

State of Rhode Island

JOURNAL

-OF THE-

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY SESSION of the General Assembly begun and held at the State House in the City of Providence on Tuesday, the Third day of January in the year of Our Lord Two Thousand and Twenty-Three.

Volume 150, No.1

Tuesday, January 3, 2023

First Day

The House of Representatives meets at the State House in Providence, Tuesday, January 3, 2023 and is called to order at 4:00 o'clock P.M., by the Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Senior Representative from Newport.

ADJOURNMENT OF 2022 SESSION

On motion of Representative Abney seconded by Minority Leader Chippendale the House adjourns the 2022 session on a voice vote.

APPROVAL OF RECORD

By unanimous consent, the House Journal of Thursday, June 23, 2022, is approved.

INVOCATION

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney presents Rabbi Sarah Mack, Temple Beth-El in Providence, who delivers the Invocation.

(For Invocation, see Appendix, this Journal.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Representative-elect Cherie Cruz to lead the membership in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney calls on Olivia Picard of Burrillville, a sophomore at Ponaganset High School, to sing our National Anthem.

COMMUNICATION

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney announces the receipt of the following communication:



January 3, 2023

To the Honorable House of Representatives:

I, Gregg M. Amore, 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 twenty-second day of November 2022, as provided by Section 22-3-13 of the General Laws of 1956;

Edith H. Ajello	Patricia L. Morgan	Robert D. Phillips
Christopher R. Blazejewski	Patricia A. Serpa	Alex D. Marszalkowski
Nathan W. Biah	George A. Nardone	Brian J. Rea
Rebecca M. Kislak	Sherry L. Roberts	William W. O'Brien
Anthony J. DeSimone	Justine A. Caldwell	Arthur J. Corvese
Raymond A. Hull	Julie A. Casimiro	Joshua J. Giraldo
David Morales	Robert E. Craven Sr.	Brandon T. Voas
John J. Lombardi	Carol Hagan McEntee	Cherie L. Cruz
Enrique G. Sanchez	Teresa A. Tanzi	Jennifer A. Stewart
Scott A. Slater	Kathleen A. Fogarty	Karen Alzate
Grace Diaz	Tina L. Spears	Leonela Felix
Jose F. Batista	Samuel A. Azzinaro	Mary Duffy Messier
Ramon A. Perez	Brian Patrick Kennedy	Katherine S. Kazarian
Charlene Lima	Megan L. Cotter	Brianna E. Henries
Barbara Ann Fenton Fung	Michael W. Chippendale	Matthew S. Dawson
Brandon C. Potter	Robert J. Quattrocchi	Jennifer Smith Boylan
Jacquelyn M. Baginski	Edward T. Cardillo, Jr.	Jason P. Knight
Arthur Handy	Deborah A. Fellela	June S. Speakman
Joseph McNamara	Gregory J. Costantino	Susan A. Donovan
David A. Bennett	Mia A. Ackerman	John G. Edwards, IV
Camille F. Vella Wilkinson	Mary Ann Shallcross Smith	Michelle E. McGaw
Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.	David J. Place	Terri-Denise Cortvriend
K. Joseph Shekarchi	Brian C. Newberry	Marvin L. Abney
Evan Patrick Shanley	Jon D. Brien	Alex S. Finkelman
Thomas E. Noret	Stephen M. Casey	



In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Seal of the State of Rhode Island on this third day of January, A.D. 2023.

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

Received and placed on file.

ROLL CALL

The roll is called and a quorum is declared present with 74 members present and 1 member absent as follows:

PRESENT – 74: The Honorable Speaker Shekarchi and Representatives Abney, Ackerman, Ajello, Alzate, Azzinaro, Baginski, Batista, Bennett, Biah, Blazejewski, Boylan, Brien, Caldwell, Cardillo, Carson, Casimiro, Chippendale, Cortvriend, Corvese, Costantino, Cotter, Craven, Cruz, Dawson, DeSimone, Diaz, Donovan, Edwards, Felix, Fellela, Fenton-Fung, Finkelman, Fogarty, Giraldo, Handy, Henries, Hull, Kazarian, Kennedy, Kislak, Knight, Lima, Lombardi, Marszalkowski, McEntee, McGaw, McNamara, Messier, Morales, Morgan, Nardone, Newberry, Noret, O'Brien, Perez, Phillips, Place, Potter, Quattrocchi, Rea, Roberts, Sanchez, Serpa, Shallcross Smith, Shanley, Slater, Solomon, Speakman, Spears, Stewart, Tanzi, Vella-Wilkinson and Voas.

