

SENATE No. 00001

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Eleven.

Lt. Governor Murray, Fellow Constitutional Officers and Members of the Governor's Council; Madam President, Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislature; Mr. Chief Justice and Members of the Judiciary; Mayor Menino and the Many Other Mayors and Local Officials present; Reverend Clergy; Distinguished Guests and Friends; and above all The People of the Commonwealth:

Four years ago, I challenged you to take a chance on your own aspirations -- on hope for an economy based on innovation and opportunity, on hope for better schools and universal health care, on hope for better politics.

Four years ago, hope was in short supply. Young people and jobs were leaving our state. Roads and bridges were crumbling. Health care reform had passed, but had not yet been implemented. Stem cell research was restricted. Our clean energy potential was undermined by refusal to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative or to support Cape Wind. And we had had too many years of leadership more interested in having the job than doing the job.

Together we set out on a journey to change that. Along the way, the global economy collapsed. Thousands of people lost jobs, lost savings, lost homes. Many, maybe some of you, lost confidence. People all over the Commonwealth began to wonder whether the American Dream itself was up for grabs.

Times like these are more than a test of policy. They are a test of character.

So, when the going got tough, we didn't look for scapegoats or run for cover. We

didn't lose our temper or our way. Growing up in rough times and rough circumstances taught me not to just curl up and wait for better times. No, what I learned was that optimism and effort, hope and hard work, is the only way to climb out of a hole.

So, just like families across the Commonwealth, we took a fresh look at our plan, stiffened our resolve, and made choices.

We chose to invest in education, in health care, and in job creation, because we all know that educating our kids, being able to count on good health care, and having a job is the path to a better future.

And that's why today Massachusetts leads the Nation in student achievement and health care coverage for our residents.

That's why we are creating jobs faster than most other states, why our unemployment rate is well below the national average, why we're coming out of recession faster than the rest of the country, and why CNBC has moved our state up to the fifth best place in America to do business.

That's why we won the national Race to the Top competition and why we will be home to America's first offshore wind farm.

That's also why the CORI system finally got fixed. And why veterans serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world know that we will look after their families when they are away and help them when they come home.

That's why today for the first time in 20 years young people and families are moving into the Commonwealth faster than they are moving out.

None of this is happening by accident. It's happening because of the choices we made, the investments you, the Legislature and the people of the Commonwealth, have supported. This and more is happening because we didn't just sit around and wait for better times. We are building a better future for all of us -- by making better choices.

Not everyone supports every choice we've made. Some of those choices have made even some of our political allies uncomfortable. But this job and these times demand more than making each other comfortable. The times demand that we face the hard choices before us with candor and courage, and that we act -- because doing so today will make us stronger tomorrow.

And we need to keep an eye on tomorrow.

I read a newspaper article some while ago that compared the so-called Greatest Generation to my generation, the Baby Boom Generation. The article described the Greatest Generation as the generation that fought and won the Second World War and then rebuilt Europe; the generation that then came home and built great public institutions and universities and the federal highway system; that created the social safety net we so worry about today; that launched the modern civil rights movement.

Then the article described my generation as the "grasshopper generation," because we have been feeding off of that all our lives.

Look around you. The University of Massachusetts and MIT, the Mass Pike, the park or rink in your neighborhood, the T, the good school in the distinguished old building down the block, the world class hospital, Tanglewood, Logan Airport, the police and fire stations and the people who serve in them – none of it sprang fully formed from thin air. Each is the result of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents asking themselves what they must do in their time to leave things better for the generation to come, and then sacrificing for it. They saw their stake not just in themselves, but in their neighbors; not just in their times but in tomorrow. They bore their generational responsibility. Now, so must we.

We must demand more of ourselves than rhetoric that divides us and leadership that kicks every tough decision down the road. We must demand more not just of our public leaders, but also of our private ones – and of ourselves as individual citizens. Generational responsibility belongs to all of us. Every one of us owes a debt to the future payable only by making the kinds of choices today that build a better, stronger Commonwealth for tomorrow.

And so the work of the second term looms before us. That means jobs to create, schools to strengthen, health care costs to reduce, and urban violence to end. Working together we have made progress on many of these fronts. But this is no time to be satisfied.

We can't be satisfied until every single resident who seeks work can find it. That means we must invest in education, in the innovation industries that are expanding opportunity around the Commonwealth, in the small businesses that are the backbone of our economy, and in the infrastructure that supports it all.

We must reduce the costs of doing business here, and make it easier for companies to

hire people by removing unwarranted barriers, be they outdated regulations, escalating health insurance premiums, or limits on capital access for small businesses.

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□ And as more and more Massachusetts companies compete nationally and internationally for sales, jobs, investors, and talent, we must answer their call, by helping to promote the attractions of doing business and creating jobs right here in the Commonwealth. Expect me to lead more trade missions here in the States and abroad, to lobby hard for our interests in Washington and elsewhere, to be your jobs advocate. We have the tools to compete. We have the talent, the tradition of invention, the venture capital, the ideas. And so we will compete ? for every job, in every industry, in every corner of the Commonwealth, and the world.

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□ We can?t be satisfied until a great school is within reach of every young person in the Commonwealth. That means we must find the ways to invest in public schools, from early education to public universities, because young people get their chance now and don?t have the option to sit out their education until the recession is over.

