum.

The members attend.

INVOCATION

The Honorable Senator Paiva Weed, by unanimous consent, presents His Excellency, the Most Reverend Thomas J. Tobin, 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 Senator, by unanimous consent, presents Senator Pichardo, to lead the Senate in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

The National Anthem is performed by Jimmy Winters of the Newport Community Police.

RETIREMENT OF COLORS

The Newport Artillery Company retires the colors.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

In Memoriam

The Honorable Claiborne Pell

November 22, 1918 – January 1, 2009

United States Senator from Rhode Island

1961 – 1997

May God Keep You In His Loving Care

SPECIAL GUEST

The Honorable Senator, by unanimous consent, presents His Excellency, the Governor, to address the body.

The Governor delivers his remarks.

The Honorable Senator appoints Senators Bates, DeVall, Metts, and Pinga to escort Secretary of State A. Ralph Mollis to the rostrum.

The members attend.

The Honorable Senator presents the Honorable A. Ralph Mollis, 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:

January 6, 2009

To the Honorable Senate:

I, A. Ralph Mollis 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 seventh day of December, 2009, as provided by Section 22-3-13 of the General Laws of 1956:

1. Maryellen Goodwin
2. Juan M. Pichardo
3. Rhoda E. Perry
4. Dominick Ruggerio
5. Paul Jabour
6. Harold M. Metts
7. Frank A Ciccone, III
8. James E. Doyle II
9. Michael J. Pinga
10. Walter S. Felag, Jr.
11. Charles J. Levesque
12. Louis P. DiPalma
13. M. Theresa Paiva Weed
14. Daniel DaPonte
15. John F. McBurney, III
16. Elizabeth A. Crowley
17. Edward J. O'Neill
18. Frank A. DeVall
19. Daniel P. Connors
20. Roger A. Picard
21. Leo R. Blais
22. John J. Tassoni, Jr.
23. Paul W. Fogarty
24. Marc A. Cote
25. Christopher B. Maselli
26. Beatrice A. Lanzi
27. Hanna M. Gallo
28. Joshua B. Miller
29. Michael J. McCaffrey
30. William A. Walaska
31. Erin P. Lynch
32. David E. Bates
33. Leonidas P. Raptakis
34. Francis T. Maher
35. J. Michael Lenihan
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 sixth day of January, A.D. 2009.

Respectfully Yours,
A. Ralph Mollis
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 A. Ralph Mollis, Secretary of State.

ROLL

The Honorable Senator Paiva Weed directs the Reading Clerk, John S. Baxter, Jr., to call the roll of the body.

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, Bates, Blais, Ciccone, Connors, Cote, Crowley, DaPonte, Devall, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goodwin, Jabour, Lanzi, Lenihan, Levesque, Lynch, Maher, Maselli, McBurney, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, O'Neill, Perry, Picard, Pichardo, Pinga, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Tassoni, Walaska.

ABSENT – 0:

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Senator Ruggerio, seconded by Senator Doyle, 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 Goodwin, nominates Senator Paiva Weed. The nomination is seconded by Senator Levesque.

Senator Connors, seconded by Senator DaPonte, 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 35 Senators voting in the affirmative and 0 Senators voting in the negative and 3 Senators abstained as follows:

YEAS - 35: Senators Algiere, Bates, Blais, Ciccone, Connors, Cote, Crowley, DaPonte, Devall, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goodwin, Jabour, Lanzi, Lenihan, Levesque, Lynch, Maher, Maselli, McBurney, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Paiva Weed, Perry, Picard, Pichardo, Ruggerio, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Tassoni, Walaska.

NAYS – 0:

ABSTAINED - 3: Senators O’Neil, Pinga, Raptakis.

The Honorable Senator Paiva Weed announces that Senator Paiva Weed has been elected President of the Rhode Island Senate for the years 2009 and 2010.

OATH OF OFFICE

The Honorable Senator introduces the Honorable Maureen McKenna Goldberg, Acting Chief 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 THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

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

Senator Connors nominates Joseph R. Brady of Newport as Secretary of the Senate for the 2009 and 2010 Sessions. The nomination is seconded by Senator Sosnowski.