ABSENT – 1: Representative Casey.

ADDRESS

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney addresses the members of the House.

OATH OF OFFICE

The Representatives-elect rise, as Secretary of State, Gregg Amore administers the Oath of Office to all members.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney calls for nominations.

Representative Brian Kennedy nominates Representative K. Joseph Shekarchi, District 23 in Warwick, to be Speaker of the House of Representatives for the years 2023-2024. Representative Brian Kennedy discusses the nomination.

The nomination is seconded by Representative Leonela Felix. Representative Felix offers her remarks.

The nomination is also seconded by Representatives Carson, Speakman, DeSimone, Donovan, Dawson, Biah, Blazejewski, Phillips, Cardillo, Marszalkowski, O'Brien, Craven, Caldwell, Morales, McEntee, Noret, Batista, Finkelman, Shanley, Perez, Vella-Wilkinson, Ajello, Shallcross Smith, Handy, Fogarty, Cortvriend, Knight, Serpa, Boylan, Costantino, Lima, Azzinaro, Kennedy, Hull, Lombardi, Tanzi, Voas, Ackerman, McNamara, Kislak, Corvese, Diaz, Slater, Bennett, Edwards, Cotter, Spears, Fellela, Shekarchi, McGaw, Messier, Cruz, Potter, Baginski, Giraldo, Brien, Felix, Alzate, Solomon, Casimiro Kazarian.

Representative Newberry nominates Minority Leader Chippendale, to be Speaker of the House of Representatives for the years 2023-2024. Representative Newberry discusses the nomination.

The nomination is seconded by Minority Whip David Place. Minority Whip Place offers his remarks.

The nomination is also seconded by Representatives Morgan, Quattrocchi, Robert, Nardone, Chippendale and Rea.

The Honorable Marvin Abney asks if there are any other nominations.

Leader Blazejewski seconded by Representative Edwards, moves that nominations be closed.

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

The election of Representative K. Joseph Shekarchi of District 23 in Warwick as Speaker of the House for the years 2023-2024 prevails, on a roll call vote, 64 members voting for Representative Shekarchi and 8 members voting for Minority Leader Chippendale and 1 member absent as follows:

SHEKARCHI-63-Representatives Abney, Ackerman, Ajello, Alzate, Azzinaro, Baginski, Batista, Bennett, Biah, Blazejewski, Boylan, Brien, Caldwell, Cardillo, Carson, Casimiro, Cortvriend, Corvese, Costantino, Cotter, Craven, Cruz, Dawson, DeSimone, Diaz, Donovan, Edwards, Felix, Fellela, Fenton-Fung, Finkelman, Fogarty, Giraldo, Handy, Hull, Kazarian, Kennedy, Kislak, Knight, Lima, Lombardi, Marszalkowski, McEntee, McGaw, McNamara, Messier, Morales, Noret, O'Brien, Perez, Phillips, Place, Potter, Serpa, Shallcross Smith, Shanley, Shekarchi, Slater, Solomon, Speakman, Spears, Tanzi, Vella-Wilkinson and Voas.

CHIPPENDALE-8-Representatives Chippendale, Morgan, Nardone, Newberry, Place, Quattrocchi, Rea and Roberts.

ABSTAINED-3-Representatives Henries, Sanchez and Stewart.

ABSENT-1-Representative Casey.

The Chair declares the Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi of District 23 in Warwick is re-elected Speaker of the House for the years 2023-2024.

OATH OF OFFICE

The House attends while The Honorable Supreme Court Justice Maureen McKenna Goldberg administers the Oath of Office to the Honorable Speaker.

NOW PRESIDING

The Honorable Marvin Abney yields the rostrum to the Honorable Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

The Honorable Speaker Shekarchi requests a moment of silence for the passing of Governor Lincoln Almond.

The Honorable Speaker Shekarchi addresses the members of the House.

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

ELECTION OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

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

Representative Mary Messier, of Pawtucket seconded by Representative Karen Alzate and the entire House of Representatives nominates Francis McCabe to be Clerk of the House for the Session 2023-2024.

There being no further nominations, Representative Messier seconded by Representative Alzate moves that nominations be closed.

