

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.6

Tuesday, January 16, 2018

Sixth Legislative Day

The Senate meets pursuant to adjournment and is called to order by the Honorable Dominick J. Ruggiero, President of the Senate, at 4:13 o'clock P.M.

ROLL CALL

The roll is called and a quorum is declared present with 35 Senators present and 2 Senators absent as follows:

PRESENT – 35: The Honorable President Dominick Ruggiero, and Senators Algieri, Calkin, Ciccone, Conley, Cote, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Euer, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Gee, Goldin, Goodwin, Jabour, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Morgan, Nesselbush, Paolino, Pearson, Picard, Quezada, Raptakis, Satchell, Seveney, Sheehan, Sosnowski.

ABSENT – 2: Senators Archambault and Kettle.

INVOCATION

The Honorable President, by unanimous consent, presents Senator Conley, to deliver the invocation.

(See Appendix for Invocation)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

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

APPROVAL OF RECORD

The Senate Journal of the Fifth Legislative Day of the 2018 proceedings is read in part.

Upon suggestion of Senator Conley and by unanimous consent, further reading of the Journal is dispensed with and the Journal approved as recorded.

GUESTS

Upon the suggestion of Senator Nesselbush and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President of the Senate, welcomes to the Chamber, The Mayor of Pawtucket, Donald R. Grebien.

APPOINTMENT BY THE GOVERNOR

The Honorable President of the Senate presents the following communication from Her Excellency, The Governor, transmitting the following appointments and requesting the advice and consent of the Senate thereto:

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR GINA M. RAIMONDO**

January 11, 2018

TO THE HONORABLE, THE SENATE:

I have the honor to inform you that in accordance with the provisions of Section § 42-64.14-6 of the Rhode Island General Laws, I have made the following reappointment to the I-195 Redevelopment Commission:

Barrett W. Bready

For a term expiring October 3, 2021.

To this appointment, I respectfully request your advice and consent.

Sincerely,

Gina M. Raimondo
Governor

Read and referred to the Committee on Commerce.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Honorable President presents the following communications:



**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
STATE HOUSE**

January 16, 2018

The Honorable Dominick Ruggerio
President of the Senate
State House Room 318
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Mr. President

Please be advised that I will be absent from Senate sessions for the period beginning Tuesday, January 16, 2018 through Thursday, February 1, 2018. I will be out of the country on a medical mission. Please record my letter in the appropriate Senate Journals.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen R. Archambault
Senator, District 22

Read and placed on file.



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
Office of the Senate President
Room 318, State House
Providence
02903

January 12, 2018

The Honorable Senate
Senate Chamber
State House
Providence, RI 02903

To the Honorable, the Senate:

Pursuant to RIGL 22-8-2, I hereby appoint the following Senators to serve on the
Legislative Council:

The Honorable Dennis Algiere
The Honorable Maryellen Goodwin
The Honorable Michael McCaffrey

Sincerely,
Dominick J. Ruggerio
President of the Senate

Read and placed on file.



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
Office of the Senate President
Room 318, State House
Providence
02903

January 16, 2018

The Honorable Senate
Senate Chamber
State House
Providence, RI 02903

To the Honorable, the Senate:

Pursuant to Rule 12 of the Rules of the Senate Democratic Caucus, I am making the
Following Appointment:

Senator Ryan W. Pearson
Senior Deputy Majority Leader

Sincerely,
Dominick J. Ruggiero
President of the Senate

Read and placed on file.

NEW BUSINESS**Senate Resolution No. 2040****BY** Sosnowski, Algieri**ENTITLED**, SENATE RESOLUTION HONORING DANIEL PUCELLA FOR SEVENTY YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE SOUTH KINGSTOWN COMMUNITY
{LC3332/1}

Placed on the Consent Calendar.

Senate Resolution No. 2037**BY** Goodwin, Ruggerio, McCaffrey**ENTITLED**, SENATE RESOLUTION EXTENDING CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF FORMER STATE SENATOR, THE HONORABLE SANDRA K. HANAWAY
{LC3654/1}

Recommended for Immediate Consideration.

Senator Goodwin requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

Unanimous consent for immediate consideration is granted.

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

The resolution is read and passed, upon a rising vote.