The motion to elect Joseph R. Brady of Newport as Secretary of the Senate for the 2009 and 2010 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 Algiere, Bates, Blais, Ciccone, Connors, Cote, Crowley, DaPonte, Devall, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goodwin, Jabour, Lanzi, Lenihan, Levesque, Lynch, Maher, Maselli, McBurney, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, O’Neill, Perry, Picard, Pichardo, Pinga, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Tassoni, Walaska.

NAYS – 0:

OATH

The Honorable Secretary of State A. Ralph Mollis, administers the Oath of Office to the Secretary of the Senate-elect, Joseph R. Brady of Newport.

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 Fogarty nominates John S. Baxter of Pawtucket as Reading Clerk for the 2009 and 2010 Sessions. The nomination is seconded by Senator Crowley.

The motion to elect John S. Baxter of Newport as Reading Clerk of the Senate for the 2009 and 2010 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, Bates, Blais, Ciccone, Connors, Cote, Crowley, DaPonte, Devall, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goodwin, Jabour, Lanzi, Lenihan, Levesque, Lynch, Maher, Maselli, McBurney, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, O'Neill, Perry, Picard, Pichardo, Pinga, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Tassoni, Walaska.

NAYS - 0:

OATH

The Honorable Secretary of State A. Ralph Mollis, 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 McCaffrey nominates Senator McBurney, as President Pro Tempore of the Senate for the 2009 and 2010 Sessions. The nomination is seconded by Senator Gallo.

The motion to elect Senator McBurney 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, Bates, Blais, Ciccone, Connors, Cote, Crowley, DaPonte, Devall, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goodwin, Jabour, Lanzi, Lenihan, Levesque, Lynch, Maher, Maselli, McBurney, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, O'Neill, Perry, Picard, Pichardo, Pinga, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Tassoni, Walaska.

NAYS – 0:

The Honorable Senate appoints Senators Picard, Miller and Sheehan to escort the Honorable John F. McBurney, III and the Honorable John F. McBurney, Jr. to the rostrum.

The members attend.

NEW BUSINESS

Senate Resolution No. 1

BY Senators Connors, McBurney, Ruggiero SEN, DaPonte, Doyle

ENTITLED, SENATE RESOLUTION HONORING JOHN FRANCIS MCBURNEY, JR.

The Senate Resolution is read and passed.

COMMUNICATION

The Honorable President presents the following communications:

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

January 6, 2009

The Honorable Senate

To the Honorable, the Senate:

I have the honor to inform you that on this day the oath of engagement was administered as President of the Senate for the State of Rhode Island to the Honorable M. Teresa Paiva Weed.

Yours sincerely,

A. Ralph Mollis
Secretary of State

Received an ordered to be placed on file.

Also:

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

January 6, 2009

To the Honorable Senate:

I have the honor to inform you that I administered this sixth day of January, A.D. 2009 the oath of engagement to Joseph R. Brady of Newport as Secretary of the Senate for the years 2009 and 2010.

Respectfully yours,

Ralph Mollis
Secretary of State

Received an ordered to be placed on file.

Also:

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

January 6, 2009

To the Honorable Senate:

I have the honor to inform you that I administered this sixth day of January, A.D. 2009 the oath of engagement to John S. Baxter of Pawtucket as Reading Clerk of the Senate for the years 2009 and 2010.

Respectfully yours,

Ralph Mollis
Secretary of State

Received an ordered to be placed on file.

Also:

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

January 6, 2009

The Honorable Senate

To the Honorable, the Senate:

This is to inform you that the Democratic Senators elected on November 4, 2008, have organized the Democratic Caucus for the Senate's 2009-2010 term.

As part of the organizational meeting, held in the Senate Lounge at the State House on November 10 2008, the thirty-three members of the caucus elected Honorable Daniel P. Connors of the 19th Senatorial District, as the Senate Majority Leader for the 2009-2010 term.

Sincerely,

Juan M. Pichardo
Senator, District 2

Secretary, Democratic Caucus

Received an ordered to be placed on file.

SENATE ADDRESS

The Honorable President introduces Senate Majority Leader, Connors to address the body.

Senate Majority Leader Connors addresses the members and their guests.

