

SIXTH ANNUAL

STATE OF THE CITY

ADDRESS

OF

JOSEPH R. PAOLINO, JR.

MAYOR OF PROVIDENCE

TO THE

PROVIDENCE CITY COUNCIL

Joseph R. Paolino, Jr.
MAYOR

JANUARY 1990





**“TONIGHT OUR VISION REMAINS CLEAR;
OUR DREAMS HAVE BECOME REALITY;
PROGRESS CONTINUES; AND THE PROMISE
OF PRIDE ENDURES.”**

Honorable members of the City Council: This year we begin a new decade and a new era of freedom in the world. In this atmosphere of peace and democratic reform, local governments across America symbolize democracy. They are the foundation of American democracy because they are closest to government “of, by, and for the people.” But we must always be willing to respond to the will of the people — to change and reform government to better educate every child, and provide affordable housing, a decent chance, and a clean, safe, drug-free environment for every family.

We began on a January night like this in 1985 when I delivered my first State of the City Address, and tonight — when we leave here — we can say that we accomplished what we set out to do.

We found a new way to lead city government. We brought together, in an honest atmosphere of change and reform, dedicated public servants who shared the goals and values of every hard-working Rhode Island family. We discussed problems, built a consensus, and developed a plan for progress. We went into every department and reshaped a new government that worked for people. Think of what government can do when we all work together for change.

Tonight let’s look back at those January nights, and as we do, let’s commit this government and the next generation of leaders to continue what we began. And this year let’s set an agenda that keeps Providence moving steadily forward.

"OUR AGENDA TO REFORM GOVERNMENT MUST CONTINUE AS EVERY AGENDA WE'VE SET EACH YEAR MUST CONTINUE. SO TONIGHT LET'S LOOK BACK WITH PRIDE KNOWING THAT WITH EACH MEMORY COMES A NEW CHALLENGE — A NEW OPPORTUNITY."

In 1985 we said for the first time that we wanted to make Providence America's Best City. Before we did anything we needed to restore people's confidence in government. We did, and we can never let Providence down again.

Remember 1985? We set the wheels of reform in motion. We started by implementing the recommendations of the Providence Management Study. We recruited professionals, and we changed every City Department. We brought government into the twentieth century, and now it's ready for the twenty-first.

But more than implementing the Management Study, developing a code of Purchasing Ethics, implementing the City's first personnel procedures, or making sure that pigeons weren't the only things in the DPW garage — we achieved something greater that year. We restored people's confidence in government. We changed people's perception of public servants.

In 1985 we had a vision of making Providence America's Best City. And in 1989, after five years of hard work, *Newsweek* said Providence is one of America's Hottest Cities, one of America's Best Places to Live and Work. Every one of you on the City Council and every department director, every community leader, and every legislator helped make it possible. Because of you we really are one of America's Best Cities.

But it's not over yet. Our agenda to reform government must continue as every agenda we've set each year must continue. So tonight let's look back with pride knowing that with each memory comes a new challenge — a new opportunity. Tonight, to continue the reforms we began in 1985, I intend to submit to the City Council a referendum package to place questions of residency for city employees on the ballot in November. I believe that our residency policy is making it hard to provide the best education possible. It's time for change.

We need to continue to reform purchasing policies in accordance with the City Charter. Therefore, tonight I'm asking the Council to work with me in drafting a workable ordinance to better ensure Fairness in Purchasing. And to ensure a broader personnel pool, we will enhance our recruitment of qualified minority applicants for all city positions.

"IN 1986 PROVIDENCE CITY GOVERNMENT HAD TURNED A CORNER. IT WAS EFFICIENT ENOUGH TO RESPOND TO PEOPLE'S NEEDS AND HONEST ENOUGH TO EARN PEOPLE'S RESPECT."

On another January night like this in 1986, I gave my Second State of the City Address. That night we reported on the changes we had made — that our reforms made a difference, and that people were beginning to feel good about government again. Providence was on the move. That night, in 1986, Providence City government had turned a corner. It was efficient enough to respond to people's needs, and honest enough to earn people's respect. That night we set a Neighborhood Agenda and reported that a new government was working for people. We talked about

family and neighborhoods, and — let me say again — my wife, Lianne, and I are as proud of our family traditions as each of you are of yours.

Remember Alvareta Murphy of Plainfield Street and Dorothea Russo in Manton? They came to one of our first neighborhood meetings with problems, and we put government to work to solve them. As long as I'm Mayor, neighborhood meetings will continue, and I hope they'll continue with every administration.

