Inaugural Address

of

His Excellency

John A. Volpe

Delivered Before The

General Court of Massachusetts

On January 5, 1967
Inaugural Address

to

the Rector

John A. Folks

President of the

University of the West Indies

for the Year 1878
Delivered Before the General Court, Boston, January 5, 1967

Inaugural Address

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Members of the Great and General Court, and distinguished and honored guests:

We meet today in this historic chamber as men and women who have accepted willingly the honor and responsibility of leadership in the affairs of our Commonwealth.

This is the third occasion that the people of our great state have bestowed upon me their confidence and trust. With a deep sense of humility, gratitude and firm purpose, I accept the challenges and responsibilities of the great honor that has been granted to me.

Today we launch the 187th year of government under our Constitution, the oldest such document in the United States. We do so under the gaze of the portraits of men who, by their total dedication to the concept of public service, have made us the beneficiaries of a great heritage.

Our joint responsibility — the legislative, the judicial and the executive branches together — is to accept our mandate of leadership with unbending determination to bring added luster to this heritage that has been our precious legacy.

We must be ever mindful that we are here today by our choice — and by the consent of the people.

Implicit in our willingness to accept the sacred public trust that has been bestowed upon us is our total dedication to the task of further enhancing the glory that is Massachusetts, and further advancing her position among the great states of our nation.
We can and will achieve this goal if we approach our daily tasks together — with integrity, responsibility and dedication — with a firm and unwavering commitment to the single purpose of serving the people who have honored us by their confidence — to the end that their lives and well-being will be enriched by our efforts.

Our heritage is indeed great. But our opportunity to build upon this heritage is far greater. For the people, by their recent approval of Constitutional amendments, have given us the tools to cure many of the chronic ills that have plagued our government for too many years. And at least equally as important, their approval of these Constitutional amendments has given us the opportunity to approach the problems, and to conduct the affairs of the Commonwealth, in an atmosphere unfettered by considerations of partisan politics.

There are no goals beyond our reach if we but regard the last election as history, and the next as a far distant exercise — if, in short, we establish a moratorium on politics.

We have only to pause and reflect on the great strides made during the past general and special sessions to appreciate fully just what can be accomplished for our people when issues are debated solely on their merit, and when problems of government are approached and resolved in a spirit of bi-partisan cooperation.

It was such a spirit that has now restored the Commonwealth's fiscal solvency — a solvency encouraging the development of new industry and the creation of 129,000 new jobs in our state, including 43,000 new jobs in manufacturing industry.

This solvency made possible increased aid to education and long overdue property tax relief.

It was this cooperative spirit that only last week permitted monumental advances to be made in the areas of mental health and mental retardation; —
That transformed the Willis-Harrington Commission Report from a mere blueprint to a standard of educational excellence; — put on our books a far reaching program to meet and solve the chronic problem of water pollution; — made possible a 50% increase in enrollment at our state schools and colleges; — equalized educational opportunities for all our children, no matter where they may happen to live, and regardless of their color or creed; — brought about the enactment of pioneer housing legislation; — and won enactment of landmark legislation for consumer protection.

These are but a few examples of what we have accomplished, working together, during the past two years — examples that serve to highlight and underscore the opportunity for even greater progress and achievement that is ours in the weeks and months ahead — if we will but work together.

Let there be no mistake about it — we have made tremendous progress here in Massachusetts.

And yet, while we can point with pride to these and many other areas in which we have moved forward, it is important that we recognize and appreciate that much more remains to be done to meet the demonstrated needs of the people by whom and for whom we have been chosen to serve.

It is important as well to recognize and appreciate that the state's role in the establishment and preservation of a balanced Federal-State relationship depends entirely on our ability to maintain excellence and achieve progress.

Performance alone justifies the existence of state government. The quality of our performance alone will forestall the preemption by the federal government of so much of our every day operation that we, and the people we represent, find ourselves voiceless and overwhelmed by growing federal controls.

In the critical months ahead we, as representatives of state
government, must be prepared to chart new courses of action and progress.

We must be prepared to recognize the changes that are taking place in our society — and we must be prepared to meet the needs that these changes foster.

There must be no hit-or-miss, piecemeal approach to the problems of our changing society.

Rather, we must be prepared to come to grips with, and to construct realistic solutions for, the fundamental problems that face and concern our people.

This is the task we have willingly assumed. This is the mandate that is ours. This is the responsibility we must face and meet in the days and months ahead.

And if we are to be successful, we must do the job together.

The areas that will be of concern to us during the coming legislative session are many — but there are several whose significance merits and demands our thoughtful consideration on this solemn occasion.

To my mind we have no greater single responsibility than that of re-establishing and re-enforcing the vigor and effectiveness of law enforcement within the Commonwealth.