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

Representative Messier moves that Representative Alzate be directed to cast one ballot for Francis McCabe to be Clerk of the House for the 2023-2024 Session, seconded by Representative Felix. The motion prevails by unanimous consent on a voice vote.

Representative Alzate casts one ballot for Francis McCabe for the office of the Clerk of the House for the years 2023-2024.

Francis P. McCabe is elected Clerk of the House of the Session 2023-2024.

ELECTION OF RECORDING CLERK OF THE HOUSE

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

Whip Katherine Kazarian, seconded by Representative Matt Dawson, nominates Diane DePina of East Providence to be Recording Clerk of the House for the Session 2023-2024.

There being no further nominations, Whip Kazarian, seconded by Representative Dawson moves that nominations be closed.

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

Whip Kazarian moves that Representative Dawson be directed to cast one ballot for Diane DePina to be Recording Clerk for the 2023-2024 Session, seconded by Representatives Dawson. The motion prevails by unanimous consent on a voice vote.

Representative Dawson casts one ballot for Diane DePina for the office of Recording Clerk of the House for the years 2023-2024.

Diane DePina is elected Recording Clerk of the House of the Session 2023-2024.

OATH OF OFFICE

The Honorable Speaker Shekarchi administers the Oath of Office to the Clerk of the House, Frank McCabe and the Recording Clerk of the House, Diane DePina for the 2023-2024 Session.

COMMUNICATION**Communication from Representative Stephen M. Casey:**

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend today's session on January 3, 2023. Had I been present, I would have voted for K. Joseph Shekarchi for Speaker of the House. I kindly ask that this communication be entered into the House Journal.

Communication from Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi:

I was saddened to learn of the passing of Governor Lincoln Almond, who had a long and distinguished career in public service. He was an outstanding town administrator in Lincoln and was nationally recognized as a U.S. Attorney. He capped off his career with eight years as Governor, always displaying dignity and compassion while working in a bipartisan fashion to accomplish so much for the people of Rhode Island. All of the members of the House of Representatives join me in extending our thoughts and prayers to the family of Governor Almond.

Received and placed on file.**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Minority Leader Chippendale offers remarks. He also congratulates Speaker Shekarchi and looks forward to working together.

Leader Blazejewski offers remarks and congratulates the Speaker in his election and looks forward to working with everyone. Leader Blazejewski would like to introduce Speaker Shekarchi's guests, his sister, Mary Shekarchi, brother, John Shekarchi, cousins, Donna Tramonti Bentfield and Ray and Susan Esposito, US Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Attorney General Peter Neronha and Elizabeth Perik.

Leader Blazejewski announces that session will be held Thursday, January 5th, at 4 p.m. New business can be introduced on Thursday.

Leader Blazejewski asks that members sit in their current seats at the start of Thursday's session and a new Seating Chart will be distributed Thursday that will be effective beginning next Tuesday. This will give members with new seating assignments the time to move their belongings after this Thursday's session.

Also, this Thursday, a photographer will be available in the House Lounge from 3 p.m. until the start of our 4 p.m. session and he will be there again after the session, to take new photos of returning Members for the legislative website and for official purposes.

Leader Blazejewski extends his Happy Birthday wishes to Speaker Pro Tempore Brian Kennedy!

Representative Knight recognizes Representative Jennifer Boylan and welcomes her to the House.

Representative Corvese announce that the Rhode Island Association of Nurses Anesthetists reception has been postponed. He would also like to welcome the DeSimone family to the Chamber.

Representative Cotter would like to thank all of her family and friends who worked hard on helping her on her campaign.

GUESTS

Representative Perez welcomes to the House Chamber his wife, Mayra Perez, his mother, Maritza Gomez and City Councilwoman Ana Vargas.

Representative Henries welcomes to the House Chamber her mother, Halona Woodson and husband, Thomas Woodson, her sister, Odina Ellis and Jarod Radigan.

Representative Vella-Wilkinson welcomes to the House Chamber her husband Kenneth Wilkinson, USAR SGT, retired, Dr. Concetta Archer, (sister), Ian Vella-Wilkinson (son), Amanda Vella-Wilkinson (daughter-in-law), Dr. Schusterman, US Navy, retired (sister) and Sal Caiozzo USAR SGT, retired (friend).