**"I'VE ALWAYS SAID THAT I LIKE TO BUILD;
I LIKE TO PRESERVE; BUT BEFORE I DO EITHER,
I LIKE TO PLAN."**

But more than building an efficient government, that year we built a strong bridge between downtown revitalization and neighborhood restoration. I think this administration — more than any other — has successfully linked development with preservation. We're seeing a "whole" city come back to life; not just one neighborhood, not just downtown. I've always said that I like to build; I like to preserve; but before I do either, I like to plan. Let future leaders know that neighborhood rivalries, or rivalries between downtown and the neighborhoods hinder our common goal of progress and prosperity for all.

Tonight to continue the neighborhood agenda we set in 1986, I'm announcing not only that neighborhood meetings will continue; but that we will immediately respond with the full force of law in any neighborhood where ethnic violence occurs. It's unacceptable, and we won't tolerate it. I'm asking the new Public Safety Commissioner to take the lead in this effort.

In 1986 we strengthened the bond between downtown

and the neighborhoods, and we've done it each year by creating jobs and expanding our tax base. We did it by moving aggressively as we did when City and State officials worked all night in my office to convince American Express to bring 500 new jobs to Rhode Island families. Now, their new building is at One American Express Plaza. We did it by persuading Cookson America to renew its commitment to Providence and restore historic Union Station as its corporate headquarters. We did it by completing plans for the Convention Center and by helping neighborhood people to revitalize University Heights. And tonight I call on the Providence Foundation and the business community to work with me to find the best sites for more parking and for colleges and universities to locate downtown. I hope that when Roger Williams College opens its Law School, it will be in downtown Providence.

"WHERE CHANGES AND ADJUSTMENTS WERE NEEDED, WE MADE THEM. WHERE GOVERNMENT FAILED, WE MADE IT SUCCEED. WHERE GOVERNMENT SUCCEEDED, WE MADE IT BETTER AND SEARCHED FOR WAYS TO GET THE MOST FOR EVERY TAX DOLLAR."

In 1987, on a third January night like this, I delivered another State of the City Address. Our agenda was to fine-tune government. Our theme was reorganization. Where changes and adjustments were needed, we made them. Where government failed, we made it succeed. Where government succeeded, we made it better and searched for ways to get the most for every tax dollar.

We can make government even better if we better respond to rising health care costs. Therefore, tonight

I'm proposing legislation to require the State Department of Business Regulation to hold public hearings on all proposed health insurance increases — group rates as well as individual rates.

In 1987 we announced a five-year Master Plan for the Roger Williams Park Zoo, and tonight we can announce that we'll break ground this spring for a \$5.5 million African exhibit and a completely renovated, modern zoo that will be one of the best zoos of its size in America. In 1987 we established Rhode Island's first Housing Court and, because of its success, last year we added a third judge. We changed the administration of the Housing Authority and have earned renewed respect from HUD for reforming our commitment to housing. But we didn't stop there. This year we worked with Traveler's Aid — and closely with the business community — to open the first multi-service center right in the heart of downtown. In 1990 we'll seek to establish Rhode Island's first Neighborhood Housing Trust Fund, and I'm calling for a Human Service Summit this year. Now more than ever — in the face of state budget cuts — we need to talk about programs for people.

In 1987 we added police and shook up the police department, and in 1990 we won't hesitate to do it again, under the leadership of our new Public Safety Commissioner, John Partington. Not only with every memory, but with every bad experience comes a new challenge and a new opportunity for change. Let me say tonight: we won't be afraid to make whatever changes are necessary to keep Providence moving steadily forward. Let the chips fall where they may.

"ONLY BECAUSE WE HAD SUCCEEDED IN REFORMING GOVERNMENT, AND BECAUSE WE WERE FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE IN MANAGING IT, COULD WE DREAM OF COMMITTING THE NECESSARY RESOURCES TO REBUILD FROM 40 YEARS OF NEGLECT."

By 1988 people knew government was ready to meet any challenge. That year we went to work to rebuild our infrastructure. Roads needed repair. Schools, parks, and city buildings hadn't been properly maintained in over 40 years. Our water supply system needed improvement. Only because we had succeeded in reforming government, and because we were fiscally responsible in managing it could we dream of committing the necessary resources to rebuild from 40 years of neglect.

It was also in 1988 that we passed a \$15 million open space bond issue to restore our parks and preserve our environment. We passed a \$41 million bond to restore every school building in Providence, and we announced that RIPEC would recommend management and capital improvements at the Water Supply Board.

