

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

The Senate was called to order at 10:46 a.m., the President in the Chair.

THE CHAIR:

Good morning. Will the Senate please come to order? Happy New Year. Good morning, everyone. Senator Looney, good morning and congratulations.

SENATOR MARTIN LOONEY (11TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Happy New Year to you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff, good morning. Congratulations to you, sir.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and good morning. And good morning to everybody who is here and not here today, in our socially distanced and safe way of opening day.

I would like to yield to Senator Looney, I know who has remarks for-- in becoming Senate President Pro Tempore again. And in the spirit of not having him or anyone else freeze outside, I think he felt that

it was good to bring the remarks inside. And so, I would like to yield to Senator Looney.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Looney. Do you accept the yield, sir?

SENATOR MARTIN LOONEY (11TH):

I do, Madam President, and thank you. Thank you so much to you for your kindness, your leadership, your insight as a public policy leader for so many years and for your courageous presiding in this Chamber.

Madam President, thanks to my colleagues certainly for electing me to a fourth term as Senate President Pro Tempore. Other than the blessings of family life with my wife, Ellen, who is missing opening day for, I believe, the first time in 39 years today not being with us, our son, Michael, and our grandchildren, Matthew, Anna, and Isabel, and some cherished longtime friendships that go back several decades. Apart from that, having your confidence, my colleagues, and trust is the most cherished honor of my life.

I'm most deeply grateful for the people of the 11th Senate District for the past 28 years, and the people of the 96th House District for 12 years before that, for the opportunity to serve in this beloved place and to know that I am part of a group that's been entrusted with work that is valuable, consequential, and thoroughly absorbing every single day. And that has been the case for the last 40 years, in my case.

I thank our Great Majority Leader Duff, who succeeded me six years ago as the Majority Leader and has been a deep well of good judgment, sound policy insight, as well as becoming a close friend during those years. And that judgment and that insight that Bob possesses will be needed more than ever in the next two years.

I'm also so pleased in these challenging times that we have so many passionate, highly gifted, and idealistic members in our Senate Democratic Caucus, ready for the challenges of the next two years. I thank Senator Kelly, Senator Formica, and the Republican Senate Caucus for their commitment to public service and a belief in our system; and their Washington colleagues have much to learn from them.

I want to acknowledge our superb staff, especially Finney Morrow and Courtney Cullinan, and Joel Rudikoff in particular who have been so involved in the preparation for this session. The reworking of our rules in a way to try to creatively prepare us for a new way of doing business and do it in a way that-- that reflects the best traditions of the Senate.

And all that they have done prior to the start of the session has been so important behind the scenes to prepare us for this day and for the days ahead, so that we can actually have a productive Session in the midst of this pandemic.

A note of personal gratitude to outgoing Republican Senate Leader Len Fasano, outgoing Speaker Joe Aresimowicz, and outgoing House Republican Leader Themis Klarides for the quality of their service and

their dedication and their love of this General Assembly over the years.

In fact, last night, Senator Duff and Speaker Ritter and I gathered with the three of them for a virtual cocktail party and a toast to reminisce about all of our years in service together and the good times and the hard times that we've had, and the friendships that have developed during those years of shared leadership. Again, something not likely to be seen in Washington these days.

Looking ahead, Madam President, we of course face policy challenges a lot more formidable than the technical ones of adjusting to Zoom after Zoom after Zoom after Zoom. Adopting a biennial budget must be accomplished in a way that does not fail to meet the mandate that the people of our state expect their state government to provide sufficient and significant support for social services for the frail and the dependent, for the highest quality in public education from pre-K through graduate and professional education.

For property tax reform for municipalities, in recognition of the reality that it is the local property tax and not any tax directly levied by the state that people find the most inequitable and the most burdensome.

We know that the pandemic has taken so many lives, and blighted so many others. It has also revealed the inequities in our health care and health insurance. We must respond with a willingness to evaluate every physical and mental health issue in light of that, and in light of the urgent commitment

to racial equity and social justice that has to be our renewed vision [Inaudible 0:07:21].

But we also need to pursue equity in urgent economic development and development of affordable housing and [inaudible 0:07:33] in every aspect of our economy. We also have to recognize that we have to have a clear vision to enhance corporate activity in the way in which we raise revenue in the state. We have to remind ourselves each day that we are not primarily just a collection of 169 separate and visible economies, but are in fact the single state of Connecticut.

Also as one who's grant base per capita range from \$15,000 to \$734,000 per person, and therein is our economic problem.