INTERIM RULES

Upon suggestion of Senator Maselli seconded by Senator Lenihan the Senate will adopt temporary rules, the rules under which it operated during the 2007-2008 session, pending the report of the rules committee and the adoption of a resolution embodying permanent rules for the 2009-2010 session, by unanimous consent, upon a roll call vote with 37 Senators voting in the affirmative and 0 Senators voting in the negative as follows:

YEAS - 37: The Honorable President Paiva Weed and Senators Algieri, Bates, Ciccone, Connors, Cote, Crowley, DaPonte, Devall, DiPalma, Doyle, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goodwin, Jabour, Lanzi, Lenihan, Levesque, Lynch, Maher, Maselli, McBurney, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, O'Neill, Perry, Picard, Pichardo, Pinga, Raptakis, Ruggerio, Sheehan, Sosnowski, Tassoni, Walaska.

NAYS – 0:

GUESTS

Upon suggestion of Senator Perry and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts, the Honorable Gloria Kennedy Fleck, the Honorable Jane A. Gencarelli, the Honorable June Gibbs, the Honorable Mary A. Parella, the Honorable Lila A. Sapinsley, the Honorable Bonnie Stewart, the Honorable Joan R. Wiesner and the Honorable Myrth York.

Upon suggestion of Senator Metts and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Reverend Dr. David D. Mitchell, senior pastor Congdon St. Baptist Church, Reverend Dr. Janice I. Thompson, senior pastor River of Life Church, and Protestant Chaplin ACI medium, Wife Dagus Metts, sister-in-law, Deborah Tunstall of North Providence and Mr. Arthur V. Strother, a cousin supporter, and former campaign manager.

Upon suggestion of Senator Cote and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Lenihan, his wife, Patricia Lenihan, daughter, Megan Lenihan Magiera, son-in-law Todd Magiera, grand daughters Victoria Magiera and Bryanna Magiera.

Upon suggestion of Senator DiPalma and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber attorney Robert Silva, Esq., Keith Stokes and Teresa Stokes.

Upon suggestion of Senator Walaska and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber family of Senator McCaffrey, wife Deirdre, children Michael, Cailin, Brenna and Deirdre, his mother Ann, his father Gene and his sister Mary.

Upon suggestion of Senator Walaska and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Lynch, her parents, John and Pat Lynch, her sister and brother-in-law Susan and Jamie McKnight, sisters, Karen Lynch Bernard, Kristen Lynch, her brothers John Lynch Jr., Joseph Lynch and Denise Cassisi.

Upon suggestion of Senator Algieri and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Maher, mother Christina Maher, wife Kathleen Maher, brother Christopher Maher, uncle Andrew Mitrusi, son's Patrick and Matthew and friends Edward Nataly and Dean Ambrosino.

Upon suggestion of Senator Connors and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator DaPonte, wife Marica Sousa, their son Antonio Manuel Sousa DaPonte, mother Adrienne DaPonte, brother Jason DaPonte, niece Ella DaPonte, Rui P. Alves, Esquire, Mayor Daniel McKee of Cumberland, Council President Higgins of Cumberland.

Upon suggestion of Senator Connors and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator, son Giancarlo Maselli, daughter Giuliana Maselli, wife Joy Maselli.

Upon suggestion of Senator Ruggerio and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Frank A. Ciccone II, father of Senator Ciccone and Robert J. DiMaio.

Upon suggestion of Senator DaPonte and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senate Majority Leader Connors, his brother Michael P. Connors, Michael's fiancé Michele Jalbert and Amy Moses, Esq.

Upon suggestion of Senator DaPonte and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator DeVall, his wife Grace DeVall, sons Andrew and Cam, his mother Gen DeVall and guests Lee Ann Towne and Bob Gagnon.

Upon suggestion of Senator Doyle and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Barbara Santilli.

Upon suggestion of Senator Tassoni and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber his parents John and Janet Tassoni and his wife S. Jean Cerroni.

Upon suggestion of Senator Miller and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Perry, son Alex Perry, Heather Carey and grand daughter Paige Perry.

Upon suggestion of Senator Perry and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Miller, wife Nancy Miller and his son Nicholas Miller.