All the changes we were making were within our budget. We kept taxes down, and that January night in 1988 we announced that our bond rating increased to "A." But that's not all. We've run four consecutive surpluses and eliminated a \$6 million cumulative deficit; and tonight I can announce that for the fifth straight year we have a budget surplus, and this year it's \$870,000. But there's more. For the first time since 1975, the city has a real "positive fund balance." That's good management. That's good business. And that means good government.

We're holding the line on taxes in Providence and balancing our budget, but the state is facing a very serious budget crisis that threatens the progress we've made. We can't manage the state's mismanagement at the local level, and we shouldn't be asked to balance the state budget on the backs of property taxpayers in local cities and towns.

Tonight our 1988 agenda for restoring the infrastructure of our city continues. The wheels of progress keep on turning. I'm announcing that this year we will reopen a restored Esek Hopkins School. We will complete exterior restorations of all schools and continue interior restorations under the \$41 million bond passed in 1988. By the year 2000 we will have fundamentally rebuilt every school in Providence. And we've completed renovations of the old Citizens Bank as the new School Administration Building.

Additionally, the RIPEC study of the Water Supply Board is complete, and we're ready to take action. I'm announcing tonight the \$20 million purchase of almost 2,000 acres of watershed land at the Scituate Reservoir to protect the future of our most precious resource. I'm also announcing that we'll be appointing a new Chief Engineer at the Water Supply Board in the near future. The Chief Engineer will oversee a \$30 million capital improvement program for the renovation and modernization of our Water Supply System.

But we're not stopping there. Our 1988 agenda to restore our infrastructure continues tonight. We're using the Providence Public Building Authority that we established to fund a \$6.5 million project to renovate neighborhood fire stations, neighborhood pools, Camp Cronin for the elderly, and to complete badly needed structural work at City Hall. And we've asked the PBA

to fund a new building for a \$1.5 million carousel for Roger Williams Park.

"AND THIS YEAR — ACROSS AMERICA — THE CHALLENGE TO BETTER EDUCATE EVERY CHILD, TO PROVIDE AFFORDABLE HOUSING, A DECENT CHANCE, AND A CLEAN, SAFE, DRUG-FREE ENVIRONMENT FOR EVERY FAMILY IS THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY, AS THE WORLD LOOKS TO US FOR LEADERSHIP."

We accomplished so much in such a short time. And then last year, on a January night like this, some said things had changed. They said we broadened our message. We did. And tonight we broaden our message even more.

Last year we renewed our commitment to preserving timeless family values. And this year — across America — the challenge to better educate every child, to provide affordable housing, a decent chance, and a clean, safe, drug-free environment for every family is the challenge of democracy, as the world looks to us for leadership.

As Mayor of the Capital City, I understand the challenges of progress. I've driven down city streets and seen children caught in the cycle of poverty. Urban leaders need to be role models, not just caretaker administrators. And government leaders need the experience to understand leadership. I've seen the progress that can be made at places like Roger Williams Day Care Center. We even helped build the new addition there. I've worked with Sister Duffy. I've held those kids in my arms and talked to them about getting an education and growing up to be mayor.

Now the time has come to take back the streets. Drug dealers are destroying our neighborhoods. We need to join together to fight this war. We need to get tough on offenders. We need to put dealers behind bars. And maybe it's time for the courts to have the option of the death penalty in some cases. At the federal level there really hasn't been a war on drugs. Since 1981, only 3 percent of the money the Federal Government spent on the drug war has gone to state and local governments.

We've done what we can in our city. We've increased and reorganized the police department and worked to give them the equipment and the legislation they need. We've implemented innovative programs in our schools.

But now it's time to bring the right people together, experts in every field to address the entire area of criminal justice and prison overcrowding—from bail to parole, from home confinement to victim restitution, from sentencing to the death penalty. I think it's time to act rather than react. A comprehensive package that restructures the entire criminal justice system and finds a way to build new prisons is long overdue.

“EDUCATION ISN'T JUST READING, WRITING, AND ARITHMETIC ANYMORE. IT'S NOT JUST GETTING BACK TO BASICS FOR AVERAGE STUDENTS. IT'S ADJUSTING THE SYSTEM TO MEET THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF A MAJORITY OF STUDENTS.”

Quality education is our greatest challenge. But education isn't just reading, writing, and arithmetic anymore. It's not just getting back to basics for average students. It's adjusting the system to meet the special needs of a majority of students. Our basic task may still

be to educate, but we're not just educating children, we're helping to raise them.

