

*FIFTH ANNUAL*

*STATE OF THE CITY*  
*ADDRESS*

*OF*

*JOSEPH R. PAOLINO, JR.*  
*MAYOR OF PROVIDENCE*

*TO THE*

*PROVIDENCE CITY COUNCIL*

*JANUARY 1989*





To the People of Providence  
John LaPalma  
Mayor  
Jan 1989

I hope we helped make  
Providence "America's Best City"

**"THE PROVISIONS WE MAKE TODAY FOR A  
BETTER EDUCATION, DECENT, AFFORDABLE  
HOUSING, AND A CLEAN, SAFE ENVIRONMENT  
WILL SHAPE OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE."**

Honorable members of the City Council, Directors, Judiciary, members of Boards and Commissions, State and Local officials, the people and friends of Providence: tonight as we enter the last year of this decade, let us be the first to look ahead to the last decade of the 20th century, when America came of age. We, and our parents, lived through wars and depression, social and economic changes that redefined the American dream and the American family. We've seen cultural and technological revolutions and a global explosion of ideas and information. We revolutionized the way Americans learn and think, the way we earn and the way we govern, the way we communicate, the way we wage war and the way we preserve peace.

The year 2000 is just over the horizon, and it is no longer the outer limit of science fiction. My daughters, Jennifer and Christina, will come of age in the next century. We can only hope they will come of age in a peaceful, safer time. As Mayor, but more importantly, as a father, I want to build our children a strong, safe bridge to the future from the timeless values we learned from our parents.

Tonight we renew our commitment to those values — to courage, patience, integrity, honesty, and fairness as we accept the challenge of drugs, education, housing, and the environment. Tonight we continue what we began in April, 1984 when I first took office, but tonight — as we look to our children's future — we open our eyes a little wider; we open our hearts and minds a little more; and we broaden our perspective as well as our efforts.

I hope that courage, patience, integrity, honesty, and fairness are words my children remember from this administration, as I remember the words of another administration. On January 11, 1962, in his State of the Union Address, John Kennedy simply, but powerfully, spoke of our obligation as public servants to future generations. He said: "when the youngest child alive today has grown to the cares of manhood, our position in the world will be determined first of all by what provisions we make today for his education, his health, and his opportunities for a good home and a good job and a good life." Today we can add to that, the provision for a safe, clean, drug-free environment.

Tonight, the State of the City is exciting. It's bigger, wider, and more inclusive. The State of the City is aware, prepared, and determined. It is aware of the challenges we face, prepared to accept them, and determined to continue to win.

Every mayor of a major city is on the frontline of public service. Every mayor knows government's responsibility when they look into the eyes of their city and see the future of a nation.

I've looked into the future when I look into the eyes of a teenage dropout who can't read or write and thinks success is measured in kilos — and I don't like what I see.

I've looked into the future when I look into the eyes of a homeless child who thinks a house is an old Ford in the back of a vacant lot — and I don't like what I see.

But I also see the future when I look into the eyes of the children of Asa Messer School, the first public schoolchildren in Rhode Island to wear uniforms. I like what I see when I look into the eyes of the Mayor's A-Team, exceptional young, at risk, middle schoolers from Providence Public Housing. With the guidance of Brown University students, they're learning not just to say no

to drugs. They're learning to be proud of themselves, and that's the best anti-drug program we have. They deserve a round of applause.

**"WE WILL ESCALATE THE WAR ON DRUGS WITH EXPANDED ENFORCEMENT, PREVENTION, EDUCATION, AND TREATMENT INITIATIVES ..."**

Everywhere we turn we see a united city actively waging a combined war on drugs. We're attacking the root of the drug problem with a long list of creative programs like the Theater for Emily project, IMP\*ACT, the Rhode Island Student Assistance Program, Junction Human Services, after school drug education programs at the Silver Lake Center, the Rap-it-Up Program of the Urban League, a Metro-Arts program at Federal Hill House, and a new program at the Providence Center for 20 pre-adolescents and their substance abusing parents.

We're waging the drug war on every front. When the Chief of Police comes into my office and tells me that in 1985 we made 590 drug arrests, 766 in 1986, 1,216 the next year, and over 1,300 arrests in 1988, I like what I hear. But when we arrest drug dealers and the Attorney General convicts them, we don't want to hear that there's no room at the ACI.