Homes must be protected from invasion by criminals.

Our people must be able to walk our streets, night or day, without fear of being molested.

During the past year I have established a Governor's Committee on Public Safety that has as its prime responsibility the evaluation of our needs in the area of public safety, as well as the formulation of programs to meet these needs.
The Committee, whose membership represents our Attorney General, District Attorneys, Police, Correction and Rehabilitation officials, has already made several significant recommendations that will be incorporated in a special message I shall submit to the Legislature shortly.

These committee members, professional all, have the day-to-day responsibility of stamping out the criminal element in our society. They know and appreciate on a first-hand basis the problems involved.

If our streets are to be safe — yes, if our very homes are to be safe — we must pay careful heed to their recommendations.

We must assist them in their battle against the criminal and corrupt by giving them the tools to do the job that must be done. We must reverse the regressive trend toward frontier justice where the gun and not the law was the dominant force in society.

Careful consideration must be given to the establishment of a new center encompassing all problems of criminal psychiatry — diagnosis, treatment and prevention. Such a center could be of significant value to the courts and enhance the protection of the community.

We must improve our system of jury selection. Careful consideration should be given to the establishment of a jury commissioner system similar to that utilized by our Federal courts.

Our agencies of investigation and prosecution must be staffed more adequately.

Increased attention must be given to the task of rehabilitating those who have once broken our laws.

Many of our court house facilities are outmoded and must be replaced.
Our Superior Court is seriously undermanned and must be augmented to insure prompt and efficient administration of justice.

We must be ever mindful of the importance of maintaining the efficiency and strength of our judiciary as an equal and independent branch of government.

The courts provide the ultimate protection for our property, our liberty and our lives. As guardians of our most vital rights and interests, the judicial branch deserves — and must have — our unqualified support in providing for its needs for adequate personnel and proper facilities. We can do no less if we are to preserve and protect our greatest bulwark against wrongdoing, lawlessness and tyranny.

In providing this support I believe that a permanent means of official communication between the judiciary and other branches of government is desirable, especially in making known and ascertaining the reasonable needs of the courts. Heretofore this has been done on a patchwork basis, often, unfortunately, with undesirable political overtones. A permanent advisory committee representing all three branches of government could function effectively in this area without transgressing on their fundamental independence. As an alternative, this function might be carried out by the Judicial Council through an enlargement of its scope, personnel and resources. This is a subject that will be the basis of a special message by me in the near future.

The establishment of a proper balance between the rights of the accused and the rights of the people must be developed and established within the framework of our Federal Constitution.

Among the more serious problems that demand solution is the impact of recent Supreme Court decisions concerning the authority and power of our police to act. I cannot disagree with the highest court in our land in excluding evidence obtained by means which violate the Constitutional rights of an accused. I do say, however, that great thought and attention must be given before
this rule is extended to all manner of police error that does not affect the fundamental rights of the defendant.

I agree with the concept that a trial should be a search for truth and justice and not merely a search for police error.

Respect for the law and the imposition of rigid and expeditious justice are the very foundation of our liberty, our freedom, and our opportunity to achieve significant progress for our people.

I serve notice today on those who hold our laws in contempt that the safety of the public — the strengthening of law enforcement — will be a prime and continuing concern of this administration.

In addition, this administration will dedicate itself to the development and refinement of sound social, mental and public health programs for our growing population — to the end that those of our people presently in need of our help will become capable, forceful and highly productive citizens of the future.

These programs include:

**Full implementation of our recently enacted mental health law —**

**Establishment of a program for state matching grants to local Councils for the Aging —**

**In-patient services for the acute alcoholic, as well as provision of services to alcoholics in tuberculosis sanatoria —**

**State assumption of the administration and cost of our existing welfare program —**

**Establishment of day-care centers for the children of working mothers —**

**A concentrated effort to meet the growing problem of air**
pollution. These represent but a few of the areas requiring our attention and our action.

And to insure the most effective and productive utilization and implementation of our policies and programs, we must re-examine and re-evaluate our present structure of health, welfare and vocational rehabilitation services.

In short, we must expend every effort to provide assistance, opportunity and incentive to those who through misfortune are presently in need of our helping hand.

In the field of education we can share great pride in the significant progress that has been made during recent years.

We now have a structure for educational supervision and guidance that is a model for the nation.

Our continuing responsibility, however, is to insure that history does not record this structure as having been a mere monument to what might have been. Rather, we must give continuing, careful consideration to the recommendations of our various boards concerned with education, to the end that all our children will receive the type of training that will enable them to prosper and to contribute to the further development of our Commonwealth.