Upon suggestion of Senator Goodwin and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Kevin McHugh, Kathy McDinough, Margie Hurley, Susan Masse, Sarah Hynos, Patrick Butler and Kristen Silvia.

Upon suggestion of Senator Sosnowski and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Felag, brother Mark Felag, sister Nancy Threadgill and niece Allie Threadgill. And the family of Senator DiPalma Cathy Niski, Darli Ebling, David Ebling, Marianne Ebling, Alexander Simeone, daughters Abigail and Kelle DiPalma and his wife Margaret DiPalma.

Upon suggestion of Senator Gallo and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Fogarty, his wife Nancy and sons Patrick, Brendan and Dan Fogarty

Upon suggestion of Senator Felag and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Madam President Paiva Weed, Theresa and Andrew Soares, Karen Harrington, Beverly Weed, nieces Julia Santos, Andrea Soares and friend Nancy Sullivan.

Upon suggestion of Senator Felag and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Sosnowski, husband Michael Sosnowski, son Michael Sosnowski, Jr.

Upon suggestion of Senator McBurney and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber his family Ann P. McBurney, Cheryle V. McBurney, John F. McBurney IV and his fiancé Liz Collins, Meghan E. McBurney and her friend John Connelly, Joseph J. McBurney his friend Mary Welsh, Michael McBurney, Patrick McBurney his friend Samantha Songle, Ellen McBurney, Mackenzie McBurney and Mark J. McBurney. And the family of Senator Doyle, parents Mayor James E. Doyle and Joan Doyle, wife Jaclyn Doyle, children James E. Doyle III, Paige Doyle, mother-in-law Sandra Foire, sister-in-law Jennifer Rocha and her son Jack, friend of the Doyle's Bob Bourgoult, Mary Bray and John Barry III.

Upon suggestion of Senator Fogarty and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Goodwin, father Thomas N. Goodwin, mother Patricia M. Goodwin, sisters Sheila Connelly and Maureen LaRogue, brother-in-law Paul Connelly, niece and nephew Margrace, Teresa and Jack. The family of Senator Gallo, husband Russell, daughters Julie and Laura and her mother Emily. And former Senator Joan Wiesner

Upon suggestion of Senator Sheehan and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber daughter and son-in-law Christine and Miguel Defaria, grand daughters Mackenzie and Gabriella Defaria, daughter Melissa Crowley, city clerk Central Falls, Kathleen Palmer and Betty Lemieux, the family of Senator Raptakis daughter Alexander, son Nicholas and wife Donna.

Upon suggestion of Senator Raptakis and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Sheehan Meredith Sheehan

Upon suggestion of Senator Levesque and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Paiva Weed, Arthur J. Paiva and Marie E. Paiva, brother John Paiva, friends Pat Beede and Nicole Beede, husband Mark S. Weed, friend Kristen Brennan.

Upon suggestion of Senator Levesque and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Kenneth Marshall, Bristol Town Council President, Dianne Mederos, Bristol Town Administer, John Faria and Loraine Derois.

Upon suggestion of Senator DeVall and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber his family Grace Correia DeVall, wife, Andrew and Cam and his mother Geneieve DeVall

Upon suggestion of Senator Maher and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator O'Neill, Carole and Jeremiah O'Neill, Zachary Johnson, Robert and Patricia Hanson, Mike Ignigni, David Fessoute, Cindy Mulvey, Seth and Jennifer Hamilton, Fred and Susan Breggia, Alex Pare, Bob and Betty Marerca, Brian Guadagni, Peter Brodeur, Susan Deshpoude.

Upon suggestion of Senator Ciccone and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber Senator Lanzi's daughter, Sofia Lanzi.

Upon suggestion of Senator Jabour and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of Senator Pinga, his wife Jill E. Pinga, daughters Nicole and Michaella Pinga, mother Anna L. Pinga, sister Jo Anna Pinga, sister-in-law Brenda L. Pinga, neice's Melissa M. Pinga, nephew Joseph P. Pinga, Jr., and friends Robert Mathias, Ernie Francis, Phyllis Francis, Alan Palazzo, Raymond Paolino, DeLores Paolino, Vincent Marzullo and his brother Louis J. Pinga. And the family of Senator Pichardo, his wife Janet Pichardo, daughters Christian and Tiffanie Pichardo, son Emilio Pichardo mother Evangelista Pichardo, Ron Crosson, Jr., and Juan Jose Fernandez.