We're doing our job in Providence, but prison overcrowding is no excuse to let drug dealers back on city streets. The time has come for the State to solve the prison overcrowding problem and solve it now — for the sake of our children, our families, our city, and our future. The time has come to fund new prisons through the Public Building Authority to solve this problem once and for all.

When the Chief of Police tells me we've seized \$250,000 under the drug forfeiture laws, and that 31 cars have been confiscated, I like what I hear. Now we can use drug

dealers' money to fight the drug war.

This year I will be introducing legislation to expand drug forfeiture laws to allow use of those funds for prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation programs.

The drug war is only beginning, and there's much more to do. Tonight I call on Senators Pell and Chafee, and Representatives Machtley and Schneider to use their influence on the Foreign Relations, Finance, and Armed Services Committees to increase local funding for enforcement, treatment, and prevention. I call on them to use their influence to stop the flow of drugs into the United States. Do you know that 44 states have submitted proposals to the Federal government to use the National Guard for drug enforcement? Do you know that Rhode Island isn't one of them? Tonight I call on the State to submit a proposal that allows our Guard to be used on a limited basis to prevent Rhode Island shores and ports, railroad stations and airports from becoming convenient drop-off points for drug shipments.

Tonight I thank you, the City Council, the Providence Police Department, the School Board and School Superintendent, the new Providence Substance Abuse Prevention Council we appointed last year, and concerned community and neighborhood groups who have recognized that to win the drug war, we must unite. We must first teach our children pride in themselves. We must combine education with prevention, prevention with enforcement, and enforcement with treatment and rehabilitation.

I am announcing tonight new anti-drug initiatives. First, I will be submitting legislation to authorize the prosecution of landlords whose properties are repeatedly used for drug activity and bring those cases to the Housing Court. Second, I am announcing a Special Canine Drug Unit in the Providence Police Department. This week two Providence police officers began attending a school in

Massachusetts where they will learn to handle dogs specially trained in drug detection to assist in finding suspected drug dealers on the streets of Providence. And third, tonight I am asking the Chief of Police and the Superintendent of Schools to work with the courts in establishing an anti-truancy program to force children off the streets, away from the drug source, and back to the classrooms. We will announce details of this program in a few weeks.

The drug war is a challenge, but it's not our only challenge. The provisions we make today for better education, adequate housing, and a clean, safe drug-free environment will shape tomorrow.

**"WE MUST SEEK TO GIVE THE NEW AMERICAN FAMILY A BETTER START!"**

But first, let's understand the changes in the American dream and the American family, as we enter the 1990's. Though we still strive for a good life for our children, the daily life of our families in the new economy has dramatically changed. Today 70 percent of all mothers with school-aged children work outside the home. This may be the single greatest change of the 20th century. Government leaders must recognize the changing American family. We must continue to provide a clean, safe, drug-free environment and affordable housing. But we must also support day care alternatives and additional day care funding. We must seek to give the new family a better start, a cleaner environment, decent, affordable housing and a good education for their children. The future depends on the provisions we make today, but the provisions we make depend on our recognition of the changes in the American dream and the American family.

Today, more than ever, we see changes in our children. When I see a young adult who can't understand a

newspaper article, I don't like what I see. We have a moral obligation to do better.

**“ANY ILLITERACY IS TOO MUCH, AND EVEN ONE DROPOUT IS TOO MANY.”**

Providence is at the cutting edge of progressive education. This year we will strengthen our commitment to education in four crucial areas. First, we will enhance existing dropout prevention and literacy programs. Second, we will strengthen and promote Providence School Partnerships with colleges, universities, and businesses — like Adopt-A-School, Education Rhode Island, and our nationally recognized Dropout Prevention Collaborative. Third, we will continue to restore every school building under Phase II of School Renaissance Plan 2000. We are completing \$25 million of renovations to roofs and walls under Phase I, and beginning inside work with an additional \$41 million passed last year in the largest bond issue in City history. And fourth, we will seek to increase parent participation in exercising their children's basic skills.

We've already lowered our dropout rate, but any illiteracy is too much, and even one dropout is too many.