To this end, our budget and our Capital Outlay Program must be geared to the task of providing a meaningful education to every one of our young men and women — not just to the superior student, but to all boys and girls who have the ambition and will to better themselves.

To increase enrollment by at least 30,000 at our state university and colleges during the next four years is the goal of this administration.

I ask for your help and support in meeting this goal.

An integral part of our educational objectives must include
as well a review of existing wages paid to our teachers — expanded opportunities for scholarship participation — and a reappraisal of our industrial needs so as to better gear our vocational schools to our present and future labor market.

We must do everything possible to insure that our young men and women are equipped to find genuine opportunity for themselves — not in California, Texas or Illinois — but right here in Massachusetts.

But if we are to be able to implement as well as merely design meaningful programs for our people, we must first of all protect and maintain the fiscal solvency and integrity of the Commonwealth.

An important first step in this direction is the continuation of the temporary 3% limited sales tax enacted in 1966.

Revenue yields from this levy have already stemmed the rising tide of property tax rates throughout the Commonwealth, and prospects for further stabilization and reductions appear assured in the years ahead.

The sales tax played an integral and vital role in our battle to reverse the decline in manufacturing jobs which, after all, are the life-blood of the Commonwealth’s economy.

We now show promise of encouraging further industrial investment in our great state. And it is important to remember that business investment is essential if we are to provide the hundreds of thousands of new jobs that our people will need in the decades ahead.

Massachusetts is an industrial state, and it must maintain and improve its attractiveness and competitive position by enacting sound, capable and publicly supported tax laws.

In my budget message to be submitted within the month, I shall propose that the limited sales tax be made permanent, as a part of the Commonwealth’s General Laws.
The public has expressed its approval of the sales tax as a responsible revenue program. We are committed to responsible action. It is essential to the economic structure of our state that this program be retained.

No tax policy or program is perfect. Our dynamic economy constantly reminds us of the need for re-examination, re-evaluation, and planning for the future. Future generations may be spared the battle of the past two years if we can develop a master tax plan for the next decade.

We need such a plan to complement our efforts in the field of industrial development — to measure our revenue potential — to meet our revenue needs — and to allow potential investors to project with some degree of accuracy the impact our tax laws would have on long-term industrial investment within the Commonwealth.

The job of projecting the Commonwealth’s tax laws will be arduous, complicated and demanding.

It will require that the best talent in all areas of taxation be brought together to contribute their observations and attitudes. Because the task is certain to be time-consuming it is important that we begin — and that we begin now.

Economists predict that the 70’s will be a period of unprecedented economic growth. The question which is ours to answer is whether or not Massachusetts will be ready for its share of the abundance of our free enterprise system.

We must not find ourselves in the awkward position of having an archaic tax policy in a modern world merely because we, charged with the responsibility of government in the 60's, failed to adequately plan for the needs of the 70's.

I shall call a Governor’s Conference on State Taxation early this year for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive study of these issues. It is my hope that you will share in my enthusiasm
for such a conference and will provide funds and staffing ade-
quate to insure that its efforts will be meaningful.

And at the same time that we blueprint new programs, the
cost of which will be borne by the tax dollars of the people we
serve, we must continue, as we have during the past two years,
to improve the quality and efficiency of our conduct of the people's
business. In this regard, several areas require our attention and
action.

Our present system of civil service and personnel adminis-
tration leaves much to be desired.

It is a system permeated with inequities and does not ade-
quately encourage or properly reward our dedicated and talented
career public employees.

Massachusetts can be proud of its heritage in the develop-
ment of civil service laws and procedures.

However, we can no longer afford to rest on our oars.

If we are to attract to state service men and women of
high competence, able to meet the ever-broadening demands of
government, it is essential that we join together in an all-out
effort to update and reform our civil service laws.

A special commission on Civil Service is now at work in an
effort to formulate far-reaching suggestions for meeting this
chronic problem.

I appeared personally before that commission to express my
own views on this important subject, and I have every hope and
expectation that the Commission's recommendations will provide a
sound basis for far-reaching reform in the Commonwealth's civil
service and personnel systems.

The approval of the Constitutional amendment authorizing
mergers and revisions of departmental structures, following an
established and successful Federal pattern, now grants the Governor a logical responsibility to carry on his duties without encumbrances that have long been exposed as both archaic and inefficient.

The opportunities that this amendment affords us in the area of improved governmental organization and efficiency are monumental.

Again, however, these opportunities can be realized only if the Executive and the Legislative branches join hands and work together in an effort to reshape our governmental structure in the best interests of the people we serve.

For my part, I will make every effort to seek the support and approval of legislative leaders of both parties prior to initiating any reorganization within the provision of this law. And I have every confidence that a corresponding attitude of cooperation will prevail in our legislative chambers.

