

*As prepared for delivery*

**Senate President Rosenberg Speech - January 4, 2017**

Thank you very much. And a very warm welcome to all the new and returning members of the Massachusetts State Senate.

Making your way to this chamber and back again is no small achievement. You have worked hard to earn the trust of the voters and your achievement is celebrated here. We enthusiastically welcome you to this historic chamber today.

And I want to take a moment to thank all my constituents and friends who sent me first to the Senate 25 years ago and who have continued to support me for these many years. Without them, I would never have gotten to this rostrum today. And, a special shout out to my husband

Bryon for his unwavering support and to those from my district who have joined me here today.

Two years ago almost to the day, I stood before you, the members of the Senate, filled with gratitude for the trust you put in me.

Today, I have no less gratitude than I had on that first day. Thank you for giving me the chance to lead this body over the last 2 years and in the new term we begin today.

On that day, we set on a course to remake our common experience as members of the Senate – to institute what we called shared leadership.

As I said then, the hallmarks of all modern, effective, and innovative organizations are collaboration, collegiality, and openness. People working together, and sharing their talents and insights to craft the best possible results.

We also pledged to remake our relationship with the people of Massachusetts, to bring residents into the building and to bring the building to them, in part through our series of Commonwealth Conversations led by Senator Rodrigues. Today, we will pass a resolution to begin those talks anew, meeting nine days in communities across the state in the coming months.

Our new era of shared leadership has yielded shared success. The agreement we reached a few weeks ago with Speaker DeLeo and the House to maintain the standing joint committees while making them work more effectively and with greater transparency is yet another step in that process. I applaud Speaker DeLeo's partnership on this and so many other issues.

The Legislature is a venerable institution, steeped in history and deliberative in nature. Today, our chambers need to maintain their greatest qualities while becoming more nimble, moving more quickly without compromising quality.

New York Times columnist Tom Friedman has a new best seller called “Thank You for Being Late,” a title meant to underscore the conundrum of living in a world in which change is rapid and unrelenting.

Consider this simple example we face here in Massachusetts. One of our achievements last year was to pass legislation regulating the new ride-sharing industry. Go back just five years ago to an era when there were no Ubers, no Lyfts, no ride sharing of any kind. Instead, we have had a regulated taxi industry for generations.

Then, in a blink of an eye, the taxi industry – and its regulatory framework – was upended. Suddenly, new competition created by technologists on the other side of the continent caused massive disruption here – across the world, to the marketplace and to the law. In fact, for the better part of these past five or six years, these companies operated with no real rules at all.

Suddenly, we as a legislature had to act quickly and decisively – not incrementally. We had to regulate the new ride-sharing industry almost overnight. We did our homework, listened to stakeholders, debated the issues and put a law on the books last year.

It would be nice now to rest on our laurels, to confidently move on from this to other matters.

Except for this: In as few as five years from now, autonomous vehicles will again turn our world upside down. Not only will the Ubers and Lyfts of the world be offering rides to Americans in driverless cars, but the rest of us will also have the chance to replace our fossil fueled, gas taxed vehicles with all-electric vehicles. All electric autonomous vehicles will present us with a new set of public finance, legal, liability, and safety challenges. Once again, we will need to move quickly and deftly to handle this new disruption. So the rate of changes in demand response transportation went from generations to a handful of years not once but twice in a decade.

And this is but one small example. Climate change, energy, and education – the issues are coming at us at a fast and furious rate.

In a sense, we in Massachusetts are among the lucky ones. To a great degree, we count rapid change and globalization among our friends. For the highly educated especially, these forces create enormous opportunities in IT, life sciences, health care and many other fields.

At the same time, these forces push down wages for some or simply displace others, as the cashier gives way to the automated checkout and the bank teller gives way to the mobile app.

As has been well documented this year, these forces are exacerbating the tensions we identified two years ago as central to our debates: the gnawing disparity in incomes in our state and nation; the difficulties faced by those whose wages are not rising; the frustrations endured by those who don't have a job but want one; the pain of working at a minimum wage job that fails to pay the bills.

And it is not just the poor or near poor. It's the middle class family whose income and home value have never fully recovered from the Great Recession, who struggle mightily just to send their children to college.

These problems in Massachusetts are chiefly national, and are shared across the country and require solutions from the national government, but there is still much for us to do here in the Senate especially if they fail to act.

We need again to take up a family leave act to allow people to care for their families without losing the wages they need to put food on the table. And we need to continue the movement forward to make the minimum wage a livable wage.



Ultimately, though, these are short-term fixes. Our real challenge is to equip each of our residents with the skills needed to prosper in this globalized economy.

And we need to start with a truly modern approach to fiscal policy.

We are nearly 20 years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and we have a budget that is built on a foundation laid decades ago, when Massachusetts began its campaign to shed the Taxachusetts label. Virtually every credible national study says the level of taxation in Massachusetts now puts us in the middle of the pack nationally. Mission accomplished.

Yet even today, some believe we can continue to cut our way to success.

I do not. I believe we need to invest our way to success. And in 2018, the people of the Commonwealth can make a bold move in that direction by passing the Fair Share Tax. The resulting extra tax contribution from our

wealthiest residents, earmarked for education and transportation, will help fund these necessary, critical pillars for a robust knowledge-driven economy.

This is an important step the voters can take to help to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century tax system and budget to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges.

But we should begin that work this year – by looking for new revenues where we can find them, whether by taxing new services, like Airbnb, which actually believes it should be taxed, or by closing loopholes that were created years ago and serve no purpose today.

It's also been 20 years since we created a multi-year plan and commitment for public education funding. Similarly, we don't have a 21<sup>st</sup> Century transportation plan to carry us into the future. We need both.