In January, 1987 I called on the new School Superintendent to attack the dropout and illiteracy problem. Tonight let me report on one successful dropout prevention program that will be incorporated into every school by 1990. At the Carl Lauro Elementary School we implemented a pilot program emphasizing early literacy training and reading skills to prevent students from dropping out later. It's exciting because it's one of the first programs to recognize the importance of literacy in lowering the dropout rate. It's exciting because it works.

We're returning to basics, teaching children to read, write, think, and be curious about the world. That's the best dropout program we can have.

New statistics will show that we've already lowered our dropout rate. But, tonight I commit this administration to developing a five-year plan to further revise the literacy curriculum and expand existing programs to lower our dropout and illiteracy rates even more.

To preserve our educational environment, we're fixing every school building — from ceilings and roofs to walls and classrooms — bathrooms, lunchrooms, and locker rooms. A good debt management program and fiscal responsibility have allowed us to make an unprecedented financial commitment to the total restoration of school buildings between now and the year 2000. But our greatest educational challenge is not only fixing classrooms but bringing parents into those classrooms.

Schools cannot become surrogate parents. As we recognize the changing role of schools and family, let us encourage parents to get involved in their children's education. Therefore, tonight I am asking the School Board, the Superintendent, and the Teachers Union to expand Parent/Teacher Partnerships to include parents in school programs to exercise childrens' basic skills.

**"TOGETHER WE CAN DEVELOP A  
COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING STRATEGY  
FOR PROVIDENCE!"**

Along with education, we will shape tomorrow with provisions we make today for decent, safe, affordable housing. The first year of the new Housing Court was a victory for every neighborhood. The Court handled over 4,000 matters resulting in 2,000 cases, 108 body

attachments for landlords who failed to appear, one jail sentence for contempt, and almost \$20,000 in fines. That's how badly we needed a Housing Court *in Providence, for Providence.*

The recent real estate boom has, unfortunately, left many average citizens behind — some with no affordable housing and some with housing they can't afford to maintain. Therefore, I have established a Providence Neighborhood Housing Trust to assess our present and future housing needs against existing stock. The Trust will coordinate rehabilitation and maintenance programs with financial options.

Additionally, I am announcing tonight a Providence Housing Summit to be held in March. It will bring together housing experts and tradesmen, financial experts and neighborhood groups, landlords and tenants, policymakers and housing advocates. Together we can develop a comprehensive housing strategy for Providence.

Tonight, as is a tradition every year, I recognize a special member of this administration. Tonight, I recognize two dedicated women who are making sure that our children have safe, decent, affordable housing. Tonight, I thank Chief Justice Susan McGuirl and Justice Beverly Ledbetter of the Providence Housing Court for a job well done.

There's another housing success story in Providence. The Providence Housing Authority was in turmoil not long ago. Its image with tenants, the Federal government, and the public was tarnished by mismanagement. We've turned the PHA around and regained people's trust and confidence. Under the leadership of an aggressive Director and a new Board, the PHA is now nationally respected as a model agency. We totally re-organized the PHA under a comprehensive Management Improvement Plan. But, we've done even more. Now prospective tenants are evaluated by

a committee that includes other tenants. We assist new families in budgeting, child care, job training, first aid, and cleaning and maintenance. We increased security and started a crime watch, a tenant's association, and a series of social service programs.

But, most importantly, we're identifying sites for 240 units of scattered-site duplex housing, and modernizing existing public housing stock. We're spending \$18 million at Chad Brown and Admiral Terrace, \$800,000 at Sunset Village, \$9.8 million at Manton Heights, and we will demolish three highrise towers with 240 units and renovate 508 others at Hartford Park for \$17.3 million.

And, this year, to assist moderate income families and to help make housing more affordable, I will ask the General Assembly for a needs-based "Circuit Breaker" program. This program will decrease the property tax burden for qualified middle income home owners without increasing the burden on other property taxpayers.

Our children may look back on this decade as the decade of America's homeless, when the American dream left some families out, and the economy left many behind.

Last year we committed \$600,000 to an emergency shelter for homeless families, and we're building that shelter at Hartford Park. It will be completed this year. In addition, I am announcing that the City is working closely with Traveler's Aide to open a new \$500,000 multi-service center downtown. Plans call for a 13,000 square foot center to be open day and night. It will provide substance abuse counseling and a variety of assistance services as well as emergency services for the homeless and de-institutionalized who wander our streets. We hope this multi-service center will be a statewide model in the heart of downtown Providence.

