

January 7, 1999

Lieutenant Governor Jane Swift:
Inaugural Address

A vertical logo consisting of the word "SPEECHES" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letters are stacked vertically. To the left of the text is a vertical orange line that ends in a square arrowhead pointing to the left. Above the text, there is a horizontal orange line that also ends in a square arrowhead pointing to the left.

Thank you. I am truly honored to stand here today as your lieutenant governor. I eagerly embrace this opportunity to serve the citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

I have been blessed with many opportunities in my life. I was taught that with opportunity comes responsibility. Governor Cellucci and I will meet our responsibility to this Commonwealth by governing with fairness, compassion, humor, and decency. Over the next four years, we will work hard to ensure that Massachusetts is a place where my daughter and all children can thrive.

Growing up, my parents told me that I could achieve my goals if I worked hard and made the most of my talents. Massachusetts families want to live in a state that rewards that kind of hard work with unlimited opportunity.

All families face unique challenges as they seek opportunities for themselves and their children. Governor Cellucci and I can help families meet those challenges by providing superior educational and economic opportunities for every city, every town, and every citizen.

The key to a bright future for our children is a quality education. Like my mother and my grandmothers, I went to the North Adams public schools. I appreciate the dedicated teachers I had, and the good schools I was fortunate to attend. I want every child across the Commonwealth to have that kind of experience in their schools.

That is why Governor Cellucci and I are committed to making our schools places where learning is valued, standards are high, and educators are respected. We will make overcrowded classrooms and underperforming schools a thing of the past. We will encourage more young adults and accomplished professionals to become teachers. And we will support programs that promote lifelong learning for veteran teachers.

But public school teachers are not the sole educators of students. Children have dozens of teachers in their lifetime. Parents, coaches, and mentors should all embrace the responsibilities they have in guiding children, helping them to make good decisions and to achieve their goals.

Children learn many valuable lessons outside the classroom. We must encourage more children to take advantage of extracurricular programs that provide them with skills to be successful students. Studies have shown that girls who participate in sports are more likely to graduate, to reject drugs, and to avoid teen pregnancies. Whether it is steering young boys and girls onto the basketball court or persuading them to try out for the school play, we all have a role in helping children uncover their own special talents.

We must also do our part to ensure that children are ready to learn when they arrive at school. Providing effective early intervention programs and alleviating childhood hunger will allow all children access to the academic opportunities which will guarantee them a bright future.

The vitality of our Commonwealth depends not only on a strong education system that encourages children to reach their potential, but also on our ability to ensure that every region of this state realizes its economic potential. For six years in the state Senate, I represented 45 communities in the western part of our state. During my time in the Senate, I learned that every region faces its own challenges and holds unique opportunities to developing a vibrant economy.

Woven together, our diverse regions make Massachusetts commerce a dynamic and

powerful force. This diversity enables our state to withstand uncertainties. By cutting taxes, lowering the cost of doing business, and supporting innovative programs, we can continue to stimulate our regional economies.

The heart and soul of this state are the people who live and work here. Governor Cellucci and I will lead the way in providing families with more of the basic things they need and deserve. Most families want safe neighborhoods where their children can play. They want lower taxes so they can have more money in their pockets. We will work hard to make Massachusetts an affordable and safe place for families to raise their children.

The dual responsibility of working and raising children places competing demands on many parents. But government can share in the responsibility of easing some of those pressures. Governor Cellucci and I can do our part by providing affordable and high quality child care, and by demonstrating the value of policies like flexible hours, telecommuting, and meaningful part-time work.

We also understand that there are families and children who face obstacles to opportunity: children who are stuck in substandard schools, trapped in troubled homes, or crime-ridden neighborhoods. The Governor and I will work to remove some of those barriers, by helping children find loving and stable homes, and providing senior citizens with the care they need.

I want to thank the citizens of the Commonwealth for the honor, support, and responsibility that you have given me. During the next four years, Governor Cellucci and I will work with you to meet future challenges. We will help provide families with unlimited opportunities, and ensure that in our state, every citizen has the chance to enjoy a safe, prosperous, and healthy life.

Thank you.