Let's look at what we've done. While the dropout rate in other urban school districts has increased, Providence's dropout rate has decreased. Tonight I'm announcing that our dropout rate is down 2 1/2 percent from last year. And since 1985, it's dropped 8 percent. That's change. That's reform. That's commitment.

We've forged partnerships with business like our Adopt-A-School program, magnet programs, and school-to-work transition programs that train students for specific skilled jobs. In fact, the National Alliance for Business has recognized Providence as one of America's top four cities in promoting business/school partnerships.

And tonight we're renewing our commitment to the implementation of model educational programs that we began in Providence. They include child care programs, teaching kids family values, private/public partnerships, and parental involvement.

**"STRONG ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP
REQUIRES COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING —
NOT CRISIS MANAGEMENT."**

Rhode Islanders, and all Americans, are more concerned about the environment than ever before. The environment is too precious to wait for a crisis to act. A leader brings people together to anticipate problems and find creative solutions. We can't afford to wait for a crisis at the Scituate Reservoir. That's why we're buying almost 2,000 acres of watershed land.

We also can't afford a \$300 million investment in Big River when EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers

can't see the wisdom of the project. We need to preserve our water supply, but we need to be very careful about losing thousands of acres of wetlands that we can never get back.

We can't afford to wait until landfills overflow; incinerators become economically restrictive; hazardous waste, solid waste, and sewage threaten our health; and power plants threaten our air quality before we act — before we get communities to sit down and talk — to develop acceptable plans and address the "not-in-my-backyard" problem head-on. Strong environmental leadership requires comprehensive planning—not crisis management.

"THE NEW WAY TO LEAD GOVERNMENT IS THE WAY WE'VE LED PROVIDENCE."

I came to public service as a Councilman during some difficult times. From the day I took office as Mayor, we faced tough challenges that required hard work and creative solutions. Some of you may remember Rikki Sweeney. She stood on the other side of that railing. She said public officials were inaccessible. Since then, she came into my office and told me she never thought she'd be in the Mayor's Office talking with the Mayor. That makes me feel good about what we've done.

The new way to lead government is the way we've led Providence. We had a vision of what the City could be, and we set tough agendas. We planned for progress. We went to every neighborhood, found out what people wanted, and how we could change and reform government to provide the most effective and efficient services. And we went to work. But there are greater challenges ahead for all of us.

How we attack these problems will test our strength as a people. It will require strong, proven leadership, but above all, it will require a higher standard of professional, ethical government — a standard set by the values and ideals of every Rhode Island family.

I've been Mayor of this City for six years, and I've seen the problems we face — drugs, daycare, worker's compensation, job training, homelessness, health care, and education. These are "people" problems a Mayor can attack but only a Governor can solve. Maybe it's time to join together and solve these problems for every city and town.

Tonight I can proudly report that the State of the City is profoundly changed from what it was six years ago. Government is reformed, and it has a new legacy of public service to pass on to future generations. It's the legacy not of one mayor but of people coming together to change government and the commitment of a whole team of public servants who delivered on the promise of progress.

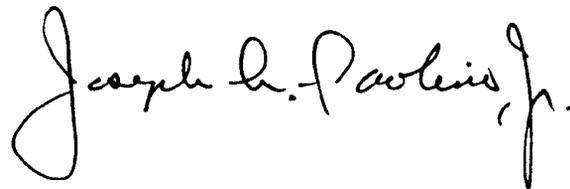
Tonight as we put our administration's accomplishments in perspective and set our agenda for the 1990's — I must recognize my staff and the key members of my staff who have been there from the beginning, for their personal achievement and their commitment to making people believe in Providence again. They're America's best.

**"PROVIDENCE, IN MY HEART I'LL NEVER LEAVE
YOU — BUT TONIGHT WE BEGIN ONE MORE
DECADE WITH ONE MORE PROMISE OF
THINGS TO COME."**

So tonight we leave you with a list of accomplishments, a list of goals, and a hope that history will show we met the challenges and made a difference to the future. As we begin the new decade, let's show the world that American democracy is the beacon of hope whose light shines from every city and town across America, where government works for people.

Friends, I leave here tonight filled with pride. For six years we've reported to you on the State of the City. Others will continue the tradition we began. But, to all of you, let me say: Providence, in my heart I'll never leave you — but tonight we begin one more decade with one more promise of things to come. You will always be America's Best City.

Thank you and good night.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph L. Pawlino, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a distinct 'P'.

