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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND ELEVEN

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In the Year Two Thousand Eleven.

Lieutenant Governor Timothy P. Murray

Inaugural Address -- 2011

State House, Boston, MA

Thursday, January 6, 2011

On Inauguration Day, four years ago, I stood before you and recalled the words of John Adams when I asked us to go forward and cheerfully engage the opportunities and challenges that confronted us, knowing that our task was both difficult and worthy.

There can be little doubt that our task was difficult, more difficult than any of us could have imagined.

And now, as we embark on a new term and begin the next chapter in the enduring story of our Commonwealth, we continue to face many difficult decisions.

So if we can agree that the task ahead is difficult, the open question for us today is this: Is our task worthy?

Or to put it another way, what is the appropriate role of state government in our lives? And how should we frame our actions to reflect the ideals of our history?

These are not trivial questions.

□ Some will argue that government is the root of all of our problems. But I learned, long ago, that they are wrong. Our free and elected state government is and must be an expression of our worthy aspirations.

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□ To illustrate this point, let me take you back to 1991, when Massachusetts was dealing with many of the same challenges we face today? though not as severe.

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□ At that time, I was going to law school at night and working full-time during the day as a housing advocate at a non-profit agency in Framingham. My job was, primarily, to assist single women and their children who were either homeless or on the verge of being homeless. Some were already in shelters, others were living with friends or family, and our agency had a contract with the state to help find them stable and affordable housing.

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□ Soon after I started the job, I began working with a woman who had three young children and was at risk of eviction from her apartment because she owed back rent. Her estranged husband was a Vietnam veteran who had struggled with what he'd been through in that war and he'd been in and out of their lives for some time.

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□ She worked as much as she could around her children's school schedule to earn enough to meet her monthly expenses, but it was tough with three young children at home.

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□ We met almost weekly, for nearly two years, and one way or another we managed to keep her and her children in that apartment.

□ Her landlord was a decent man, and more than once he agreed to wait a few more weeks for the back rent owed, as she struggled to work as many hours as she could.

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□ And I worked with her to navigate the tangled and often disconnected array of human service programs, both public and private, to find any help that was available for her.

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□ Through it all, I was struck by her strength and her determination? but most of all, by her attitude. She was in a very tough situation. She'd had some bad breaks in life, but she always seemed hopeful, never bitter? though, I'm sure she had difficult moments because of all that she was dealing with.

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□ Well, a couple of years passed, and I left that housing job to work as a law clerk.

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□ Another advocate took over this family's case, and we all moved on. Then, sometime in 2005, when I was Mayor of Worcester, I got an email from this woman. She wanted to know if I was the same Tim Murray who had worked as a housing advocate in Framingham back in the early 1990s. I responded to her yes, and we spoke. We met for

coffee and we've stayed in touch over the years.

Without compromising her privacy, I asked her permission to tell you her story today, because it's relevant to the question of the worthiness of our task. And the rest of her story is the proof positive. You see, a while after I left the housing agency, she was approved for a housing voucher. That meant the constant threat of homelessness was over. Having stable housing marked a turning point for her, and her children.

She continued to work as many hours as possible and then enrolled in a community college. After completing the program, she went on to Framingham State College and earned a degree, which helped her secure a full-time job. She no longer needed the housing voucher, and a few years later, she bought her own home—which, by the way, was in a 40-b affordable housing neighborhood.

Today, she's still working hard, and she's put her all three of her children through college, two of whom went to our state's public universities. And she's proud to report they are all doing well.

Now, this family is not famous. We don't read about them on the front page, or see them on the six o'clock news. This woman doesn't feel entitled to anything more than the freedom to live her life, raise her family, and contribute to the community around her. And she's the first to admit that without that temporary help from the government, and without other acts of support and kindness from her community and private citizens, she would not be where she is today.

Her story demonstrates, that in some shape, manner or form, the work we do here impacts every member of the Massachusetts family, somehow, or in some way.

To me, this is why our work is worthy.

This is what it means to be a Commonwealth.

Over the past four years, working with Governor Patrick, I've had the great privilege to lead our administration in several areas that focus on fundamental issues, like housing and homelessness. And whether it is making sure everyone in Massachusetts has a roof over their heads—or a safe and reliable transportation network—or safe communities and good schools for their children—what we strive to do is make government work better.

It may not be glamorous, but it's the every-day blocking and tackling that makes government more efficient and effective. And in this spirit, we've completed many important reforms around transportation, education, pensions and other matters over the

past four years.

And we know that the additional work that lies ahead will require new models and paradigms for how we deliver services. We will reach out to work with municipal leaders and employees to control health insurance costs in an expeditious and fair manner?we will establish a transportation infrastructure bank to continue our work in modernizing the state's transportation system?in these and other initiatives, we have hard work to do, and I know that if we work together, we can achieve success.

Nearly 50 years ago?in this chamber, President Elect Kennedy quoted Pericles when he said of this Commonwealth: ?we do not imitate, for we are a model to others?. So today, I say, let us be a model of action and thoughtfulness in tackling the challenges ahead? never losing sight of the fact that we truly are a Commonwealth.

The preamble to our state Constitution reminds us that, we live in ?a social compact by which the whole people covenants with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed?.for the common good.?

That means creating an environment for economic opportunity, while helping those among us who need it most so that ultimately every citizen contributes and benefits.

Throughout our history, in the boom times and in the difficult times, the people of Massachusetts have risen to this challenge. They have found a way to innovate, adapt and get the job done. And the compassion of the people of Massachusetts is expressed through the framework of their free and elected government, to provide for the common good.

In this way, we maintain the fabric of our communities and preserve the ideals of our Commonwealth for the next generation.

This is a worthy goal?it is our shared goal.

It is what I believe in; it is what Governor Patrick believes in?

And today I ask the people of Massachusetts for their support, their good ideas, and to join us as we set upon this worthy task.

Thank you.