Senate Resolution No. 2039**BY** McCaffrey, Lynch Prata, Calkin, Lombardo, Gallo**ENTITLED**, SENATE RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING THE WARWICK VETS GIRLS SOCCER TEAM ON WINNING THE STATE CHAMPIONSHIP
{LC3881/1}

Recommended for Immediate Consideration.

Senator McCaffrey requests unanimous consent for immediate consideration.

Unanimous consent for immediate consideration is granted.

Senator McCaffrey moves passage, seconded by Senators Lynch Prata, Gallo, Ciccone, Quezada, Gee, Sheehan, Goldin, and Felag

The resolution is read and passed, upon a voice vote.

GUESTS

Upon the suggestion of Senators McCaffrey, Lynch Prata, and Calkin and by unanimous consent, the Honorable President of the Senate, welcome to the Chamber, the following members of the Warwick Veterans Junior High School Girls State Soccer Champions: Mikayla Boyd, Gillian Brown, Mackenzie Costa, Kathryn Creamer, Lindsay Flanders, Seasia Kong, Samantha Laurent, Sarah Lynch, Faith Meade, Janelle Mixner, Amelia Murphy, Madelyn Narcavage, Olivia Nardillo, Keira Ramsden, Ava Schobel, Katie Shaheen, Desani Stewart, Kylie Whitney, Isabella Zuller, and Coach Nicole Kenney.

CALENDAR

In order for the day is taken up as follows:

1. Senate Resolution No. 2001

BY Conley

ENTITLED, JOINT RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE STATE TO ENTER INTO FINANCING LEASE AND PAYMENT AGREEMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF A BALLPARK IN THE CITY OF PAWTUCKET

Committee on Finance recommends passage.

Senator Conley moves passage, seconded by Senators DiPalma, Pearson, McCaffrey, Goodwin, Lombardi, Sosnowski, Quezada, Lombardo, and Seveney.

Senators, Dipalma, Pearson, Seveney, Nesselbush, Gallo, Crowley, Lombardi, Felag, and Sheehan discuss the act.

The act is read and passed upon a roll call vote with 26 Senators voting in the affirmative and 9 Senators voting in the negative as follows.

YEAS – 26: The Honorable President Ruggerio and Senators Ciccone, Conley, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Euer, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goldin, Goodwin, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Nesselbush, Pearson, Picard, Quezada, Satchell, Seveney, Sosnowski.

NAYS – 9: Senators Algiere, Calkin, Cote, Gee, Jabour, Morgan, Paolino, Raptakis, Sheehan.

Senate Bill No. 2002

BY Conley

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- REDEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND PROJECTS (Permits redevelopment agencies to finance the construction of projects for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, institutional, public, or other purposes contemplated by a redevelopment plan.)

Committee on Finance recommends passage.

Senator Conley moves passage, seconded by Senators McCaffrey, Goodwin, Felag, Miller, Nesselbush, Pearson and DiPalma.

The act is read and passed upon a roll call vote with 26 Senators voting in the affirmative and 9 Senators voting in the negative as follows.

YEAS – 26: The Honorable President Ruggerio and Senators Ciccone, Conley, Coyne, Crowley, DaPonte, DiPalma, Euer, Felag, Fogarty, Gallo, Goldin, Goodwin, Lombardi, Lombardo, Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Metts, Miller, Nesselbush, Pearson, Picard, Quezada, Satchell, Seveney, Sosnowski.

NAYS – 9: Senators Algieri, Calkin, Cote, Gee, Jabour, Morgan, Paolino, Raptakis, Sheehan.

TRANSMITTAL

By unanimous consent, all matters on the Secretary's desk are ordered to be transmitted to Her Excellency, the Governor, the Honorable Secretary of State or to the Honorable House of Representatives forthwith.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Senator Nesselbush announces that the Women of the Senate will meet in the Bell Area of the State House.

RECESS

Upon motion of Senator Maryellen Goodwin, the Senate stands at recess in memory of The Honorable Sandra K. Hanaway at 5:51 o'clock P.M.

ROBERT L. RICCI
Secretary of the Senate

Appendix**PROCEEDINGS IN JOINT SESSION**

Tuesday, January 16, 2018

The Honorable, President of the Senate, Dominick J. Ruggiero in the Chair.