Also, Madam President, I believe we have to recognize that when we received yesterday the results from the State of Georgia that equity and access to quality health care and education and a commitment to social justice are not fringe issues of the left, but are fundamental American issues that are cared for and cared about deeply and passionately by the mainstream of people in the United States.

Madam President, I believe that we have the capacity. With goodwill, we can deliver, in partnership with Governor Lamont's administration, a productive state government; one that is enlightened, compassionate, and efficient, and that that state government can be a force for good, especially in times of crisis. And that is our fervent belief and one in which we need to continue to keep the faith as we go forward.

Thank you, Madam President and thanks to everyone for this voyage we are about to begin on, which is in some ways is so traditional, but in other ways, this year will be so new. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Looney. Senator Kelly, will you remark, sir? And congratulations to you and Happy New Year.

SENATOR KEVIN KELLY (21TH):

Thank you very much, Madam President. And like Senator Looney, I am very excited about the prospects of not only this Session, but the next Session and the opportunity to be back in the people's building and to get the voice of the people of Connecticut and particularly the middle class back at the table and being heard.

These are challenging times, but as much as things change in the State of Connecticut, they do stay the same. And there are very decent, good, and hard-working families across our state that want to make our state a better place in which to live, work and raise a family.

And to that end, I look forward to the next two years of working for those issues and working across the aisle to make sure that we can make Connecticut that better place to live, for all people of Connecticut.

Now, I would be remised if I didn't also recognize as a new leader that I have a Deputy in Senator Paul Formica, and I have been blessed that he has decided to also serve with me. And I'm also blessed and humbled by the support of our Caucus and the good Senators in our Caucus who have decided to step forward in challenging times to make sure that their voice is heard, and to make a commitment and a sacrifice on behalf of the people of Connecticut.

We do have a couple of individuals who were with us last session, but are not with us today. Both George Logan and Gennaro Bizzarro unfortunately did not make it. And to them, I would like to sincerely thank them for their service on behalf of their districts and the sacrifices that they've made for the people of Connecticut.

And I'd also like to recognize my predecessor, somebody who was very instrumental in helping me become the Senator who I am. From the very beginning ten years ago, he helped me, he guided me, he taught me very much and it was a blessing to be in the Caucus with such a leader and to learn from somebody who was so committed, not only to the people of Connecticut and his family, but to this institution itself. And that is Senator Len Fasano.

The State is a better place, I know this institution is a better place, because of the commitment that he made to both. And I thank him for his sacrifice and service of 18 years to the State of Connecticut and also the sacrifices of his family to give him to us, so that we could benefit from all the things that he did to make us a better place.

And lastly, while we're talking about service and sacrifice, I must comment that I myself have a family. My wife, Cindy, like Senator Looney's spouse, is not able to be here with us today. It's the first time she's missed also. But I couldn't do what I do without her support, love and devotion. As well as our family, our four kids, our grandchildren, and the difficult time that they're going through now didn't allow them to be with us today, but I'm certainly blessed and grateful for the sacrifices that they make on my behalf so that I can be with you not only here today, but throughout Session.

So once again, just thank you. I look forward to working with everyone and I am hopeful and optimistic that Connecticut will get through this, and we will not only get through this, but we will be better for the experience. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kelly, thank you so much. Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, also again I want to just extend my congratulations to Senator Kelly and Senator Formica on their ascension to leadership. Once again, I congratulate my partner and friend, our Leader of the Senate, Senator Looney, for all his work and dedication to the people of the State of Connecticut and for laying out a bold, visionary agenda for the next two years for us to consider.

And the fact that Senator Looney has dedicated his life to public service and the work he has done doesn't go unnoticed, and we certainly appreciate that.

And we all, I think, as Senators want to take a moment and then assuming you, Madam President as well, want to thank our families for their sacrifices as well for what they do and for their support in the background of us, so that we're able to be here.

I just also want to take a moment again to congratulate our Clerk and our Assistant Clerk on their elections and appointments. We couldn't do without them and we certainly appreciate their work.

And with that, I will put them to work right now. So, Madam President, does the Clerk have Senate Agenda No. 2 -- I'm sorry, No. 1 and No. 2 on his desk?

THE CLERK:

The Clerk is in possession of Senate Agendas No. 1 and No. 2 dated Wednesday, January 6, 2021.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President, I move all items on Senate Agendas No. 1 and No. 2 dated Wednesday, January 6, 2021 be acted upon as indicated and that

the Agenda be incorporated by reference in the Senate Journal and Senate transcript.