Representative Sanchez welcomes to the House Chamber Corazon Amigon (grandmother), Jacqueline Arreola (mother), Enrique Sanchez (father), Guadalupe Dela Rosa (sister), Stephanie Sanchez (sister), Guadalupe Villasenor (grandmother), Jessica Sanchez (stepmother), Temo Arreola (stepdad) and Miguel Sanchez (brother).

Representative Craven welcomes to the House Chamber the General Treasures new legislative liaison his son Robert Craven, Jr.

Representative Biah welcomes to the House Chamber his wife Thumbelina Biah, son Nathan Biah Jr, daughter Natalie Biah, Gail DeSimone-Tella and Mary DeSimone.

Representative Morales welcomes to the House Chamber his mother Silvia Morales.

Representative McEntee welcomes to the House Chamber her husband, former Representative, Mike McEntee and Nick Edwards from RI 250 committee.

Representative Lima welcomes to the House Chamber Representative Cardillo's wife Patricia and daughters Brianna and Lauren.

Representative Boylan welcomes to the House Chamber Bob and Sheila Smith (parents), Terry Boylan (father-in-law), Terrence Boylan, Jr., (husband), Jamie and Tanner Boylan (sons).

Representative Speakman welcomes to the House Chamber her son Adam Speakman.

Representative Carson welcomes to the House Chamber Sharon Connors, Ryan Patrick Kelly and Guy Cummings.

Representative Shallcross Smith welcomes to the House Chamber Ronald Smith (husband), Christopher Smith and Keith Shallcross (sons) and Amy Shallcross Vogel (daughter).

Minority Leader Chippendale welcomes to the House Chamber his wife Sherri Chippendale, daughter Paige Chippendale and son Seighin Chippendale. He would also like welcome Representative Brian

Rea, his wife, Michelle and their children, Kevin, Breanna, Giovanni Rea, grandchild, Noah Rea, parents, Dominic and Sarah Rea, brother Anthony and wife, Karen Rea.

Representative McGaw welcomes to the House Chamber her husband Jim, her brother, Marc and his wife, Theresa Rousseau.

Representative Tanzi welcomes to the House Chamber and introduces Representative Tina Spears her husband, Forrest Spears and her two sons, River and Ahanu, Kathleen Marra, Kathy Connelly, Tristan Grau and Janice Arragan. Representative Tanzi also welcomes to the House Chamber Representative Cherie Cruz and Randall Cruz (brother), Raymond Plante and Robert Cruz and Richard Cruz (brothers), Charice Cruz (daughter), Terrell Cruz, Aaron Dixon, Christopher Cruz (sons), Cesar Cruz (uncle), Jazzlynn Cruz (granddaughter), Richard Angell (cousin), Renee Cruz (sister), Richard Cruz, Robert Cruz (nephews), Mark Fisher, Jennifer DeMendonca, Richard Addison, Celeste Santiago (sister-in-law) and her late parents Randal and Renee Cruz.

Representative Phillips welcomes to the House Chamber his wife, Nancy E. Phillips and would also like to welcome Representative Brien back to the House Chamber.

Representative Voas welcomes to the House Chamber his father Todd Voas, his brother, Cameron Voas, grandparents, Frances and Robert Pearson and girlfriend, Chelsea Temples.

Representative Serpa would like to recognize her mother Constance Petrarca.

Representative Caldwell welcomes to the House Chamber her children, Escher and Luna and her husband David.

Representative Diaz welcomes to the House Chamber her best friend Everin Perez, Arelys Medina, Noemy Cruz and Candy Danicher.

Representative Slater would like to recognize and welcome to the House John and Diane DeSimone, Anthony, Thomas, John Jr., Gail, Mary DeSimone, Julia and Robert Russo.

Whip Kazarian welcomes to the House Chamber Representative Matt Dawson's family, Bethany (wife), Kelsey and Abby (daughters), Sheila Perkins (mother), Tom Perkins (Stepfather), Erinn Carlsten (sister), Beth DeCosta (aunt), Mary Susan Tavares (aunt) and Manuel Tavares (uncle). She would also like to recognize her mom Michele Kazarian, the Honorable William Irons and his grandson Josh.

Representative Casimiro welcomes to the House Chamber three constituents Joey and Michael Vento and Julia Carrulo. She would also like to introduce Representative Meg Cotter and her husband, Christopher Carter, her children, Emily, Joseph and Charles, grandfather, Harry West, aunt, Maryanne Weldon, sister, Marion Wholey and brother Daniel Connor.

