

SENATE. No. 2100

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

MESSAGE FROM
GOVERNOR ARGEO PAUL CELLUCCI
RELATIVE TO
THE CONCERNS OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

Thursday, January 15, 1998.

REMARKS

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Governor Paul Cellucci
— State of the State Address —
Thursday, January 15, 1998
State House,
Boston, Massachusetts

The first part of the report
 deals with the general
 conditions of the country
 and the progress of the
 work during the year.
 It is followed by a
 detailed account of the
 various expeditions
 and the results obtained.
 The report concludes
 with a summary of the
 work done and a
 list of the names of
 the persons who have
 been engaged in the
 work.

Governor Paul Cellucci
— State of the State Address —
Thursday, January 15, 1998

Good evening.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, reverend clergy, citizens across Massachusetts, and to the students with us tonight from New Bedford's Parker Elementary School:

Four days ago this building — our State House — celebrated its 200th birthday. It is amazing what Massachusetts has done in those 200 years. We have given birth to innovative technologies like the telephone and the Internet. We have seen our sons and daughters fight for freedom at home and abroad. We have nurtured some of the greatest writers, educators, and scientists.

No matter what we accomplish in Massachusetts, it is always done with zeal and determination. This strength comes from our communities and our families.

I see this spirit and energy in families everyday in my hometown of Hudson. Hudson is a close community. It is a proud community. I know most of the people there, and people in Hudson are not afraid to tell me what is on their minds.

Over the last seven years, Bill Weld and I worked very hard to make Massachusetts a better place to live. We have done well. Our economy is booming. Businesses are growing. And more people are working in Massachusetts than ever before. That is great news.

But the breakfast talk at Nick's Diner in Hudson — and across the state — is not about bull markets or the Gross National Product. People are asking, how are they going to pay for their children's college tuition? Can they save enough money to buy their own home? Can they find affordable, quality day care? Are their kids prepared for the future?

For families these days, life is not simple. As governor, I want to give support to our families. They are the backbone of our state, and the hope for our future.

Tonight I could address a number of challenges our state is facing, and that I have been working on: Quality health care and a clean environment. Hi-tech shipyards and modern convention centers. Protecting women and children by fighting domestic violence. Making our streets safer and bringing back the death penalty.

But tonight I am going to talk about the two things that tie everything — and all of us — together. And that is our children's education and their economic future.

Massachusetts is fiscally fit. Bill Weld and I balanced eight budgets in a row without raising taxes. We cut taxes twenty-one times, saving taxpayers over \$1.2 billion each year. Unemployment is well below the national average. We are creating jobs at a rate of over 75,000 each year.

Times are good because of our fiscal and economic accomplishments. And this provides the perfect foundation to build the best education system for our children.

I believe the real state of our state will be measured by the state of our schools.

The most important thing that government can do — and must do — is provide a first-rate education for our children. The economic vitality of this state, the strength of our families, even the safety of our neighborhoods, depend on the quality of our schools and the graduates they produce each year.

Well-educated children can be our state's greatest asset, but developing outstanding schools is still our greatest challenge.

Over 160 years ago, the first free public school system in the nation was established in Massachusetts. The greatest minds and the best educators in this country called Massachusetts their home. And it was in this Commonwealth that a basic notion was born: that the state has a responsibility to provide the best schools possible for all our children.

Over the last several years, we have made a strong commitment to our public schools. We provided computers for nearly every school district in the state. We made schools safer by allowing principals to expel violent students. And we nearly doubled the number of new textbooks in the classroom.

We are requiring schools to send parents report cards not just on the students, but also on the school itself. Because, while parents must hold their children accountable for learning, we must hold our schools accountable for how well they teach.

We have made an unprecedented financial investment in our schools over the last four years. In 1998, we will spend \$1 .6 billion more on education than we did just five years ago. But, money alone will not be a solution for public schools in our state. And it certainly will not make a difference if it is spent carelessly. Because for all the billions of dollars we've spent, there are still more important figures: 60 percent of our state's fourth graders still can't read at their grade level; over 8,000 of our high schoolers drop-out each year; one in every seven freshman students at our state colleges needs remedial help in math.

Last year, we commissioned a special audit team to make sure state education funding was spent in the classrooms to buy the tools children and teachers need daily. We found too much money was being spent on administration.

This year, we will spend 2.9 billion state tax dollars on our public schools. I am not going to stand by and watch this money wasted on bloated administration budgets. I will insist that money go straight into the classrooms.

I am going to establish a "ninety - ten" rule for our schools. For every new dollar we deliver to a school, they will have to spend a full ninety cents, and not a penny less, in the classroom, where it belongs and where it will produce results. That is ninety percent in the classroom — ninety percent directly for our children.

Our students learn their reading, algebra, and history at their desks, in front of a blackboard, with a teacher. Those classrooms are more than four walls and a place for kids to spend the day. Our school classrooms are the incubators of our future. It is in the classroom that students today learn the skills for tomorrow's jobs. It is in the classroom that teachers inspire tomorrow's leaders. And it is in the classroom that our commitment to education will make a dramatic difference.

But, sometimes classrooms are overcrowded. Some teachers are faced with the daunting task of instructing as many as thirty students at the

same time. When there are too many students in one class, it is difficult for children to learn, and almost impossible for teachers to teach.

Teaching is a difficult profession. No matter how much money we spend in our schools, it will not make a bit of difference if we do not have good teachers and if we do not have enough teachers.