CALLED TO ORDER

The Joint Session is called to order at 6:52 o'clock P.M.

Upon suggestion of The Honorable, President of the Senate, and by unanimous consent, the reading of the roll of the Senate and the roll of the House of Representatives is dispensed with, there being a quorum of the Senate and a quorum of the House of Representatives present, therefore a quorum of the Joint Session.

The Honorable, President of the Senate, by unanimous consent, appoints Senators Coyne, Crowley, Euer, Goldin, Quezada, Sosnowski and Representatives Abney, Corvese, Donovan, Fellela, Jacquard, and Messier to escort Her Excellency, the Governor, Gina M. Raimondo and guests to the Chamber.

Joint Session attends while the Honorable Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell and the Members of the Judiciary enter the Chamber.

Joint Session attends while members of the Presidents of the Rhode Island Institutions of Higher Education enter the Chamber.

Joint Session attends while the Mayors, Town Administrators and Local City and Town Officials enter the Chamber.

Joint Session attends while members of the Directors of the Executive Departments and Quasi Public Agencies enter the Chamber.

Joint Session attends while the first gentleman of Gina M. Raimondo, Andy Moffit and son Tommy Moffit, and daughter Ceci Moffit enter the Chamber.

Joint Session attends while the Honorable Seth Magaziner, General Treasurer, enters the Chamber.

Joint Session attends while the Honorable Nellie M Gorbea, Secretary of State, enters the Chamber.

Joint Session attends while the Honorable Daniel McKee, Lieutenant Governor, enters the Chamber.

Joint Session attends while Her Excellency, the Governor, Gina M. Raimondo, enters the Chamber.

The Honorable, President of the Senate, presents Her Excellency, the Governor, Gina M. Raimondo, to the Joint Session.

The Governor, Gina M. Raimondo delivers her State of the State Address.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Speaker Mattiello, seconded by Senator Majority Leader McCaffrey, and by unanimous consent, Joint Session adjourns and the two Houses separate at 7:55 o'clock P.M.

Appendix**INVOCATION****SENATOR WILLIAM J. CONLEY, Jr.**

Almighty Father, let your spirit of wisdom transcend upon the leaders of our State. Tonight, as Governor Raimondo delivers her State of the State Address, we are reminded of the challenges we face ahead. Help us all strive to work together to reach common ground and find positive solutions for the benefit of all our constituents as we move Rhode Island towards a brighter tomorrow. Amen.

Appendix

CONSENT CALENDAR

IN ORDER FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2018:

1. **2018-S 2040**
BY Sosnowski
ENTITLED, SENATE RESOLUTION HONORING DANIEL PUCELLA FOR SEVENTY YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE SOUTH KINGSTOWN COMMUNITY

Ordered on the Consent Calendar.

GOVERNOR GINA M. RAIMONDO 2018 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

RHODE ISLAND STATE HOUSE
TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2018 AT 7:00 P.M.

STRONGER TODAY

Good evening. Thank you. Mr. Speaker, Senate President, members of the General Assembly; distinguished guests; my husband Andy, my son Tommy; and my fellow Rhode Islanders:

Tonight I stand before you filled with optimism for the future. Rhode Island is stronger than we've been in decades: Four years ago, our unemployment rate was the highest in America. Today, it's in-line with the national average. The number of people who filed for unemployment insurance last year is the lowest it's been in 50 years. Our economy has more jobs than at nearly any other time in our State's history.

We've cut our deficit in half. TF Green is booming. , , And we're the first state in America to teach computer science in every public school.

You can see it all around us: Cranes rising over Providence, Johnston and Kingston; construction crews fixing roads in every part of Rhode Island; and hope in the eyes of our friends and family who finally have a good, steady job.

We've made this progress together, and I want to thank everyone who's been a part of it: the legislature, mayors and town managers, and my team. Thank you for your hard work and commitment to our state.

But of course, the real credit goes to the people of Rhode Island: People like Lisa and Alan Tortolani.