The Senate with the help of the Barr Foundation will help craft a multi-year 21<sup>st</sup> Century transportation vision as part of our Commonwealth

Conversations tour starting this month. Also Senator DiDomenico will soon release the Kids First Plan, a vision for raising resilient children who become productive adults.

Today, there are almost 26,000 kids on the waitlist for early childhood education services. The need is most acute in our urban and rural areas, where the numbers of kids getting pre-k schooling pales in comparison to the suburbs.

You may have heard me say it before but I will say it again: If a child is reading at grade level when he or she reaches the 4th grade, then his or her chances for long-term educational success skyrocket. That's our challenge and our responsibility.

The Speaker has also already spoken eloquently on the contribution early childhood education can make to reach this goal. And the Senate is poised to do its part. The Kids First initiative will include a bold blueprint that rests on

making sure infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers get the opportunities they need to succeed in later grades.

By putting these kids on the road to success early, we can finally close the lingering achievement gap we all decry. And as they grow, we can put this generation on a path to being part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, not left behind like so many before them.

Needless to say, our job does not end in grammar school or even high school. We need to redouble our efforts to lower tuition rates and fees at our state's colleges and universities by increasing state appropriations to help reduce student debt.

Right now, there are thousands of good paying jobs going unfilled in the life sciences, in clean energy, in information technology and in advanced manufacturing. Even for those who make it through the thicket of our current

education system, their skills are often mismatched for this economy. If our state wants to remain one of the world's true knowledge economy leaders, we need to find ways to give these people the skills they need to fill those jobs.

Our knowledge infrastructure is critical to our success. But the past few years have also underscored how important our physical infrastructure is to our success.

Barely a day goes by that we do not read of another company locating inside our state's urban core, along the Seaport or in Kendall, at North Station or downtown. General Electric, Converse, Reebok – what do they all seek? Young, educated workers. And where do they seek to locate? Near public transportation.

And yet as those young workers settle down, have families and inevitably migrate out of the city, what will they face? The same problems we face north,

south, and west of Boston. Deteriorating roads and bridges. Congested highways. Infrastructure investments on hold, and little or no commuter rail opportunities. We need a bold 21<sup>st</sup> Century transportation plan sensitive to our changing world and our need to lead in reducing our carbon footprint.

And speaking of our carbon footprint, Massachusetts must continue to be a bold and innovative leader in addressing climate change. Progress in all other areas of public interest is rendered moot if we do not successfully tame the carbon beast that threatens humankind. The energy sources we choose, the seriousness with which we pursue energy efficiency, the level of commitment demonstrated to developing and implementing resiliency and adaptation plans and the willingness to make the tough decisions around controversial but potentially effective strategies like carbon pricing will all

determine what future generations say about our leadership. We must lead on this critical issue or fail ourselves and generations yet to come.

Recently, the governor sounded the alarm early on budget shortfalls and made cuts. To be sure, we have to be fiscally responsible to guard against deficits and work to build a rainy day fund ready for future recessions. But cutting is not our best strategy. And if we do need to trim expenses, we need to do so not by slicing programs but by finding real reforms that yield real savings.

Right now, for instance, we spend more than \$1.3 billion to run correctional facilities – more than we spend on all of higher education.

And what has all this locking up people done for us, besides put an enormous strain on our budget? Very little. Right now, about two-thirds of those who leave our prisons return to the system within five years. And yet, in

the neighborhoods most riddled with crime, the streets remain frighteningly unsafe.

We've been tough on crime; now we need to get *smart* on crime. We need to scale up successful diversion and restorative justice programs, end mandatory minimums for non-violent drug offenses, address the needs of those who otherwise languish in our jails suffering from mental illness and substance abuse. We should reform our bail and probation systems and shift away from a focus on long sentences and toward helping offenders re-enter society successfully so they never go back to prison again. And, let's implement the recommendations of Senator Barrett's Post Audit Committee report eliminating the practice of jailing probationers who cannot pay court ordered, statutorily required fees and fines. Fine time, as it's called, is an echo of the long abandoned concept of debtors' prison. We are ahead of some states and



the savings may not be as much as elsewhere but we can still reap significant fiscal and human benefits. We've talked about it long enough-- this is the term we need to pass meaningful criminal justice reform.

[PAUSE]

Allow me now to shift gears a bit.

As the year begins, my hope is that the country can find a way to strike a more civil tone, to put an end to partisanship for its own sake, an end to pitting one against another. The America we cherish is one that embraces its differences and its similarities at the same time.

Here in Massachusetts, we do have our disagreements but we truly work together. In the Senate, we listen to our Republican colleagues – not steamroll them. At the leadership level, we meet together every week –

Democratic legislative leaders and a Republican Governor – to talk, listen, respond and ultimately forge a way forward on many matters.

This last election has not been an example of our political system at its best. It has been a cautionary tale though about the consequences of inaction on some of the most pressing concerns Americans face. We cannot afford for the country to slip into even deeper gridlock or for us in Massachusetts to be tempted to do so ourselves. The eyes of the voters are upon us.

In this new term, let's once again meet our challenges with openness, civility, common purpose – and with boldness and a sense of urgency. If we don't take this approach, we will fulfill Friedman's notion: we will indeed be too late to the party, unable to meet the challenges of a century tumultuous in nature but filled with promise as well. Through our

commitment to shared leadership and shared responsibility, our state has its best chance to enjoy shared prosperity and true equality from one end of the Commonwealth to the other.

Now with the campaigns and speeches behind us, let's move into the new term boldly and with passion and purpose. Our constituents await our leadership!