Representative Brien offers remarks and welcomes to the House Chamber his aunt, OBlaine Plant, his father-in-law, Paul Bourget and his wife, Nicole Brien.

Representative Alzate welcomes to the House Chamber and introduces Representative Jennifer Stewart and her husband, Benjamin Evans, her mother, Roze Ketchens and her three children and Olivia, Abby and Zach.

Representative Felix welcomes to the House Chamber her husband, Greg Kowalski, her father and mother-in-law, Donald and Elaina Kowalski and her sister, Gena Felix.

CLARIFICATION

Technical error in original vote count. Correction has been made.

SHEKARCHI-63- Representatives Abney, Ackerman, Ajello, Alzate, Azzinaro, Baginski, Batista, Bennett, Biah, Blazejewski, Boylan, Brien, Caldwell, Cardillo, Carson, Casimiro, Cortvriend, Corvese, Costantino, Cotter, Craven, Cruz, Dawson, DeSimone, Diaz, Donovan, Edwards, Felix, Fellela, Fenton-Fung, Finkelman, Fogarty, Giraldo, Handy, Hull, Kazarian, Kennedy, Kislak, Knight, Lima, Lombardi, Marszalkowski, McEntee, McGaw, McNamara, Messier, Morales, Noret, O'Brien, Perez, Phillips, Potter, Serpa, Shallcross Smith, Shanley, Shekarchi, Slater, Solomon, Speakman, Spears, Tanzi, Vella-Wilkinson and Voas.

CHIPPENDALE-8- Representatives Chippendale, Morgan, Nardone, Newberry, Place, Quattrocchi, Rea and Roberts.

The Chair declares the Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi of District 23 in Warwick is re-elected Speaker of the House for the years 2023-2024.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:01 o'clock P.M. on motion of Majority Leader Blazejewski seconded by Minority Leader Chippendale the House adjourns, on a unanimous voice vote.

Diane M. DePina
Recording Clerk

APPENDIX

INVOCATION

RABBI SARAH MACK

Eternal God at this moment of hope and inspiration we pray for our State Representatives/Senators who serve our state with selfless devotion — those whose noble deeds and sacrifice benefit the great state of Rhode Island.

We are ever grateful for these women and men of inspiration and insight who build our communities with wisdom and vision; Stewards dedicated to justice, unafraid to face the challenges of our day,

Bless these leaders with the fortitude and imagination to solve the complex issues of our times.

May they govern with courage and conscience, upholding our state's highest values and aspirations. Teach them your ways that they may administer affairs fairly, that peace and security, hope and prosperity may abide in our midst.

May they speak against hatred in all its forms and lead us to a time when liberty and equality reign supreme, and prejudice are no more.

Let each of us be an advocate for justice, an activist for liberty and a defender of dignity. Teach us to give thanks for what we have by sharing it with those in need. Help us to hear the silent tears of those who suffer and bless those who accompany the lonely and feed the hungry.

May the State of Rhode Island be an influence for good for all who dwell there that the words of the prophet shall be fulfilled and "light shall shine in the darkness."

Amen.

APPENDIX**SPEAKER SHEKARCHI'S ADDRESS**

Members of the House, Honored Guests, Family and Friends:

I'd like to extend my deepest appreciation to Chairman Marvin Abney for doing an outstanding job as the presiding officer at this session and for the tremendous work he has done as the Chair of our Finance Committee for nearly a decade.

Thank you to Speaker Pro Tempore Brian Patrick Kennedy and Representative Leonela Felix for your kind words in placing my name into nomination.

Brian is starting his 35th year in the House and as I told the freshmen at their Orientation, he will still be in this chamber long after they are gone! Today is also Brian's birthday...Happy birthday, Brian!

To all those who supported me today, I sincerely thank you. I am honored and humbled and will strive to live up to the trust you have placed in me.

I'd especially like to thank Majority Leader Chris Blazewski for being my partner in government, my trusted advisor and a good friend. The House has had so many incredible accomplishments over the past two years – and these could not have been done without the hard work and careful guidance of Leader Blazewski.

To Minority Leader Mike Chippendale – as you begin your first session in your new role, I offer you my congratulations and best wishes. While Mike and I may not always agree on every issue, we have always shown mutual respect for each other and we both share a deep respect for this House. Mike, I look forward to working with you and your caucus.