**"OUR LAND, AIR, WATER, AND WILDLIFE ARE  
THE INHERITANCE EACH GENERATION  
PRESERVES FOR THE NEXT."**

Rhode Island is blessed with hundreds of miles of rocky shores and sandy beaches, thousands of acres of forest, rolling hills, wetlands, and marshes. It's blessed with pure drinking water, acres of undeveloped farmland, and a productive fishing industry. Rhode Island's natural resources have more than a monetary value. They have an emotional value.

The need for responsible environmental leadership becomes more obvious with each acre of land we lose, each ounce of water we pollute, and each species that disappears from the earth. Our land, air, water, and wildlife are the inheritance each generation preserves for the next.

This summer, when my daughter asked "Why can't we go to the beach, daddy?" I had to explain medical waste, and I didn't like what I had to say. I'm concerned for her future when ocean dumping is a way of life and landfills are closing. I'm concerned for her future when I read about the greenhouse effect, depletion of the ozone layer, deforestation, and acid rain. I'm concerned about her future when I hear about tire burning plants in Connecticut and toxic waste seeping into our water supply.

These may not seem like a city's problems, but if our children's inheritance is to be as precious to them as it was to us, then we must act at every level of government.

Providence is doing what it can with the preservation of open spaces, the restoration of our parks, a tree planting program, the renovation of our zoo as a link to the survival of endangered species, the preservation of watershed land, and new programs to ensure clean, safe, abundant drinking water.

In November, 1987 you overwhelmingly approved a \$15 million bond issue to preserve open spaces and restore neighborhood parks. We're already seeing results. We've completed and dedicated the new Candace Street Playground, Veazie Street Playground, Garibaldi Park, Abbott Park, and the Warren Street Playground. We've finished Ardoene Park and Sackett Street Park, Sayles Playground, and Dudley Street Playground, with many more to be completed by the Fall.

Through more than 100 public meetings around the City that included community leaders, school and athletic officials, parents and teachers, neighbors and kids, we learned what they wanted, and we designed and built it.

**“OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN AND OUR NEIGHBORHOODS SOMETIMES REQUIRES A LITTLE VISION AND A MORE WORLDLY VIEW.”**

But we have a greater responsibility to our children. While we're restoring parks and playgrounds in every neighborhood, the preservation of open spaces is becoming a reality.

I am announcing tonight the purchase of Canada Pond in the North End. This 30-acre refuge in the heart of Providence is the nesting place for many birds and contains endangered plant species. I am also announcing that the City is negotiating for a second open space parcel of land in the South Side. With its purchase, we preserve access to the waterfront and set a policy that balances dynamic urban growth with environmental needs. Our responsibility to the future of our children and our neighborhoods sometimes requires a little vision and a more worldly view.

Tonight, I am announcing a new emphasis on our

Forestry Division. Recent reports on global deforestation are alarming but — strange as it may seem — those reports suggest that each of us can make a difference by planting more trees everywhere. The Providence urban forest has dwindled over the years, but through the efforts of Peggy Sharpe and the Mary Elizabeth Sharpe Street Tree Endowment, a variety of programs will ensure more tree planting in the future.

As part of that effort, we are establishing tonight a Tree Farm Program. We will plant 16,000 trees in four tree farms around the City to provide low cost trees for City streets and make the air we breathe cleaner and healthier.

If we cherish more than a memory of what the world was when we were children, then we can take comfort in our commitment to the Roger Williams Park Zoo. Today zoos are not just entertainment — they are a refuge for breeding programs to preserve wildlife. And *our* zoo is fast becoming Rhode Island's representative to the world wildlife conservation effort. You ask what Providence can do for the future, and I'll show you the new zoo.

Remember the penguins? Do you know there are only about 500 Black-Footed Penguins left in the world's zoos? And do you know that we have 12 of them? Can you imagine how important those 12 are to the survival of the species?

On Christmas morning one more Black-Footed Penguin was born. It may not survive, but it was born at our zoo. That's what our zoo is all about. It's about the future.

