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INAUGURAL ADDRESS



OF

MAYOR JOSEPH R. PAOLINO, JR.

TO THE

PEOPLE OF PROVIDENCE

JANUARY 5, 1987

***Family, friends, honorable members of
the City Council, distinguished guests,
and people of Providence:***

We have come a long way from the uncertain days two and a half years ago when I first stood here. Today we can look back knowing that we have succeeded, knowing that the future of Providence looks brighter than it ever has before.

Allow me to recognize and thank a few who have been responsible for that success. First, my wife, Lianne and my daughter, Jennifer, who have learned first hand that being Mayor really isn't just a nine-to-five job. I'd like to thank my staff for their support and dedication, my department directors for helping me restore pride and confidence in government, my campaign workers for their time and efforts, and, most of all, the people of Providence who have put their trust in all of us. This has been a team effort by all involved. And, I'd like to give a special thanks to the City Council. They have been my partners and I will continue to look to them for guidance and advice.

I am humbled by the plurality by which you expressed approval of this administration. Not only were we supported by Democrats, we were supported by Republicans and Independents. I hope that this administration will be an administration for all the people, not for any one group, political party or neighborhood.

The mandate you gave me on election day was not a mandate to gamble on uncertain choices, but an affirmation of the right choices we already made, choices like the Housing Court, River Relocation, the School Repair Bond Issue, neighborhood meetings, and the professional management of city government.

You have said that you believe Providence really can be America's Best City. I thank you for believing it and for believing in me.

When I first took office, we were a city in search of stability. We needed a rest from a difficult period. We needed a quiet time to put it all back together again, a time to rebuild and rediscover our neighborhoods. We're not flashy, we're hard workers. Now, from two and a half years of stability has come strength. We have rediscovered who we are, and what we are as a city, and we found our pride again. I want this to be the best administration ever. We're not looking for passing grades, we're looking for

excellence. The stability of this administration has brought with it an enthusiastic rediscovery of our potential. Last year we looked back and celebrated our 350th birthday. This year we look ahead to what we know we can be.

We are at an historic crossroad. As larger cities begin to buckle from the burdens of congestion and overpopulation, Providence can stand as a shining example of a modern city. We are the city of the future. But over the next four years, we will be faced with the challenge of carefully setting a proper agenda that takes advantage of every new opportunity while preserving the character that makes us unique. We will have to strike the proper balance between opening ourselves to development and preserving the quality of life of families who built their lives here. If the price for the future is our neighborhoods, then the price is too high.

As Mayor of the Capital City, I intend over the next four years to be a spokesman for all cities, to fight for our needs as we face the challenges ahead. I am saddened by the proposal to privatize Amtrak, and I am outraged by the loss of revenue sharing; I am outraged not just for Providence, but for every city in America. I believe the trend will be toward cities like Providence. Our challenge for the next four years will be to make the right choices and choose the best opportunities for economic growth and community development. We must continue to maximize the efficient, economical delivery of city services. We must keep housing affordable and taxes in line while, at the same time, we open our doors to development that will expand our tax base and assist our neighborhoods.

Like Mayor Thomas Doyle's administration, one hundred and twenty-three years ago, we serve at a time of great change. His leadership was visionary and dynamic — marked by individuality and decisiveness. Like Mayor Doyle, we will, over the next four years, make choices that will influence Providence for the next century and beyond. We can be the true architects of history. The choices can be difficult and may not always be popular, but a Mayor must not be afraid to make unpopular choices to maintain the fiscal integrity and level of services necessary to preserving a high quality of life.

Our agenda for the next four years will be built on the success we have already had in returning to professionalism and basic management principles. We can control city finances and increase services; we can take advantage of development and

preserve the character of our city. And we can move rivers, change our skyline, and open our waterfront to rediscover one of our most neglected resources, Narragansett Bay.

In the next four years, we can make our dreams of Providence come true. We can have a modern, downtown residential neighborhood. We can have a revitalized retail area by opening Westminster Mall again, and an expanded business district. Today I am calling for the Capital Center Commission to lift the prohibition on major retail development in the new Capital Center. Why should the popularity of shopping malls be limited to the suburbs when we can bring the convenience of a retail mall into the heart of downtown? And we must be willing to face the challenge of developing more parking downtown. We've already gone to Congress to grandfather-in eighty million dollars worth of parking authority. Now we need to turn that authority to brick and mortar.

In the next four years to complement our River Relocation Project, I will be working closely with the City Council, state officials, planners, and developers to begin the process of opening our waterfront once again — to open eight hundred acres from the hurricane barrier to the shipyard, from Allens Avenue to the waterfront. Let's replace scrap metal heaps and oil tanks with new mixed-use development along Narragansett Bay, development that can include residential units, high-tech industry and recreational facilities like a marina and maybe even an Aquarium. We're ten years behind the times. It's time to make our environment work for us. It's time to open our waterfront once again. The Old Harbor District, the first project in New England to utilize tax incremental financing, is underway.

I want to expand our neighborhood park system and return an African exhibit to the zoo. How many of us remember Alice, the elephant, at Roger Williams Park? Wouldn't it be nice to bring her back again? We must expand our Civic Center, open a beautiful new Convention Center and add new buildings to our skyline that will expand our tax base and ease the burden on the neighborhoods. When that happens, everybody wins. Let's target the Northeast with our new city advertising campaign. Let's get some of their business to come to Providence.

There's no magic to making a city work if you have a dream of what the city can be and a quiet businesslike approach to management. Difficult problems like revaluation that test our strength as a community can be resolved through honest, profes-

sional, and fair government. This administration can promise such honesty and fairness.

We are truly at a crossroad in our history. Ahead lies a bright and prosperous future if we are wise enough to make the right choices . . . if we are willing to work toward our goal to seeing more police officers back in uniform — we'll be seeking to bring seventy percent of all sworn officers to uniform again . . . if we are willing to build a new Public Safety Complex and ask the Public Building Authority to determine the most cost-effective way to proceed . . . if we are willing to change management practices at our Housing Authority or at any agency that is not working the way it should . . . if we are willing to re-evaluate areas like the Roger Williams housing project and explore new options for affordable housing . . . if we are willing to create a new professional Department of Human Services to consolidate all Human Service programs for the elderly, handicapped and needy of our community — and for our children . . . if we are willing to seek new leadership in our schools that will return to the basic principles of learning. We must be willing to make the choices that will lower our dropout rate and increase opportunities for the new Southeast Asian, Hispanic and other minority immigrants whose families we welcome as our families were welcomed years ago.

I will be announcing specific plans for the first year of my new administration in the State of the City Address next week. Our four-year agenda is an ambitious one. We will continue to hold neighborhood meetings. We will listen to what people need and want and we will act. Where old programs have failed, new programs will be implemented. Where changes are needed we will not hesitate to make them. Where government has failed we will make it succeed. Where government has succeeded we will make it better and search for ways to get the most for every tax dollar.

The choices we will face may be difficult but the resources at our command are limitless. The people of Providence have the courage and desire to prosper. Today I call on all of you — whether you are Democrats, Republicans or Independents — this will be your administration and I ask you to help it succeed and help me keep the oath of office I swore before you today.

Together we will make Providence America's Best City.

Thank you and God Bless all of you and our city.