That is why tonight, I am making a commitment to the parents and to the students of this state. We will hire 4,000 new teachers in Massachusetts' public schools during the next school year. More teachers will mean smaller class sizes and more attention devoted to each and every child in that classroom. It means teachers will be able to do a lot more of what they do best — teaching and inspiring.

All of us can remember at least one teacher who made a lifelong impact on us. I want to make sure the legacy of teachers who have the time and the chance to inspire their students continues far into the future. That is something every child deserves.

We measure teachers by the children they inspire. In the same way, we must measure schools by the graduates they produce. A high school diploma should be a graduate's passport to the future. That is why we are holding students and schools to rigorous new standards.

Beginning this spring, students across the state will be tested against these standards. And in three years, if high school students do not pass the tests, they will not graduate.

Now I suspect, when test results are in this year, the picture will be troubling. Many students will fail. A lot of schools will be embarrassed. And some legislators and parents will come to us complaining that the tests are too difficult. They will say we have to be easier on our children. They will urge us to lower the standards.

But I will stand firm. I will not lower the standards. I will not let mediocrity be the standard for our schools. I will not let failure be a passing grade for our students. We must push our schools and our children to a higher level. Low standards are not acceptable in college. They are not acceptable in a job. I will work day and night to make sure low standards are not acceptable in Massachusetts public schools.

We can all agree that the three R's — reading, writing, and arithmetic — are vital skills for college and getting a job. But I believe that respect and responsibility are just as important as those three R's.

Our schools need to teach students more than how to read and write; they also need to teach them right from wrong. Basic values, like honesty, compassion, and perseverance — virtues that know no political or social boundary — should have a prominent role in everyday lessons. And I will make sure they do by directing the Board of Education to weave character education into every school's curriculum. Our teachers and parents already know these values need daily reinforcement. I will support them in their quest to reinvigorate character education.

Improving our schools continues to be our most important challenge. And my plan will meet that challenge:

- Ninety percent committed to the classroom;
- 4,000 more teachers for smaller class sizes;
- Unwavering support for our rigorous standards;
- And building character into the curriculum.

These solutions will rejuvenate our schools and shape our children's lives.

Providing our children with an excellent education will energize the entire state. Our economy, our prosperity, and our future depend on new generations of educated workers.

When we mix smart economic development policies with a first-rate education system, our state will become even more of an economic powerhouse. That is why we have spent the last seven years making this state a place where employers want to locate and grow. We've cut taxes, we've slashed electric bills, we've dropped insurance rates, and we have eliminated needless red tape.

The result has been a vibrant state economy with 363,000 new jobs created since the dark days of the last recession. And behind these numbers are thousands of people, who today are working, raising children, and saving for retirement.

We need to keep the economic engine of Massachusetts in high gear. The last time our economy was booming, a tax and spend free-for-all sent us into a tail-spin. Lawmakers in the late 1980's thought the state's economic success was an invitation to raid families' wallets.

They were dead wrong, and we paid the price.

I know and you know that your family's money is better off in your bank accounts than in the budget books of Beacon Hill.

There is one simple way we will both bolster our economy and support working families. We need to cut the income tax down to five percent.

Our income tax is among the highest of the industrial states, and that makes us less competitive. States with lower rates, like Virginia, Michigan, and Connecticut are waiting to grab our businesses and our jobs.

There are naysayers who claim we can't afford to cut the income tax. They say cutting taxes is imprudent. In 1991, Bill Weld and I heard the same thing: People told us that we could not cut taxes. They told us that the state needs every last drop of tax revenue.

Seven years later — or should I say, twenty-one tax cuts later — we have an economy moving full-steam ahead, and we definitely do not need more taxpayer money fueling large bureaucratic programs.

When we take tax money off the table, when we give the money back to the taxpayers, there will be no temptation to create another government feeding frenzy that could bankrupt us down the road. This tax cut is right for our economy, and right for our families.

I've told you my vision for our children's future. Let me tell you what I don't want to see. I don't want to see our children grow up in Massachusetts, get a good education, and then have to move out of this state because they can't find a job or afford to live here.

By taking less of people's money, we will invest more in our families and the state's economy. This tax cut will save jobs and create jobs. It will jump-start businesses. It will give families peace-of-mind.

Making sure our children grow up with the skills they need to succeed, and making our economy competitive to keep and create jobs are goals we can all agree on. Working together we can give our children an exceptional place to live, work, and raise their own families.

I have been governor for almost six months, and I want you to know I love this job. No matter where I have traveled in Massachusetts, the people of this state have been warm and encouraging. I am most grateful for that.

It is the great privilege of my life to serve you as governor, but I have to tell you my most important title — and my proudest title — is dad. As a father, I have more responsibilities than any governor, any president, or any CEO. It is the toughest job I know, but it is the most rewarding.

My wife Jan and I — just like our parents and their parents before them — are determined to make life better for our children. As governor, I have the unique opportunity to help make life better not only for my two daughters, Kate and Anne, but for children across this state.

When you stop and think about it, it really doesn't matter where you come from, or what your political philosophy might be. In the end, we all want the same thing — a good life for our children, for our families, and for the communities where we live.

That is why we need to have a strong economy creating jobs and prosperity. And that is why we need to have nothing short of the best public schools.

With your help, we will.

Thank you and good night.

