

04.05.13 Student Government Day Remarks

AS DELIVERED:

Governor Deval L. Patrick
Student Government Day
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Good morning everybody. Thank you, Karen for the very warm welcome. On behalf of myself, the Lieutenant Governor, the Secretary of Education, Secretary Malone, and all the members of our Administration we welcome you warmly to State House. This is your house, and so it's enormously important that you're here and we appreciate your interest in government.

I'm going to take a minute or two beyond the welcome, to ask you to consider, and I'm sorry I should acknowledge Governor Mitchell from Southbridge. Now that you have the job, talk to me at the end of day. Actually, it's a blast. It's incredibly interesting, important times in the State House, in the Commonwealth and in the lives of all of the people of the Commonwealth.

Let me ask you a question. How many people here have any concerns about your ability to pay for college? How many of you here ride the T? Do you have any concerns about the quality of the T? How about the commuter rail? Have you ever been on a commuter trail that was late, or slow or broken? How many of you raised your hand all 3 times? How many of you live in places where there is a bridge out? Or a road that is badly in need of service?

I want you all to understand that every one of those things gets fixed through your tax dollars. That's the nature of civilization that we all contribute some so that the things that are a public good get funded. And it's been a long time, over many, many generations where people understand that we, in our time, are supposed to make a sacrifice so that those in a generation to come have things better off.

And we're in the midst of that very debate here on Beacon Hill right now. It's not an abstract debate. It's about you, your lives, your futures. The jobs, also, that come from rebuilding those roads and restoring those T cars; the opportunity that come in neighborhoods that don't have access to adequate access to transportation today that would if we invest.

There are choices. Difficult choices and that don't lend themselves to sound bites and slogans. They're not about polls and they're not about abstractions. They're about real people's lives and opportunities.

A lot of you here know, and maybe some of you don't, but I grew up on the South Side of Chicago. I lived there with my mother and my sister and my grandparents in a 2 bedroom tenement, some of that time on welfare. My mother and sister and I shared one of those bedrooms and a set of bunk beds; you'd go from the top bunk to the bottom bunk to the floor, every third night on the floor.

I went to big and broken, under-resourced, sometimes violent public schools. But for all the things we didn't have in that neighborhood that was time when every child was under the jurisdiction of every single adult on the block. So if you messed up in front of Ms. Jones' down the street she would go right upside you head as if you were hers, and then call home so you got it two times.

I think what those adults were trying to get across to us was that they had a stake in us. And that understanding the membership in community that we have, our role in community, is seeing the stake we have not just in our own struggles, but in our neighbors struggles as well. Not just our own dreams but our neighbors dreams as well.

And in many, many ways what we have been trying to do together, and when I say together I don't just mean in this Administration or between this Administration and the Legislature, but in this whole Commonwealth is rebuild that sense of common cause, of community. Rebuild that sense of stake in each other. And be willing to call the hard questions right now in our time that will make your way a little bit better. And offer you an example of how you must think in your time for a generation behind you.

It's in that spirit that I welcome you to the State House. Have a great, great day.