THE CHAIR:

Hearing, no objections, so ordered. Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Would the Clerk please call, while we move Senate Agenda No. 2?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk. Okay.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

And one second, Madam President. So, Madam President, now we've adopted the items on Senate's No. 1 and No. 2, we just have to announce that the Secretary of State has provided the canvas and a return of votes for Senators and the tabulations are in order, and all Members are officially seated.

THE CHAIR:

So noted.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, on Agenda No. 2, would the Clerk please call Senate Resolution No. 1?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk -- and I do want to congratulate both of our wonderful Clerks -- would you please call the items?

THE CLERK:

Thank you. Senate Agenda No. 2, Senate Resolution No. 1, A RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE RULES OF THE SENATE.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, these-- the rules are our usual rules, except for the fact of our pandemic that we're in these days and how we're going to proceed with that. And I would urge adoption of the Resolution.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Duff. Will you remark further, Senator Duff?

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

[Inaudible 0:16:52]

THE CHAIR:

Okay. Thank you, Senator Duff. If not, let me try your minds. All those in favor, say aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed?

SENATOR:

No.

THE CHAIR:

The ayes have it. Mr. Clerk. Sorry, Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Would the Clerk please call Senate Joint Resolution No. 1?

THE CLERK:

Senate Agenda No. 2, Senate Joint Resolution No. 1,
A RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE JOINT RULES OF THE
SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Again, these are our standard rules except for the fact of the pandemic we're in and are rules accordingly in how the Senate and the House will operate under the pandemic at the moment.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark further? If not, let me try your minds. All in favor of the Resolution, please signify by saying aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed?

SENATOR:

No.

THE CHAIR:

And they are adopted. Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Could we stand at ease, please?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Will the Clerk please call Senate Joint Resolution No. 2?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Senate Agenda No. 2, Senate Joint Resolution No. 2,
A RESOLUTION CONCERNING PUBLICATION OF THE
LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN, PRINTING OF BILLS AND EXPENSES
OF THE 2021 SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, again,
this is a standard Joint Resolution for opening day
on the Publication of the Legislative Bulletin, et
cetera, and I'd urge adoption.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark further? If not, let me try your
minds. All in favor, please say, aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

All opposed? And the ayes have it, the Resolution
passes. Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I believe that's the end of our Joint Resolutions and I would move for immediate transmittal down to the House of Representatives.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, Mr. Clerk. Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, would the Clerk please call Senate Resolution No. 2?

THE CLERK:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Senate Agenda No. 2, Senate Resolution No. 2, A RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE PRINTING OF THE SENATE JOURNAL.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. We call this must-read material and again, printing of our Senate-- normal Senate Journal and our standard rules and I would urge adoption.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark further? If not, let me try your minds. All in favor of the Resolution, please signify by saying aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed? The Resolution is adopted. Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Would the Clerk please call Senate Resolution No. 3?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Senate Agenda No. 2, Senate Resolution No. 3,
RESOLUTION CONCERNING ROLL CALL AND READING OF THE
SENATE JOURNAL.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Again, this -- the title says it all and I would urge adoption of the Resolution.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark further? If not, let me try your minds. All in favor of the Resolution before us, please signify by saying aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed? The Resolution is adopted. Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Would the Clerk now please call Senate Resolution No. 4?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Senate Agenda No. 2, Senate Resolution No. 4,
RESOLUTION CONFIRMING THE NOMINATION OF RABBI PHILIP
LAZOWSKI OF WEST HARTFORD AS CHAPLAIN OF THE SENATE
AND REVEREND BONITA GRUBBS OF NEW HAVEN, AND
MONSIGNOR GERALD G. SCHMITZ OF BRANFORD AS DEPUTY
CHAPLAINS OF THE SENATE.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I move adoption of the Resolution and would just note that we're very fortunate to have these three folks, Rabbi and our Reverend and our Monsignor to lead us in prayer at our Sessions, and I would urge adoption of the Resolution. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark further on the Resolution that is before us? If not, let me try your minds. All those in favor, please signify by saying aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed? And the ayes have it and the Resolution is adopted. Senator Duff.

SENATOR BOB DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. That concludes our business for today, for the moment. I would normally yield for points of personal privilege, but I think we're -- we're good. So with that, Madam President, I will move that we adjourn subject to the call of the Chair.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered. The Senate stands adjourned subject to the call of the Chair, and I urge everyone to go forth and govern.

(On motion of Senator Bob Duff of the 25TH District, the House adjourned at 11:07 o'clock a.m., to meet again at the Call of the Chair.)