

EMBARGOED UNTIL 7:30 P.M.

Governor Deval L. Patrick
State of the Commonwealth Address
State House, Boston, MA

Thursday, January 21, 2010

As Prepared for Delivery

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, and Members of the House and Senate, Lieutenant Governor, Fellow Constitutional Officers, and Members of the Cabinet, Members of the Honorable Judiciary, Congressman and Mrs. Capuano, Mayor Menino and Other Municipal Leaders, Reverend Clergy, Distinguished Guests, and above all, the People of Massachusetts.

I want to first acknowledge and thank my First Lady and yours, Diane Patrick. She has done marvelous work around the Commonwealth on domestic violence issues. Diane, I think people have come to be almost as grateful to have you in their lives as I am to have you in mine.

And please join Diane and me in thanking the men and women of Massachusetts who serve in the United States military -- and their families. We are all in your debt.

Special thanks to Pastor Laguerre, who joins us tonight for the invocation. We pray with you for rescue for the Haitian people, comfort for their families and friends here in the Commonwealth, strength for the relief workers from Massachusetts who are on the ground now in Haiti, and blessings for all the good people of this Commonwealth who have offered support to the victims.

I want to commend all three candidates in the special election for a spirited campaign, and to congratulate our United States Senator-elect Scott Brown. I pledge to work with him as I do the whole delegation on behalf of the best interests of the people of the Commonwealth. The best news is that -- even on a cold, snowy day in January, for an out-of-cycle election -- the voters came out in force and engaged in their democracy. At a time when many feel powerless, people reminded themselves and us that they have all the power they need to make all the change they want.

Three years ago when I took the oath of office on the steps outside this building, I described a vision for a better, stronger Commonwealth. I talked about good jobs at good wages all across the state, a great school in every neighborhood, and citizens with a renewed sense of community, where each of us sees the stake we have in each other's dreams and struggles.

I knew the challenges before us, and acknowledged them. Young people were leaving our state. There was no real plan for job growth. Our public schools were too often failing poor children. Our roads and bridges were broken. Health care reform had passed, but had not been implemented. And the culture of Beacon Hill, with due respect, was famously resistant to outsiders and to change.

We chose to confront these challenges, not because it was politically expedient or popular, certainly not because it was easy. But because we understood the stake we have in each other; because people need not big or small government, for its own sake, but good government; and because confronting these challenges was the only way to build a better, stronger Commonwealth.

Our task was made harder by bumps along the road – some of my own making, others left behind by predecessors, but most the result of a global economic collapse that no one foresaw and few living have ever experienced. That economic meltdown produced \$9 billion budget gaps, cuts to worthy programs, and elimination of thousands of state jobs. Just like in household after household, and business after business, we in state government have had to make do with less, to improvise and innovate, to work harder. But because we made it personal, because we understood that a better, stronger Commonwealth would lift us all up, we kept going.

The toll this global economic crisis has taken on people here at home has made me even more determined. I meet people every day, and I see the anxiety in their faces. I hear their stories of lost jobs or lost homes, of lost retirement accounts or lost hope. I know they are stressed not just for themselves, but because there are still kids to be educated and parents to be cared for. I met a grandmother at the Career Center in Lynn this month who told me about moving her son and daughter and their kids, 9 strong, into her home because they're out of work and strapped for cash: now she has lost her job. She's not asking for much, just a chance to work to provide for her family, and a little help holding on until she can make her own way. Meanwhile, like so many other citizens, she is feeling powerless against forces beyond her control. This is not the American Dream she counted on. And it is not the one we will accept.

For her, for every other striver who aches for a better, stronger Commonwealth, we kept faith with our vision and kept going. Too fast for some, not fast enough for others, learning from our mistakes as well as our triumphs, but always forward. Without ever losing sight of who we are working for.

So, working together, we closed that \$9 billion budget gap and delivered a third consecutive budget that was responsible, balanced and on time – not something many other states have been able to do. But we also worked to understand and address the impact each cut would have on the people who depended on the program, and to deliver the service in more efficient ways. We made it personal.

