

# 01.04.07 - Inaugural Address

**Governor Deval L. Patrick**  
**Inaugural Address**  
**January 4, 2007**  
**As Delivered**

Mr. President and Members of the Senate;  
Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives;  
Lieutenant Governor and Members of the Governor's Council and the Cabinet;  
Madame Chief Justice and Members of the Judiciary;  
Former Governors, Honorable Elected Officials and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;  
Reverend Clergy;  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen Every One of You:

We meet today on a singular occasion. More than the passing of title and honor, more than the ritual transfer of the power of government -- this is the occasion when the people charge new leadership to steward the public trust. It is a profound responsibility. I accept it humbly, mindful of the history that brought us here, and the challenges before us.

For a very long time now we have been told that government is bad, that it exists only to serve the powerful and well-connected, that its job is not important enough to be done by anyone competent, let alone committed, and that all of us are on our own. Today we join together in common cause to lay that fallacy to rest, and to extend a great movement based on shared responsibility from the corner office to the corner of your block and back again.

My journey here has been an improbable one. From a place where hope withers, through great schools and challenging opportunities, to this solemn occasion, I have been supported and loved and lifted up. And I thank the family, the mentors, the teachers - every one of whom is here today in body or in spirit - just as I thank the tens of thousands of campaign volunteers and millions of voters across the Commonwealth who shared this improbable journey with me.

America herself is an improbable journey. People have come to these shores from all over the world, in all manner of boats, and built from a wilderness one of the most remarkable societies in human history. We are most remarkable not just for our material accomplishments or military might, but because of the ideals to which we have dedicated ourselves. We have defined those ideals over time and through struggle as equality, opportunity and fair play - ideals about universal human dignity. For these, at the end of the day, we are the envy to the world.

Massachusetts invented America. American ideals were first spoken here, first dreamed about here. Our constitution is the oldest, and one of the most explicit about individual freedoms. Our legislature is the longest continuously operating democratic body on the face of the earth. In so many ways, our struggle, our sacrifice, our optimism shaped the institutions and advanced the ideals of this Nation.

Our founders came on the Mayflower, the Arabella, and the early clipper ships. But there were other boats, too. There was the Amistad and her cargo of kidnapped Africans, who commandeered the ship to sail home to Africa, but who were seized in Long Island Sound and imprisoned in New Haven.

On this very day 165 years ago, a young man named Kinna, who had been part of that rebellion, sent a letter from prison to our own John Quincy Adams, who had retired from public life at home in Massachusetts.

Kinna pleaded with Adams to help the 36 captives from his ship to earn their freedom. Adams took the case all the way to the United States Supreme Court and won.

As a gesture of thanks and respect, the Africans gave Adams a Bible, called the Mendi Bible, after their tribal

homeland.

I took the oath this morning with my hand resting on that same Bible -- and with my resolve strengthened by that same legacy. I am descended from people once forbidden their most basic and fundamental freedoms, a people desperate for a reason to hope and willing to fight for it. And so are you. So are you. Because the Amistad was not just a Black man's journey; it was an American journey. This Commonwealth - and the Nation modeled on it - is at its best when we show we understand a faith in what's possible, and the willingness to work for it.

So, as an American, I am an optimist. But not a foolish one. I see clearly the challenges before us.

I see the young talent and jobs leaving our state, driven away by the high cost of housing.

I see the poor in terrible shape, and the middle class one month away from being poor.

I see the heroin in the cities and the oxycotin in the suburbs, destroying families with cold indifference to class and status.

I see the way the public schools too often fail poor kids and the how the cost of public colleges is pushing young people out.

I see the broken roads and bridges, the soaring health care costs, the high property taxes, the violence in our streets.

But I also see the creativity of our universities.

I also see the ingenuity of our industries.

I also see the skill of our hospitals, the inspiration of our artists.

And I see above all the imagination, the compassion and the energy of our people.

I see what we are capable of - not just as a matter of history, but as a matter of character.

And I am asking you to touch that part of our shared legacy, and reach with me for something better.

I know that we can have more and better jobs, and a stronger economy. But we will need the best prepared workforce on the planet, simpler and faster regulatory processes, a stable and simplified corporate tax structure, and a more cooperative relationship between labor and business. Let's reach for that.