Upon suggestion of Senator Bates and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber former Senator William Enos and his son Andrew Enos.

Upon suggestion of Senator Paiva Weed and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President, welcomes to the Chamber the family of the Joseph Brady, wife Ellen Brady, son Joseph Brady III and daughter Kathryn.

MUSICAL GUESTS

The Honorable President introduces the Newport Community Baptist Church Choir to perform a musical selection.

BENEDICTION

The Honorable President, by unanimous consent, presents the Most Reverend Francis A. O'Laughlin, Pastor of Jesus Savior Church in Newport, to deliver the Benediction.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Senator Walaska, seconded by Senator Connors, the Senate adjourns at 6:25 o'clock P.M.

JOSEPH R. BRADY
Secretary of the Senate

APPENDIX

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS



M. Teresa Paiva Weed
President of the Senate

Good afternoon and thank you all.

I would like to acknowledge, Governor Donald Carcieri, Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Roberts, General Treasurer Frank Caprio and Secretary of State Ralph Mollis.

Acting Chief Justice Maureen McKenna Goldberg. It is an honor to have you here today to administer the oath of office.

Our Senate members: To those of you who have served in the Senate previously. Welcome back. To those of you new to the Senate, congratulations.

Each of us has been honored with our constituents' trust to serve them with integrity and with a thoughtful and thorough approach to the issues facing our state. I am honored to be serving with each of you.

And we welcome all the family and friends who have been so supportive to all our members through their campaigns and through their past years of service. Thank you for giving your time and energy for the betterment of our state.

Senator Connors, for the past ten years you have been tireless in your advocacy for your district and for people across Rhode Island. As a committee chair, you worked diligently to successfully build consensus on critical, and many times, challenging, issues. I am proud to be walking forward together as leaders in the Senate.

Thank you also to my colleagues who nominated me today: Mary Ellen Goodwin, our friendship started in the halls of this State House, working together on important issues and you have come to know me all too well. You have been a source of strength for me through the years, and particularly during recent weeks, and I am forever grateful for your friendship and guidance.

Senator Levesque, as my neighboring senator on Aquideck Island, a fellow attorney and trusted friend, you have been my advisor and confidant on more issues than I can count. Your passion for people, issues and for public service, are an inspiration. I thank you for seconding my nomination, and I am certain Mary is smiling on us today. Without her, I wouldn't be here, and she is always in my heart.

Although he is not here today, I would like to thank former President Joe Montalbano. Joe was a strong and able leader for this Senate. I, along with this entire chamber, wish him well.

Finally and most importantly, thank you to the members of the Senate for your vote today. You have given me your confidence and united for a leadership team you believe in. I am honored and humbled on this day to accept the post of Senate President.

Today, January 6, 2009, is day one of our term, and we have our work cut out for us.

Our state and our nation are in the midst of an economic crisis. Significant changes must be made and proactive policies implemented to address these complex conditions.

In Rhode Island, we have more families and individuals coping with economic hardships, than ever before. These are our neighbors -- our constituents.

Job losses, layoffs, company closings, foreclosures and rising rents have left many facing decisions they never thought they would have to make. Can we afford our prescription drugs? Can we afford to fix the car? Which bills do we pay and when?

And even worse, when they cannot pay their bills, Rhode Islanders are facing utility shut offs, scaled back food purchases, loss of healthcare, and, in the most heart-wrenching, but increasing case, – homelessness.

We have businesses struggling to stay afloat and access to quality healthcare remains unaffordable for many.

But we are ready to act. In the coming months, we will work late nights, early mornings and engage in hours upon hours of committee hearings. We will face tough decisions. We will confront great challenges. But I am confident we will rise to meet them and address them.

We have no other choice. It is our job. It is our duty. And, in fact, it is our honor to have a seat at the table to ensure significant, important changes are made for the benefit of our state and its people.

Despite our challenges, I stand before you today with great hope for our future. Not hope on its own, but hope backed by meaningful change through decisive action.