To create jobs, we leveraged our world-class universities and health care institutions, making investments in biotech, life sciences and green technology so that

the people of Massachusetts would have opportunities in the innovation economy of tomorrow. But we also went to work calling individual business leaders about locating or expanding here, working out ways to help them prosper and create jobs – 10, 50 or 200 at a time, making sure the workforce was trained, and extending unemployment and health care benefits to help families hold it together in the short run. We made it personal.

We did the hard work of implementing health care reform so that now nearly every man, woman and child in the Commonwealth have reliable health insurance, and we are a model for the Nation. But because we know many families and small businesses are struggling to afford the premiums they pay, we went to work to drive down costs, hauling insurance companies into public hearings to explain why premiums keep going up when everything else is coming down. We made it personal.

In a time of dwindling state revenue, we funded public schools at the highest level in history. In the budget I file next week, I will propose to do it again by fully funding the education budget through Chapter 70 next year, so that no school will see a cut in state support. But because schools need innovation as well as money in order to be great, we made law and history this week by signing an education reform bill that will put a great school within reach of every child in every corner of the Commonwealth. We made it personal.

We did all that and more together this past year. And I want to thank President Murray, Speaker DeLeo and each Senate and House member for your willingness to work with us, frequently across Party lines, and take the tough votes that will make a better, stronger Commonwealth.

I also want to thank the members of the Cabinet and their teams for your creativity and tenacity, and the state workers who – despite furloughs, contract concessions, pay freezes, and increased health care contributions -- go to work every day trying to do right by the people we serve.

Change is never easy and rarely quick. Woodrow Wilson once said, “If you want to make enemies, try to change something.” Lord knows he was right! But it is worthy. Because we are together building the foundation for a better, stronger Commonwealth.

Don't just take my word for it. Here are the facts:

For the first time in twenty years, more people are moving into our state than are moving out.

Business confidence has improved 9 of the last 10 months, which means more investment and more jobs ahead.

Home sales are up for the fifth consecutive month – 59% in November alone.

All three national rating agencies have affirmed the state's AA credit rating and stable outlook for the future, expressly citing our successful management of this fiscal crisis.

Massachusetts is one of the few states in the country able to access the bond markets to fund our student loan program.

We are first in the Nation in student achievement for the third straight year and first in the Nation in health care coverage, with over 97 percent insured.

Our clean and alternative energy initiatives set national standards. We will increase wind power 10-fold and solar power 15-fold by next year, and in the solar industry have more than doubled the number of jobs and quadrupled the number of companies.

Still, people sometimes ask what this means for them.

Well, a good credit rating means we can do construction projects like Assembly Square in Somerville or the Appleton Mills redevelopment in Lowell or the Route 7 improvements in Pittsfield or the Route 24 ramp in Fall River, projects that put people to work now, create other jobs shortly, and improve the quality of our lives for years. It means people like R. Evans Stewart can get a state-subsidized student loan to help his grandson pursue his dreams at Western New England College.

Implementing health reform well means peace of mind for people like Jaclyn Michalos from Norwell, who would not have had her breast cancer diagnosed and successfully treated without access to affordable care, or finding a cost effective way to cover over 26,000 immigrants who live and work here legally and pay taxes into the system.

Simplifying the transportation network and abolishing the Turnpike Authority means we saved taxpayers a quarter billion dollars and can put toll and T fare hikes off while we focus on better service for commuters.

Holding the line on funding for schools or passing the ed reform bill means the kids I meet at Arlington or East Boston High Schools, or the South Middle School in Brockton, or the University Park Campus School in Worcester, or the Walsh School in Framingham, or the poor and special needs kids I hold in my heart, will get the chance I got to make a better life for themselves and their families.

Investing in clean and alternative energy, or the life sciences and biotech, means Dan Leary, an Iraq War vet, can hire more people at his solar installation company in North Andover (he's up to 45 so far); and Randy Moquin can get trained, get off unemployment and go to work as an energy auditor out in Springfield; and Josh Hamilton can build a Center for Regenerative Medicine in Woods Hole and start to transform the future of human health.

