

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 second day of January in the year of Our Lord Two Thousand and Eighteen.

Volume 145, No. 1

Tuesday, January 2, 2018

First Legislative Day

The Senate meets pursuant to adjournment and is called to order by the Honorable Dominick J. Ruggerio, President of the Senate, at 4:15 o'clock P.M.

ROLL CALL

The roll is called and a quorum is declared present with 36 Senators present and 2 Senators absent as follows:

PRESENT – 36: The Honorable President Dominick Ruggerio, and Senators Algieri, Archambault, Calkin, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DiPalma, Euer, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Kettle, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, Nesselbush, Paolino, Pearson, Picard, Quezada, Raptakis, Satchell, Seveney, Sheehan, Sosnowski.

ABSENT – 2: Senators DaPonte and Doyle.

INVOCATION

The Honorable President, by unanimous consent, presents Father Robert L. Marciano from Saint Kevin Roman Catholic Church in Warwick, to deliver the invocation.

(See Appendix for Invocation)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

The Honorable President, by unanimous consent, presents Senator Michael J. McCaffrey, to lead the Senate in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

SENATE PRESIDENT'S OPENING DAY ADDRESS

(See Appendix for Senate President's Opening Day Address)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Senator McCaffrey wishes Senate Door Keeper Luigi Del Ponte a Happy 90th Birthday.

Senator Conley Announces that the Committee on Finance will meet Thursday at the rise of the Senate in room 313.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon the Motion of Senator Goodwin, seconded by Senators Algieri, McCaffrey the Senate adjourns at 4:24 o'clock P.M.

ROBERT L. RICCI
Secretary of the Senate

Appendix**INVOCATION**

**Father Robert L. Marciano
Saint Kevin Roman Catholic Church in Warwick**

Heavenly Father, we bow our heads this day to You, upon whom this Nation was founded and to whom we still look for guidance. As we begin another year and open these chambers, we ask your inspiration upon the men and women who serve here, selected from and by the people of our State, as they come here each week to serve others. They come from Westerly to Woonsocket, Barrington to Burrillville, but are united in their desire to make Rhode Island, the State we love and call home, a better place for all.

Lord we ask that you give them strength and determination to know what is right and to have the courage to do it. In all their deliberations help them to see those less fortunate as an opportunity to serve You, for as You told us, "whatever we do for the least of our brethren, we do for You".

And finally Lord, when days are long, and hours and energies spent, give them and their good families consolation in knowing that the many sacrifices that they make, they make for us.

We offer this prayer humbly in your Sight always proud to be, One State, One nation, under You our God forever and ever. AMEN.

Appendix**SENATE PRESIDENT'S OPENING DAY ADDRESS****Dominick J. Ruggerio***President of the Senate*

My colleagues in the Senate, and distinguished guests: it is my honor and privilege to welcome you to the 2018 session of the Rhode Island Senate.

To some of us, I'm sure, it may feel as if we never left. Commissions and committees worked hard through the fall, and we return ready to build upon the progress we have made, and eager to address the challenges facing our state.

We're going to hit the ground running, as Chairman Conley is filing legislation today as a result of his committee's off-season work. We are very grateful to all the members of the Finance Committee for their commitment during their extensive hearing process.

As we enter the New Year, Rhode Island continues to gain momentum.

Just five years ago, our state had double-digit unemployment, the highest rate in the nation.

Today, the unemployment rate is near 4 percent ... and global companies like Infosys and GE are choosing to locate and create jobs here.

Rhode Island is building on our assets, such as the many outstanding institutions of higher learning within our borders, and seeing the results of investments we've made.

As we face a significant budgetary challenge this session, let us work to maintain the progress we have made, such as numerous reductions in personal and business taxes, while also caring for vulnerable Rhode Islanders and making wise investments.

As the funding formula is phased in, we need to invest in the physical conditions of our schools. The average school building is six decades old.

Chairwoman Gallo served on the task force making recommendations for how we can bring school facilities up to date, while also incentivizing quality in science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics. Senator Pearson has also been a leader on this important issue.

This investment in our educational facilities is also an investment in our future economy.

The Senate will work to protect the health of all Rhode Islanders through passage of Senator Miller's legislation that places the protections of the Affordable Care Act into state law.

We will also work to pass the mental health protections championed by the members of this chamber. No one with a mental health condition should be turned away from a needed residential stay because of questions about insurance coverage.

We also need to continue to invest in our workers, through job training but also worker protections. Some of the progress we have made for workers in recent years include:

- Increasing the minimum wage;
- Paid sick leave; and
- Paid family leave.

This year, let's work together to enact legislation that helps close the gender salary gap.

Rhode Island women make 82 cents for every dollar that a man is paid. Senator Goldin has been a leader on addressing this issue, and filed legislation that is sensible for all parties.

Let's work together to pass this bill and move closer towards our goal of equal pay for equal work.

These are a few of the many issues we will be working on this year.

I know that whatever challenges we face, we are well equipped to address them because of the talented and dedicated members of this chamber.

Leaders Michael McCaffrey and Dennis Algiere, and Whip Maryellen Goodwin – my partners in leadership: I am very fortunate to serve alongside each you.

And I am truly honored to serve with all of the talented members of the Senate. Each of you works with passion and compassion on behalf of your communities and the people of this state.

I am pleased to welcome you back, and I look forward to working together with all of you during another busy and productive legislative session.