I know we can have better schools to support that emerging economy, and to prepare today's and tomorrow's citizens. But we will need high expectations for our kids at home as well as at schools, more flexibility in the classrooms and even in what we consider to be a "classroom," early education and after-school programs, and public colleges and universities every bit as well-supported and honored as their private counterparts. Let's reach for that.

I know we can have more accessible and more affordable health care for ourselves and our families. But it will take transparency among clinicians and health insurers, a system of care that makes more use of community settings, simplified administrative systems, and government stewardship for the good of the whole. Let's reach for that.

I know we can have safer neighborhoods. But it will take more community-based patrols, after-school and enrichment programs, summer job and volunteer opportunities for young people, training and pre-release preparation for inmates, and sensible reform of both CORI and sentencing. Let's reach for that.

We know what to do. We know that our challenges were long in the making and will require long-term solutions. We know what to reach for. And we ought to know that either we invest today or we will surely pay excessively tomorrow. We know that investment in education today beats investment in prisons tomorrow.

Quick fixes, gimmicks and sound bites are not enough. That's not in the spirit of what built this country. That is not what cleared the forest and planted New England's earliest farms. It's not what inspired our great universities and museums. It's not what created the boom in textile manufacturing in its time or a flourishing biotech industry today. It's not what freed the colonies from oppression or the slaves from bondage or women from second class citizenship.

What has distinguished us at every signature moment of our history is the willingness to look a challenge right in the eye, the instinct to measure it against our ideals, and the sustained dedication to close the gap between the two. That is who we are.

We will need different tools and different approaches, ones for our times. As your governor, I have broad responsibility for what goes right and what goes wrong, but far less authority than I need to influence the course of either. For that reason, I will reorganize the executive branch, to simplify our systems, to make it more modern and accessible and accountable, to enable our public employees to concentrate on the public service at the core of their assignments, and to enable your governor to advance the agenda you elected me to do.

I will ask municipalities to enter into a new partnership with state government, so that we can work together to reduce their operating costs, to better plan across regions, and to rebuild city and town centers into stronger economic cores.

And I will be calling on you each one of you to stay engaged, to bring forward your solutions, not just your problems, to suggest a better way, to keep your eye on the higher ground we seek, and to act like this State House is your House. You stood up, and you reached out, from every corner of the Commonwealth, working together in the best example in recent memory of a bedrock democratic principle: that to make any difference in our common realities, we must see our stake in each others' dreams and struggles as well as our own, and act on that.

My point is that we will be doing some things differently. Moving today's rituals within reach of you is symbolic of that. Change is not always comfortable or convenient or welcome. But it is what we hoped for, what we have worked for, what you voted for, and what you shall have.

I got a letter from a woman in Worcester named Stacy Amaral a few weeks ago. She told me how she - like my own mother -- had raised two children on her own, now both grown and doing well. Stacy now helps care for her mother, a frail 82-year-old woman of just 85 pounds, who is recovering from cancer and a broken hip.

On Election Day, when Stacy went to collect her mother to go to the polls, she arrived to find the elevators in the building weren't functioning. She had to walk up six flights of stairs to her mother's apartment. When she told her mother that she was sorry she wouldn't be able to get down (or back up for that matter) because the elevators were not working, her mother got her coat and started down the six flights of stairs. Half an hour later, one cautious step after another, her daughter following her with the walker in one hand and two pocketbooks in the other, Stacy's mother got down those six flights of stairs. I have no idea how long it took her to get back up again later on.

That frail 82-year-old did not walk down six flights of stairs for us to conduct the business of government the same old way. It is time for a change. And we are that change.

To the earliest settlers of this Commonwealth, as we have been reminded on a couple of occasions today, this Commonwealth was their shining "city on a hill." To this kid from the South Side of Chicago, Massachusetts is my city on a hill. For every mother living month to month; for every student struggling to get through school; for every dad working two jobs and wondering which one is going to be shipped overseas; for every fisherman wondering whether this year's catch will do; for every immigrant wondering whether the American Dream is a myth; for every teacher, every bus

driver, every government clerk, every firefighter, every small business owner doing your best and wondering whether anyone appreciates you; for every one of God's children who calls Massachusetts home - let's rebuild our "city on a hill," and make it shine again.

God bless our work and God bless you all. Thank you