LOVE FOR RHODE ISLAND

Alan grew up in Burrillville and went to school in Pawtucket. After college, he fell in love with a girl from Jersey. (Which I can relate to since I'm a Rhode Island girl who fell in love with a guy from Michigan.) It took a little while, but when he was ready to start his company – ABCya – he convinced Lisa to move to Rhode Island. He couldn't imagine chasing his dream anywhere else.

Alan got started in the basement, balancing a kid on one knee and his laptop on the other, while Lisa supported their young family teaching Italian. But when his game Math Bingo hit #1 in the App Store, they knew it was time to move out of the basement. ABCya started hiring programmers, designers and project managers from all over Rhode Island.

When I met Alan, it was clear to me that he loved Rhode Island, but he didn't shy away from telling me that it sometimes frustrated him. Our maze of regulations drove him crazy, and it was sometimes too hard to find people with the right skills. It seemed to him that the state was putting up barriers instead of clearing the way for him to grow. That kind of thing drives me

crazy, too.

I asked Alan to keep believing in Rhode Island, and I promised him that we were going to work together to make things better. Alan kept going. It would have been easier for him to get frustrated and let cynicism crush his dream. But he was proud of his company and he wanted to grow it in Rhode Island. Last year, more than 120 million kids played a game on his site: Kids from Warwick and Westerly to Guatemala and India.

Since 2015, we've come together to fix many of the things that frustrated Alan and so many Rhode Islanders. We've cut over three thousand pages of regulations. We've cut red tape. And we've cut taxes every single year. . . .

LET'S KEEP GOING: A COMMITMENT TO CHANGE AND PROGRESS

Four years ago, it didn't seem like we'd have so much to celebrate today. At that time, our economy had run out of gas because our leaders hadn't positioned us for growth in the new economy. One out of four bridges in our state was crumbling and unsafe, and we didn't even have a plan to fix them. But worst of all, people were losing their pride because they had been out of work for so long. And some people felt like our state leaders weren't listening, and they were losing confidence in Rhode Island.

We came together four years ago and decided to chart a new course. We decided to change the old way of doing things, so that we could do better by Rhode Islanders.

Our progress didn't just happen. It wasn't an accident. And it wouldn't have happened if we kept doing things the same old way. But we had a willingness to try a new approach; a commitment to build a new economy, and not settle for anything less for our kids and our future.

We've come a long way, but we're only in about the third inning of our economic comeback. So tonight, I say: Let's keep going.

We've made Rhode Island more business friendly: Our economy is the 18th best in America; Last year, we went from No. 50 to No. 23 in unemployment taxes; , , Four years ago, the Gallup Jobs Index ranked our economy dead last. Today, we come in at Number 29. And we're not stopping until we're at the top of the list. Let's keep going.

We've proven that you can grow the economy and protect the environment at the same time: We're the only state in America with an off-shore wind farm. We're on track to make our energy system 10 times cleaner by 2020. Since 2014, we've added more than 5,000 green jobs – a 66 percent increase. Let's keep going.

We've made record investments in education, and we're committed to ensuring that everyone has a shot to continue their education past high school: Today, there are three times as many public pre-K classrooms as there were four years ago; We've guaranteed all-day kindergarten for every child in Rhode Island; And more than 1,500 Rhode Islanders are getting a shot at a career because we're the first state on the East Coast that's made community college tuition-free.

But there's so much left to do. So let's keep going.

Let's continue to support our veterans: Last year, we opened a new Veterans Home in Bristol; And last month, we launched a new online portal to better coordinate the services that our Vets and their families have earned. To everyone who wears - or has ever worn - our nation's uniform, and to your families, we say thank you.

We've also been listening. We've listened to Rhode Islanders who felt like their leaders weren't doing enough to support them: We raised the minimum wage, and we're gonna do it again next year; We passed paid sick leave, because no Rhode Islander should have to choose between a paycheck and taking care of a sick child at home; We've improved the quality of child care so parents can have peace of mind while they're at work. And we listened to seniors like my mom, who say it's too hard to live on a fixed income, and we cut the tax on their social security.

And we heard you. The car tax is probably the most hated tax in Rhode Island. So, last year, we cut it.

The progress we've made together is undeniable, and it's the result of the reforms we've made together. So, let's keep going with bold reforms. Let's send a clear and loud signal that we are willing to move beyond the old way of doing things.