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□ And it is critical that we use the tools we have in the landmark Achievement Gap Act, which the Legislature passed and I signed only last year, to support the imagination and creativity of great teachers, principals, parent groups, and business partners, to reach the poor children and children with special needs and children who speak English as a second language ? the children on whose preparation and optimism our future economy and quality of life depend.

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□ We will close the achievement gap in Massachusetts and continue to show leadership in public education. Being first in the Nation is a good start. But being first in the world is where we are headed.

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□ We can?t be satisfied until health care is as affordable as it is accessible. That means creating incentives for all providers to work together to deliver better care at lower cost, improving transparency in the charges for services, reforming the medical malpractice system, and getting excessive paperwork out of the way of the relationship between doctor and patient. It means a new emphasis on wellness and prevention.

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□ And it means that we must change the way we pay for health care. So, we will file legislation in the coming weeks to address health care cost, including significant payment reform and simplification. This will be a challenge. There will be great debate and resistance to change. But working families, small and large businesses alike, and governments, too, need a solution ? and they need it now.

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Some steps we can take immediately without waiting for new laws. At my direction, MassHealth, the Health Care Connector and the Group Insurance Commission will implement pilot programs to demonstrate new, more cost-effective ways to buy health care. To get different results, we need to start trying different things. And we need to start now.

We will work on these and other plans with our partners in the health care industry and in Washington, as well as with patient advocates. Everyone -- insurers, hospitals, physicians, nurses, and other medical professionals, and especially patients -- needs to be a part of this solution. But let me be clear: The time for talk is over. The time for action has arrived.

We can't be satisfied until children stop killing other children, until we have developed and implemented a comprehensive strategy for preventing youth violence, one that ends the despair felt by too many young people and the fear felt by everybody else. It's time to move beyond ideas and programs that may once have worked but don't today, and stale alliances to individual budget line items.

I don't have all the answers, and that frustrates me deeply. But I know the answers are out there. So, we will engage the full spectrum of people who work with young people -- educators and law enforcement, street workers and clergy, human services providers and business leaders, victim advocates, and survivors, whoever is willing to help support and love a young person on to a positive future. The cycle of violence and poverty in any community is a threat to every community. It threatens our fundamental belief in opportunity for all and it must stop.

More jobs. Stronger schools for all our children. Affordable health care. Safer neighborhoods. That's the work of our second term. We cannot be satisfied -- and I will not be satisfied -- until we have done all we can in each of these areas. Only in this way will we bear our responsibility to leave this place better than we found it for our sake and for a generation yet to come.

That is my commitment and the commitment of my administration to the people of Massachusetts.

That also means continuing to improve the way our government serves people. We have a pension system that needs further reform, cities and towns that need more tools to cut their costs, a re-entry system (both in probation and parole) that needs to regain the public's confidence, sentencing laws that need coherence, a tax code that needs simplicity and fairness.

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□None of this is simple. All of it is challenging. Fortunately, we also have a legislature that has shown its willingness to take tough votes, public employee unions willing to work with us in respectful partnership, appointees who understand that the public's interest comes first, an attentive and engaged electorate, and a governor who has shown you I will stand up to anybody to bear our generational responsibility. We have what we need to do what's right. Now is the time to fix what's broken.

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□To meet these responsibilities, I challenge us all to turn to each other, not on each other. Let us bring our passion not to scoring political points but to finding real solutions. Let us bear our generational responsibility together.

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□Because there are real needs in real people's lives at stake.

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□Nothing we say or do here today will long be remembered. What will be remembered, what will last, is the light we let shine in our neighbor's lives and in our Commonwealth. And in some fundamental way, that is all about service and sacrifice.

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□The service and sacrifice of the soldiers or police officers or fire fighters who put themselves in harm's way abroad and at home for the rest of us.

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□The service and sacrifice of the teachers who come in early and stay well past the class day to help a child master her reading.

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□The service and sacrifice of the immigrant who works three jobs to provide the signature American opportunity he once lay awake dreaming of in a distant homeland.

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□The service and sacrifice of our parents and grandparents, of our aunts and uncles and cousins and the old ladies in my old neighborhood, and neighborhoods all across the Commonwealth, who chose through some gesture, great or small, to make a better way for each one of us.

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□What is at stake is the American Dream. It is worth fighting for, worth serving and sacrificing for. I say that not just as your Governor, but also as someone who has lived it. Make no mistake: for that reason, I will give everything I have to move this agenda forward.

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□On Saturday, through something we call Project 351, we will gather 8th graders from every single city and town in the Commonwealth for a day of service. They are remarkable young people, who are already contributing to making a better community.

They are young people like Angelidi Monegro from Lawrence, who serves as a companion to children with severe disabilities and volunteers at the local food pantry.

Kids like Stephen Vercollone of Pembroke, who as one of 11 children, led a school drive to create holiday packages for our troops in Afghanistan, where his older brother is currently stationed.

The point of Project 351 is to lift up their examples, to encourage the substance and the spirit of their work, and the parents, teachers and communities that inspire them, and to send them back to their communities as a beacon and a challenge for the rest of us. Service for them is not just about what they do, but also about who they are. Surely, if these 8th graders can find a way to serve, a way to bear their generational responsibility, the rest of us can also.

In that same spirit of service and sacrifice, we embark on the journey of this second administration, humbled by the public trust, invigorated by the task, confident in our plans, committed to our responsibility to build a better Commonwealth, and certain that with optimism and effort, and the grace of God, our best days lie ahead.

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