In our effort to improve the quality of government for our people I deem it essential that responsible legislation providing that key department heads serve coterminously with the Governor be passed during this session.

A careful and up-to-date study must be conducted as to the future role of county government and its relationship to state and local government.

And certainly no effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our governmental organization would be complete without careful consideration and review of the present adequacy of our basic law — the Constitution.

In recent weeks there has been significant dialogue and debate as to the need for amending our Constitution. Some have suggested an immediate need for a Constitutional Convention, and a complete overhaul of our Constitution, if the Commonwealth is to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. Others hold, how-
ever, that this document has successfully withstood and met the challenges of the passing years, and that by the process of selective amendment through the customary procedure it can continue to provide necessary controls and direction.

Our Constitution is of course not perfect. But to say that we must now meet in Constitutional Convention for the purpose of a total revision — without knowing what direction such revision should take — would in my mind be nothing more than to leap without looking.

It has been almost half a century since the last Convention, and yet our Constitution has been amended several times during the past decade — and, for the most part, the changes made have been significant and far-reaching.

I favor necessary Constitutional revision, but I propose that the subject of Constitutional revision be given careful study and consideration.

To this end, I shall submit a special message calling for the establishment of a study commission, adequately staffed and funded, which shall have as its purpose the review of our Constitution and the recommendation of necessary amendments. In addition, this commission shall have the ancillary responsibility of recommending the most effective and expeditious method of bringing about such amendments — either by a popularly elected convention, or by a continuation of our present method of joint legislative convention, subject to voter ratification.

The commission would be comprised of the finest talent available — and would include members of the legislature — academic, business, legal and labor communities — representatives of cities and towns — and the public at large. The work of this special commission would be completed by June 30, 1968. This date would precede that of the general election in November 1968, should the commission recommend the calling of a general convention requiring voter approval.
There would, therefore, be no time delay as a result of such a study. Moreover, the benefits to be gained in terms of an orderly, prudent review of our Constitutional requirements far outweigh the desirability of an immediate piecemeal dissection of the very structure of our government.

Other priorities towards which we must direct close attention during this session include housing, highway safety and automobile insurance.

We must strive continuously to achieve a society in which every citizen, regardless of race, creed or color, enjoys safe, respectable and sanitary housing. During this session I will submit a special message for your consideration devoted entirely to the problems of housing, the provisions of which will contain several recommendations to transform the many tools provided by recent legislation into a concerted attack against sub-standard living conditions within our Commonwealth.

Great progress has been made in the field of highway safety, but much more remains to be done to reverse the ever spiralling toll of accident and injury on our highways.

Driver education — compulsory vision re-examination — breath tests for drinking drivers — identification and elimination of high accident locations — enlargement of our State Police force for highway patrol purposes — these are but a few of the measures that I shall submit for your consideration and approval in the weeks ahead.

It is essential that we provide our Registry and law enforcement officials with the necessary weapons to wage an all-out war against the drivers and conditions that each year cause such a senseless and tragic toll of human suffering.

I am convinced that the success or failure of our highway safety program has a direct effect on the cost of automobile insurance within the Commonwealth. At the same time, however, I am equally convinced that our present system of compulsory au-
tomobile insurance is out-dated, out-moded and should be repealed — and that our present system for processing automobile accident claims should be reviewed.

These matters were the subject of a special message submitted by me during the past general legislative session.

Within the next few weeks I will again submit a special message advocating a program of automobile insurance that will reflect its validity in lower cost and increased equities for our motorists with safe driving records.

We must spare no effort to reduce the cost of automobile insurance for our people.

These then are some of the problems and issues to which I will request that you direct your attention and consideration during this legislative session.

They are problems and issues that pose great challenges to each and every one of us.

They bear no political or partisan label.

Neither politics nor partisanship should play any part in their solution.

Together, we have an unprecedented opportunity to close ranks for the purpose of enhancing the general well-being of our people.

In asking for unity and cooperation, I am not unmindful of the great need for continuing with a two-party system and its vital checks and balances that serve so well the cause of sound, honest and efficient government.

On the contrary, we expect and, yes, welcome criticism of our plans and programs — as well as the free and open debate which, historically, has provided such great strength to our democratic form of government and to our American way of life.
But let this criticism and debate be voiced within the spirit and framework of what is best for our state, our nation, and our common welfare — and not on the basis of mere political motivation.

As we begin our duties today, I pledge to each of you my deep and firm dedication to these principles. In doing so, I ask for your help, advice, cooperation and support in the important months ahead.

Working together, and with God's help, we can go forward to earn in full measure the pride and faith of the people we have sworn to serve.