Tonight, I'm asking the legislature to put the line item veto , on the ballot in November, and let Rhode Islanders decide. It's time. Forty-four other states, including Massachusetts, already have it. And they use it to eliminate waste and give taxpayers confidence in their government. Rhode Islanders deserve the same thing.

LET'S KEEP GOING: RHODE ISLANDERS WHO INSPIRE

I know that every member of this chamber cares deeply about Rhode Island and works hard for the people of our state. Tonight I'd like to share the stories of Rhode Islanders who inspire us all to keep going. Rhode Islanders who give us confidence that we're on the right path. Rhode Islanders like Alisa Richardson. Her story gets right to our core mission: to make sure every Rhode Islander can keep up and get ahead, whether or not they have a college degree.

Job Training for all Rhode Islanders in the New Economy

I met Alisa at her daughter Elisabeth's graduation from one of our job training programs. Elisabeth had started college, but she didn't finish. She still has a mountain of loans, and they're due every month. Because of the job training program, though, she now has a good job at Guill Tool in West Warwick. Alisa's son, James, studied electronics at the Warwick Career and Tech Center. He's now one of the thousands of Rhode Islanders Electric Boat has hired in recent years. And her youngest child, Katie, is a senior at Pilgrim High School, and she's excited to go to college next year. She's planning to go to CCRI on a Rhode Island Promise scholarship.

Alisa and her kids are here tonight. Congratulations, you guys are doing great.

The reality is that 70 percent of jobs in Rhode Island require more training and education than just a high school diploma, but they don't all require a four-year degree. It's on us to make sure that every Rhode Islander has the job training and education they need to get a good job.

Since 2015, we've completely revamped our approach to job training. Real Jobs Rhode Island now gives Rhode Islanders in the middle of their career the new skills they need in a changing economy. Real Jobs alone has trained and placed more than 2,000 Rhode Islanders into good, solid jobs.

We've also expanded more than two dozen career and tech programs in our high schools, like the welding program at Coventry High School. Austin Ferrara enrolled in that program last year. He graduated in June, and got his high school diploma and a credential. A week later, he started a job at Electric Boat. And if you ask him if he likes his job as a welder, he'll look you dead in the eye, filled with pride and tell you: "I've got a real job."

Tonight I'm proposing that we expand our job training initiatives and our technical training in high schools.

A year ago, we opened the Westerly Higher Education Center which trains people for jobs at local companies. It's been an incredible success. In just one year, more than 500 Rhode Islanders have earned a certificate to get a good job, and 345 of them already started working at Electric Boat.

Let's keep going. Let's put the same kind of center in the Blackstone Valley. In the weeks ahead, I'll announce a new public-private partnership to establish the Northern Rhode Island Higher Education Center which will provide hands-on training and a path to a good job for Rhode Islanders without a college degree.

Small Business is Our Business

Small businesses have always been the engine of our economy. In fact, they employ about half of our state's labor force. That's why we've made investments to help small businesses.

A couple years ago, we announced 10,000 Small Businesses, a unique partnership at CCRI that helps small business owners learn the skills they need to jump to the next level. Since then, more than 100 companies have gone through the program. These are local stores, restaurants, jewelry makers, and small food companies. These are our neighbors and friends who put everything they have into their business.

Nearly every one of them has added jobs, including Evan Oliveira, a Navy veteran from East Providence.

For years, he worked a desk job that he tolerated; but, on the side, he owned a small cleaning business that he loved. His company was growing, and he finally built up the courage to tell his family that he was going to quit the desk job to focus full time on his company, Universal Cleaning. So, as you can imagine, Evan really needed to make this work. He also needed some

capital to grow, and banks wouldn't lend to him because he was too small. He applied for a loan through a new program we started for small businesses in 2015. With that \$10,000 loan, he was able to buy the equipment he needed to support his new contracts. And since then, his business has tripled.

Like every Rhode Islander I've ever met, Evan is determined to succeed. Rhode Island small businesses are expanding because of these loans, and tonight I'm committing to double the number of loans awarded by the end of this year.

The responsibility to support small business, though, can't rest solely on state government. It's time to come together as a community and support one another. We need our biggest employers to use their spending power to support our small businesses.