**“WATER IS OUR MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCE,  
AND WE MUST DO ALL WE CAN TO PRESERVE IT.”**

Providence's greatest responsibility is the preservation of clean, safe, abundant drinking water. What we do to modernize and efficiently operate the Providence Water

Supply System will affect generations of Rhode Islanders to come. Tonight, I proudly say that we accept that responsibility.

Under the leadership of a respected new Chairman, Edward F. Burke, the Water Supply Board will oversee many changes. With a management study by the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council due in the next few weeks, we will begin to streamline administration, management, and operations by April 1. A Facilities Needs Assessment is due this year, and with those recommendations we hope to prioritize and begin necessary capital improvements during the next fiscal year.

In the last few months we attacked the nagging problem of collections. We don't want to shut off water, but fairness is the issue, and everyone must pay their share. We implemented and are carrying out a tough new collection policy to make sure they do.

Water is our most precious resource, and we must do all we can to preserve it. Therefore, we are hiring a consultant who will recommend a comprehensive water conservation strategy by May. Implementation of the first phase of those recommendations should begin by July 1.

We can announce tonight the purchase of the Paquette Property, the first 60 acres of watershed land at the Scituate Reservoir. This \$155,000 purchase is the first in what I hope will be a series of announcements on over 1,000 acres of watershed land. Additionally, I will introduce legislation to increase funds for such purchases and to allow us to condemn land to further protect our water supply.

Also, I am calling on the Department of Human Services, the Police Department, the Attorney General, the Family Court, and State juvenile officials to investigate the possibility of forming a Youth Conservation Corps. This Youth Corps would develop a community service component for juvenile offenders. The Youth Corps would

help plant trees, clear watershed land of litter, and perform necessary tasks to preserve and protect our environment.

And tonight we must set a long-term goal to develop a comprehensive statewide drinking water policy. I will ask the Chairman of the Water Supply Board to examine all future options for watershed protection, conservation, supply, and delivery. In 1913 Mayor Joseph Gainer had a vision when he realized the importance of a water supply system to the future. Now we must have the same vision to ensure that our drinking water remains as clean and abundant for our children as it has for us.

#### **“LOOK WHAT WE’RE ACCOMPLISHING DOWNTOWN AND IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS!”**

This year we’ve broadened our message and efforts. But we can report that last year we continued to provide effective government and efficient services. Look what we accomplished downtown and in our neighborhoods.

When I look out my office window, I see progress on the River Relocation, the most far-reaching project in history. I see a new 13-story Citizens Bank Building rising above the rivers, the renovation of the old Union Station as Cookson America’s new corporate headquarters. If you haven’t noticed, we’ve even helped to completely restore and remodel the Providence Public Library, the cornerstone of Rhode Island’s neighborhood libraries. Our commitment of \$1.6 million is a donation to our children to increase their curiosity in the world and decrease illiteracy in our state.

The City is alive with brick and mortar projects and dramatic plans that will change Providence forever. We’ve purchased land for the new Convention Center, hotel, and parking garage. There’s a new marina at Corliss Landing

and plans for India Point waterfront preservation are off the drawing board. And — because I'm a preservationist — this year we'll try one last time to save the old Outlet we all remember, and make it the cornerstone of downtown mixed-use development.

The Capital Center is poised for a new era in downtown retail, office, and residential space with the hope of Providence Place and the reality of the Gateway Project, an \$18 million multi-use development. There's a new traffic pattern and highway interchange that easily links the Interstates and relieves traffic in the neighborhoods. But we all know that when we drive downtown we can't easily find an affordable place to park. Tonight I call on the Department of Planning and Development to work with the Parking Authority and the private sector to forge a creative partnership and develop innovative financing for new, affordable downtown parking.

We're breathing new life into the heart of downtown's old business district with a contract to open Westminster Mall to limited traffic, once and for all. Finally, we'll have the access we need to attract a new residential community of artists, college students, and urban pioneers who can spark downtown residential growth as they have in other cities.

Tonight I, once again, call on the Providence Company, the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation, local colleges and universities, and the Rhode Island Council on the Arts to help attract these pioneers to downtown.

Since 1984, I've made neighborhood meetings the cornerstone of this administration. We will continue those meetings this year and every year. We've made government work and we've put it to work to bring better services to the neighborhoods.