Investing in infrastructure means that, now and even more in the spring construction season, new bridges will be built; exit ramps and roads are being restored; broadband cable is being laid under I-91; stations, office parks, medical research buildings, and parking garages are going up -- investments that put people to work today and become the economic enabler of tomorrow.

Ending the abuse in the state pension system and tightening the ethics and lobbying rules means state government is focused again on the people's business and not personal gain.

Governing for people, the ways your government can help you help yourselves, is why we come to work every day. By investing in people, by making it personal, we are building a better, stronger Commonwealth for all of us.

I know there's much more to do. And I will not be satisfied until it's done.

Unemployment, even with the disappointing numbers released today, is not as high here as the national average, but I will not be satisfied until we have put all our people back to work.

More people than ever are insured, but I will not be satisfied until the cost of health insurance is lower, especially for small businesses and working families.

I will not be satisfied until CORI and sentencing reform are enacted into law and we start getting as smart on crime as we are tough.

We have worked together to give local communities new tools to cut costs and raise revenues, to regionalize more municipal services. But I will not be satisfied until we can find a way to bring property taxes down.

I will not be satisfied until we have reshaped and reinvented state government itself, consolidated more agencies and wrung out of them every inefficiency.

That must be our agenda and I will not be satisfied until it's finished. And neither should you.

These are tough issues, I know. But by now you should know, my friends, not to doubt my resolve or my determination. I hear the detractors who fiercely or passively defend the status quo. I hear the challengers pressing to return to old, familiar ways, even policies that failed us in the past. But I also hear a public deeply frustrated with the pace of change, who need a little help from us right now so they can help themselves. Our job is to be leaders for them. To stand up and make the hard decisions to build a better, stronger Commonwealth. We must make it personal.

To the people of the Commonwealth, above all, especially those whose lives have been disrupted by this economy, you are not powerless. And you are not alone. If

we here work together and creatively, we can make a difference where it matters, not on our resumes but in your lives. We have shown we can with historic reforms already, and we must redouble our efforts. We will do our part. You must also do yours.

Be angry – but channel it in a positive direction. It's easy to be against something. It takes tough-mindedness and political courage to be for something.

In Massachusetts, at our best, we are for each other, we are about seeing our stake in our neighbors' dreams and struggles as well as our own.

I know some kids who understand this well.

The high school in Brockton, Massachusetts is the largest in our Commonwealth. 4100 young people go to that school. Sixty-four percent are on the free lunch program. For nearly half, English is a foreign language. I visited the school last spring to announce some of the federal stimulus funding for education and arranged to meet beforehand with parents of special needs students.

I sat with about a dozen of these parents in the school library, surrounded by members of the student council who had come to observe. At first we talked about programs and policies and information, but the conversation got personal, when one mother asked me to imagine what it is like to have a child in school who has no friends. As a parent myself, the comment was searing. Her child's learning issues were so profound that other kids just shunned him.

At that point, one of the student council members raised her hand and said, "I want to be your child's buddy here in the high school." It was beautiful and spontaneous.

Another parent then said, "Well, that's nice, but my child is in the grammar school and has similar issues." Which prompted another student to raise her hand and say, "Why don't we have a program where high school students can be buddies for special needs kids in whatever Brockton school they attend?"

The superintendent had a natural reaction: he began to worry aloud about how, in these times of scarce resources, he could possibly pay for such a program. To which another student replied, "We don't have to be paid. This is our community." His message was plain and powerful: "If there is a need, send me."

That program now has a name, the Boxer Buddies, is going strong, and I am proud to acknowledge the Buddies who are here tonight.

The point is this. In a city as hard hit as any by the economic crisis, these young people did not sit around wondering and worrying what to do and who was going to do it. They did not accept that they were powerless. They saw a need and met it, and

found power in service itself. And through that not only have they inspired me and many others, but they also built a better, stronger community.

Brick by brick. Block by block. Neighborhood by neighborhood. Town by town. That is what each of us must do. That is who each of us must be. That is the opportunity today's crisis presents us. If we seize it, I am certain our best days lie ahead.

Thank you. God bless you all and God bless the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.