This is our mandate.

Meaningful change through decisive action is how we will lift people up, assist businesses and create a brighter future for Rhode Island. We cannot and will not let these difficulties define our state in the years to come.

The good news is we are not starting off from square one. Last year, our Senate worked together with the House to implement and pass policies that provide a foundation on which to build.

We created the 21st Century Workforce Commission to match skills needed by local businesses with the skills being developed by local students and workers. CCRI will be the major vehicle for implementation of this initiative. A win, win for businesses looking for skilled labor and applicants in need of good paying jobs.

We passed legislation to hold companies accountable for the tax credits they receive through new reporting requirements to track the number of jobs they create.

We passed a significant renewable energy law to improve our environment, create “green” jobs, increase alternative energy resources, and offer our municipalities a real advantage in reducing energy costs.

And, we made tough budget decisions, ending with a fair and balanced budget to meet the needs of our state.

This session we will make meaningful change through decisive action, by working swiftly to address immediate economic concerns. And, we will take a forward-looking approach to developing long-term strategies to secure a stronger economic future.

In my speech to the democratic caucus when I was endorsed in November, I spoke of three priorities:

Ensuring transparency in the operation of the Senate.

Addressing the issues surrounding our economy and working to make a real difference for our businesses, for our workforce and in our educational system.

And working together with the House, the governor and other partners in government to effectuate real change.

Our work on these priorities has already begun.

To ensure transparency in the Senate, we will continue our outreach to media outlets throughout the state to discuss our priorities and answer questions. We will also look to provide more access to information on our website and through emails, as an informed public is critical.

Over the past weeks, our leadership team has done two economic tours – one in Newport and one in the Lincoln/Cumberland area. From discussions about lengthy permitting processes to the need for workers skilled in math and sciences, we gained insight into some of the roadblocks local businesses are facing.

Throughout this session, we will continue to meet with people in business, human services, labor and education. And we will take what we have learned and develop legislative strategies to address the economic issues important to all Rhode Islanders.

In addressing our economic issues, we will work to create business-friendly policies to attract new companies to the state, but our MAIN priority will be growing the businesses that are already here in RI. We will work with the Governor and the House of Representatives to help our small businesses address the concerns they are coping with.

We will support policies that prepare our workers with proper workforce training for new workers and REtraining for experienced workers laid off in this economy.

We will make efforts to improve our educational system and prepare our young people for the future. We need a fair, equitable and predictable funding formula for our public schools.

And we will expand renewable energy alternatives, create green jobs and work to protect our natural environment, particularly our Bay.

And importantly, we will remain committed to addressing the needs of our most vulnerable populations – particularly our elderly, our disabled, and our children.

We will work together with the House and the Governor to effectuate these changes. Compromise and consensus together are the only ways to ensure progress in our state.

We will work to make meaningful change through decisive action, and we are bound to do this together.

In closing, I again thank you for your confidence and support.

Much has been said about the honor that has been entrusted to me today as the members of this body have been the first to elect a woman to serve in the office of senate president. However what I want to do is recognize that while I am given this opportunity, it is only because of the women who have come before me and those who are here with me today.

At this time, I would like to ask all the women Senators past and present here to stand and be recognized. Thank you for your contribution.

This is a moment I hope will inspire young women. What I have learned is that hard work, perseverance and compassion, and a determination to clear any hurdle in your path, will help you reach any goal you set for yourself. Young women should know: Anything is possible.

This is what the women in my life have taught me. My mother always taught me to do my best. To be compassionate, but strong. To be caring, but steadfast.

Yet, let me not forget that it was not only women who inspired and guided me. My father has been a source of encouragement in my education and daily life. And my husband Mark has been my rock. No matter what I have had to give up, no matter the pressure and late nights and weekend events, he has stood by me and made this OUR goal – not just mine. Mark, I love you and thank you for your tireless support of me.

I have been elected to serve the people of this state, as you have. The people in our communities are counting on us. This is a difficult time. And it is our duty to provide the leadership and assistance they need to get back on their feet. We will each enter this next session with strength, courage, perseverance and compassion.

Together we will provide people with hope when we make meaningful changes through decisive action.

Let us get to work.