In the Police Department we've re-organized and

increased the force. We provided our new Police Chief with new cars and equipment. In the Fire Department we added two new state-of-the-art rescues and reduced out-of-town rescue calls. We will continue to run police and fire schools to keep public safety manpower at full complement. We're housing the new statewide 911 emergency system and increasing overall communications to reduce emergency response time.

In Public Works we've spent \$2.3 million to repave 120 City streets that haven't been properly maintained in over 15 years. We've purchased \$1.1 million of new equipment including trucks, a backhoe, sewer cleaners, and a street sweeper. We've even installed 262 parking meters and 786 street signs. We've cleaned 100 vacant lots and tagged or towed almost 4,000 abandoned cars.

**"WE HAVE A TEAM IN CITY GOVERNMENT  
THAT HAS CHANGED PROVIDENCE'S IMAGE  
OF PUBLIC SERVICE."**

We've done so much because we have good public servants providing good government and a tough City Council that makes sure we do it right. In the final analysis we've worked together. Councilmen Glavin and Farmer, Easton, Dillon, and Rollins, Stravato and Petrosinelli, Cola and Annaldo, Lombardi and Lopes, Councilwomen Brassil, Fargnoli, DiRuzzo, and Young — because of these men and women, we have an incredible record of administrative success unequalled in recent memory.

This year we implemented the fairest, most professional revaluation possible. We did it with competent managers, and people praised us not for revaluation, but for the process. We won their trust because we were open and honest and willing to listen.

There's no magic to good government. It comes naturally with skilled public servants in an honest environment. We have a team in city government that has changed Providence's image of public service. They have set a high ethical standard in building an effective, fiscally responsible government.

Because of their efforts, we've been able to provide better services and set a new direction for government. Because of them, we've increased our bond rating, successfully completed revaluation, and run surpluses every year. Because of them, we've computerized every department of city government, and implemented a prudent borrowing program and debt policy that allowed us to make the financial commitments to rebuild parks and schools, to move rivers and reshape this city. Because of them, our message has been heard.

And tonight, I can announce that we have completely eliminated a cumulative deficit that stood at \$6.3 million when I took office. That may be the single most dramatic statement we can make about the kind of public servants Providence has had for five years. And we did it together — this City Council and this Mayor.

**"I WANT TO BUILD OUR CHILDREN A STRONG, SAFE BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE FROM THE TIMELESS VALUES WE LEARNED FROM OUR PARENTS."**

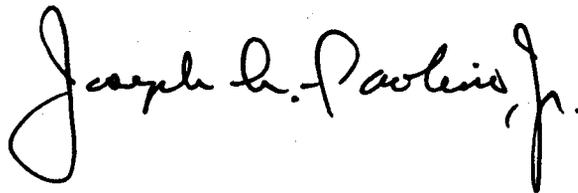
Yes, we are a shining city on a hill, but building a bridge to the next hill — a bridge that can bear the weight of poverty, drugs, illiteracy, poor housing, and pollution — is our challenge. A bridge that strong can only be built with the blood, sweat, and tears of generations of Americans who have handed down timeless values to us to pass on to the next generation.

We have a profound responsibility to the children who will come of age in a new century. American cities are at the frontline of public service. This is where you see the tears and hear the cries. And when I see those tears and hear those cries, I want to say that this city, this mayor, this father rose to the challenge and made a difference to the future.

Sometimes we lose sight of why we're working so hard in the public sector, what we're trying to accomplish, and what exactly we're working toward. When that happens, all I do is look at my wife Lianne and our daughters, Jennifer and Christina, and think of the thousands of less fortunate children, the children I've seen in Providence and across this nation: forgotten children — homeless children — children who can't read or write — some who are sick — some who are dying — some who are disadvantaged, unhappy, unloved, and unwanted — children struggling against incredible odds to survive. We can even those odds, or we can at least try.

This year I met a very special child who symbolizes America's future. He is the son of Cambodian immigrants as my grandfather was the son of Italian immigrants at the end of the last century. I met John Nou as part of a school project. He came to spend a day with the Mayor. He's bright, funny, full of life and hope. He's just a regular kid, but that day, and since then, he made my job a little easier. When I look into his eyes, I see the future of Providence, and I truly like what I see.

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, looping initial 'J'.