I'd also like to thank Supreme Court Justice Maureen McKenna Goldberg for again swearing me in. And, thank you to my good friend and former House colleague, Secretary of State Gregg Amore, for administering the oath of office to all of us.

To my sister Mary, thank you for standing with me today and to all of my family, I appreciate your support as well.

Thank you all.

Two years ago, when Leader Blazewski and I stood before many of you, we pledged to make this a member-driven body and committed to a new spirit of collaboration – not only within the House, but also with all partners in government.

Since that first day, we have worked to bring people together and we have focused on building consensus in pursuit of the common good. At the end of the day, regardless of where we stand on the issues, we all come into this room with the BEST interests of our own constituents — and the entire state — at heart.

I believe a strong spirit of collaboration has helped us accomplish so much: the past two-year term was one of the most productive in recent history. The legislation we passed was the result of many, many hours of hard work. For that, I thank you. I am so proud to lead this very diverse and talented group of lawmakers.

Over the last two years, we laid a solid groundwork and have achieved so much:

Unprecedented investments in housing – more than \$250 million dollars, the establishment of the first-ever permanent funding stream for affordable housing in Rhode Island and the creation of a Housing Secretary

The best two years of environmental policy-making in Rhode Island history, including passage of the historic Act on Climate

And, in the past two years, we have passed three fair and balanced budgets in which we have not raised taxes

In fact, we have implemented strategic tax relief that impacts virtually all Rhode Islanders, including the permanent elimination of the car tax.

As we embark on a new legislative term, we need to build upon this foundation. We will continue to meet the needs of today while putting ourselves in the best position to solve the problems of tomorrow.

We have made progress in tackling Rhode Island's housing crisis. However, we need to do much more. Our lack of affordable housing has been exposed in recent months. There can be no doubt we have a housing crisis and a homelessness crisis. As long as there are people without safe and permanent housing, our work is not done.

In the last session, we created two commissions, which have been working diligently to look at many of the barriers to housing production in Rhode Island. One commission, led by Chairwoman June Speakman, is studying the state's Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act. The other commission is made up of a team of experts studying land use more generally.

I am incredibly proud of the work of both commissions and look forward to receiving their recommendations, which we hope will lead to even more housing legislation this year to aggressively and creatively tackle this critical issue. In order to find solutions to our housing crisis, we need to bring all parties to the table, including cities and towns. As our commissions have already heard, some of the barriers to housing production must be addressed at the local level.

While we have built and funded a solid framework over the past two years, now we must ensure that the directives we have set forth are executed swiftly and efficiently.

As the stewards of the state's budget, our single most important duty as a House, we must make certain that taxpayer resources are leveraged judiciously. We have allocated unprecedented investments in housing, healthcare and human services. We must ensure these dollars are deployed effectively, expeditiously and prudently. We must be steadfast in ensuring that the legislation and funding we have all worked so diligently to craft is implemented.

Because, while we have weathered the storm of COVID-19, there is another real and impending storm on the horizon: the recession of 2023. While we continue working to strengthen our economy now, we must anticipate and prepare for the economy of tomorrow.

There is no reason why Rhode Island cannot be a leader in the bio-life science field. Our world-class healthcare and higher education institutions and our bio-manufacturing companies, combined with our closeness to other metropolitan areas, uniquely position Rhode Island to become a hub for life sciences.

The emerging green economy also presents a host of opportunities for us to create new jobs while we move away from reliance on carbon fuels. I want to build on our last two years of historic accomplishments in environmental initiatives. We must continue striving to meet the renewable energy goals and the guidelines outlined in the Act on Climate.

We also need to make sure that the next generation of our workforce is trained and ready – we must ensure that all of our students are able to achieve greatness and are prepared for success.

As we build on the accomplishments of the last two years, we will continue to maintain the transparency that has been the hallmark of this House. We better serve the public when our government is open and accessible.

I ask you to join me in committing to these ideals.

This is a very special day for our freshmen members and their families. Thank you to the families of the new members for sharing them with us. No doubt, you have already learned how much hard work goes into being a State Representative!

I am very impressed with this class of 12 freshmen – their energy, passion and commitment to the issues. This is a GREAT class.

And, they are joining a GREAT House.

To my colleagues in this chamber, I believe in you. I am excited to continue the work we've started and to accomplish even more. We will work together to get good things done this session.

Thank you. God Bless you all.