Here's an example: If our colleges, universities and hospitals shifted just two percent of their contracts to Rhode Island companies, it could add more than \$50 million to our economy and create hundreds of new jobs. This year, we'll launch "Supply RI" to make it easier for our biggest employers to buy from local companies like Evan's. Andy and I do as much local shopping as we can, and we hope our biggest employers will do the same.

Most of our manufacturers are small businesses, too. For every Electric Boat, there are dozens of smaller manufacturers like FarSounder in Warwick and Swissline Precision in Cumberland. Last year, manufacturing companies created 1,500 new jobs. My dad spent his career in manufacturing, and making a living making things gave him so much pride.

Let's bring that pride back. This year, I'm again calling on the legislature to pass the Rhode Island Manufacturing Initiative. It's a good plan that helps smaller manufacturers buy new equipment and hire more people.

Protecting Our New Approach to Compete with Other States

Our first priority will always be to support businesses that are already here, but if we're going to be sure there's a good job for everyone, we also need to recruit new companies to Rhode Island. The good news is that for the first time in a long time companies are moving here and expanding here, mostly because they want to hire Rhode Islanders.

For decades, we just sat back and watched as Massachusetts rebuilt and thrived. Boston and its suburbs flourished, while the mill buildings along 95 and the Blackstone River stood vacant and crumbling. The resurgence in Massachusetts didn't just happen. It wasn't an accident. They had a strategy and a plan to create jobs and put cranes in the sky. They used job training investments and incentives to create thousands of jobs in and around Boston.

Massachusetts, and nearly every other state in the northeast, still uses incentives. , And they've all been doing it for years. Until recently, though, our leaders didn't have a strategy; and because of that, Rhode Islanders got left behind. And the few times our past leaders did take action, they put all their eggs in one basket or chased special deals. Any way you slice it, Rhode Islanders got hurt.

So in 2015, we created a strategy combining job training and incentives that enables us to compete and prevent the special deals of the past. The results are in. Our new approach is working. In the last two years, we've recruited or expanded 22 companies. Twenty-two companies that would have gone somewhere else. Because of our new approach, they're here and on track to hire more than 2,000 Rhode Islanders at an average salary of more than \$70,000.

So, yes, our new approach is working. And if we go back to the old way of doing things, we'll put hard-working Rhode Islanders at risk. So, let's keep going.

Rebuilding Rhode Island's Roads

Let's continue to fix our roads.

When our kids were younger, Andy and I would take them to soccer practice and drive across the Newman Avenue Bridge in East Providence. That bridge made me so mad. The Massachusetts side was in great shape: The road was smooth; the lanes were well marked. But when we drove back into Rhode Island, you could literally feel exactly where the state line was.

Since then, we made a commitment to fix our roads. And I want to thank members of this chamber for passing RhodeWorks which has allowed us to fix dozens of roads and bridges all over the state and put thousands of Rhode Islanders to work fixing them. Let's keep going.

Pathway to Recovery

Now, I want to talk about a fight that we just cannot lose: the overdose crisis. It remains our most urgent public health crisis, taking people away from us in every single community. In the last two years, we've made it a top priority, , , and as a result, overdose deaths were down eight percent last year. , But even one death is too many. The budget I'll send the General Assembly continues to fund what's working.

But, we have to do more. If we're going to save lives, we have to support people's recovery. One of the members of our Opioid Task Force, Jonathan Goyer, has often told me that his job has been critical to his recovery. That's true for so many people. This year, we're going to create a new job training program for people in recovery. There is no silver bullet in our fight against addiction, but helping Rhode Islanders in recovery to get a good job will save lives.

I'd also like to talk about another topic we don't talk enough about because of the unfortunate stigma, and that's mental health. I hear from so many Rhode Islanders who are beside themselves because they or their loved ones can't get access to good mental health care, mostly because their insurance company won't to cover it.

That needs to stop.

In the coming weeks, I'll propose legislation to make health insurance companies cover addiction and mental health treatment just like they cover diabetes or other chronic conditions.

Let's Fix Our Schools

Now, let's talk for a few minutes about what we're going to do to fix our schools.

Last week, schools across our state had to close and send students home. All across Rhode Island, there are teachers putting trash bins in the middle of the classroom to collect water dripping from leaky ceilings. Teachers and students are getting sick because of mold.

Our school buildings get a failing grade, and that's not acceptable. And like anything, the longer we wait, the more expensive it gets. Rhode Island hasn't made a meaningful, statewide investment in our school buildings in over 25 years.

One of the first things I did as Governor was to end the previous administrations' freeze on school construction and add funding for high priority projects. Because of that decision, we've been able to fix a handful of our worst schools, including Potter Burns Elementary School in Pawtucket. It was a 100-year-old building, and you knew it the minute you walked in the door. Today, because we came together and made an investment, it's bright, it's clean, it's got a new library, and it's been totally rebuilt and wired for 21st century learning so that kids are ready for 21st century jobs.

Attendance is up, and disciplinary problems are down. Students and teachers are proud to attend Potter Burns. And there isn't a parent in Rhode Island who wouldn't be proud to send their child there.

So, let's keep going. Our children deserve to know we value them.

Tonight I'm calling on all of us to take action. Let's make a once-in-a-generation investment in our schools. Together with our cities and towns, let's commit to investing \$1 billion over the next five years to fix our public schools. Don't let anyone tell you we can't afford to do this. We can. We have a detailed plan that outlines how we can invest more and do it smarter so that we protect taxpayers at the same time. Every year we wait, we waste millions of dollars putting band aids on our crumbling schools. So let's act now.

LET'S KEEP GOING: OUR WORK IS FAR FROM DONE

My fellow Rhode Islanders, we're making real progress. But our work is far from done. The recovery still hasn't reached everyone. We're not going to stop until every Rhode Islander is included. We'll keep going until every child is lifted out of poverty; until every child can attend a flourishing public school; until we meet the needs of every senior; and until every Rhode Islander has a shot at a good job.

Let's stay at it until every Rhode Islander can work free from harassment, abuse or bullying. I applaud every woman who has come forward to tell her story. And I pledge to work with anyone to root out harassment in this building and every other workplace in our state.

We also have to come together to make sure that the uncertainty in Washington doesn't derail our progress. Now, more than ever, we need to stand up to protect Rhode Islanders.

Nearly every person in Rhode Island has health insurance, and the premiums on our health exchange are the lowest in America. When politicians in Washington tried to take health care away, we spoke out and we stopped it. We are not going to let Washington take your health care away.

When politicians in Washington took aim at our Dreamers we stood with them because in Rhode Island we don't just tolerate diversity; we celebrate it.

And last week, when President Trump announced a plan to open our coast line to drill for oil, we, the people of Rhode Island said: "Not on our watch.",

We've come so far and need to keep going.

THE RHODE ISLAND WE LOVE

I'd like to end tonight where we began, and share with you the rest of Alan and Lisa Tortolani's story. It's a story that offers a window into what Rhode Island is all about. Who we are, and what our state can be.

Nine months ago, on a Friday, Alan called Lisa while he was heading home from work. Before they hung up, they said, "I love you," just like they always do. And after that, Alan went out for a bike ride.

But Alan never came home.

He was 40 years old. He was a dad with three kids. While he was riding, something happened. He collapsed. He was rushed to the hospital. And he passed away late that night.

His wife and kids miss him every single day. Somehow, Lisa's found the strength to pick up the pieces. She keeps going. She's running ABCya now, leading it to new heights, honoring Alan's work and deepening ABCya's commitment to Rhode Island.

I asked Lisa, "Why are you so committed to Rhode Island." I mean, she wasn't born here; she didn't grow up here.

She told me she's never lived in a community that's as kind-hearted, and as tight-knit as Rhode Island. Alan's been gone nine months. Lisa can't remember a single night that a friend or neighbor hasn't brought dinner over for her and her three kids. That's who we are. That's the state we love. That's what Rhode Island is all about.

Lisa's here with us tonight. Lisa, you're amazing, and inspire us all to keep going.

Let's all keep going for Rhode Island. Let's commit ourselves to making our recovery real for everybody. Let's stand up for our values and protect the progress we've made.

The Tortolanis love Rhode Island – not because it's perfect, but because of the people – people who wake up every morning determined to make Rhode Island it better. They love it for the same reason we all do.

Because it's home.