



Rhode Island House of Representatives

Opening Day Speech
Rep. Peter Martin

January 1, 2013

“Governor, General officers, dignitaries, honored guests, families, friends, and my fellow members...

“Article II, section 7 of the Rhode Island State constitution provides that the senior member from Newport shall preside in the organization of the House.¹ So I join you today, truly honored to have the privilege of representing my beloved city as I fulfill this constitutional duty and convene this 2013 - 2014 session of the Rhode Island House of Representatives.”

For me, life in the **Rhode Island State House** has come full circle. I started working in this great building, as a Senate page, in January of 1960.

The State House was then a young 56 years old! I served through the 1964 session. The building was opened in 1904. It is now 109 years old, just a little older than our friend, House Doorman, Frank DiPalo.

I was younger, thinner, and clean shaven in those days. The hair on my head was a bit thicker!²

At that time, the Lieutenant Governor **Edward P. Gallogly**³ served as the president of the Senate and **Harry Curvin**⁴ was in his 19th year as the Speaker of the House.

Governor J. Joseph Garrahy,⁵ was a salesman for the Narragansett Brewing Company and the treasurer of the **Rhode Island Young Democrats**.

Over there, [*pointing to the right*] sat a young ⁶ and impressive Republican representative, the late **John Chafee** who went on to become our Governor, our Senator, and then Secretary of the Navy.

These great men were in their early 30's when they came into public service in this now 109 year old building.

¹Section 2. Officers -- Presiding member during organization. -- The house of representatives shall have authority to elect its speaker, clerks, and other officers. The senior member from the City of Newport, if any be present, shall preside in the organization of the house.

² I was a nineteen year old student at Providence College.

³ Ed Gallogly was 41 years old in 1960.

⁴ Speaker Harry Curvin was 62 years old in 1960.

⁵ Joe Garrahy was thirty years old in 1960.

⁶ Representative Chafee was thirty eight years old in 1960.

That year, a now famous Newport resident, **Claiborne Pell**⁷ was elected as the [United States Senator](#) from [Rhode Island](#).⁸

Growing up in the Newport, I had the pleasure of having met the then **US Senator, John F. Kennedy**, and his wife, '**Jackie**' while I worked at '**Bailey's Beach**.'

Jack Kennedy became the 35th **President of the United States** while I was running errands for the Rhode Island State Senators.

Most of you have learned about President Kennedy's most famous quote which he gave during his inaugural address, he asked us to think about '**what we could do for our country**.'

His message is just as powerful today as it was when he delivered it more than fifty years ago.

It has particular meaning for us as legislators who have been elected to guide Rhode Island through these troubled times.

By their legacies, these men continue to serve as examples for me in the performance of my own work.

When it came time for retirement from corporate life, I knew where I wanted to be. I returned to Rhode Island and the great City of Newport.

It didn't take me long to determine that retirement was not for me!

I became interested in, and worked on, establishing a pedestrian / bike path in my city. That was in October of 2001.

Next I became a member of the **City of Newport Planning Board** and where I served proudly for six years.

⁷ Clairborne Pell was 42 years old in 1960.

⁸ He served six terms from 1961 to 1997, and was best known as the sponsor of the Pell Grant, which provides financial aid funding to U.S. college students. A Democrat, he was that state's longest serving senator.

Our chairman at that time was our now retiring **Representative Russell Jackson** who has provided me with a good example of public service, both on the Planning Board and, here, in the House of Representatives.

My Planning Board activities led to my becoming a member of the **Aquidneck Island Planning Commission**, where I served for six years; two of them as their chairperson.

I was elected to my first term in this House of Representatives in 2008.

I now stand where the late **Representative Paul Crowley** stood for many inaugurations - as the senior member of the **House of Representatives** from the **City of Newport**.

It has been a long journey from the back row of the Senate as a page to this '*very interesting assignment*' on the rostrum of the Rhode Island House of Representatives.

Today, I want to remember those whose legacies have made significant contributions to our own Rhode Island history and to remember President Kennedy's timeless challenge.

Early in my business career, I found a quote that I have tried to live by for many years. I would like to share it with you:

"It is a wise person who recognizes what he can and cannot do; and then, maximizes his contribution and achievement within the domain of the achievable."

I never did find the source of that quote, but I have tried to live by it for many years.

The quote reminds me that we, or at least many of us, are not perfect people. I believe that it is our obligation to work together to "maximize the achievable" for the **people**, **organizations**, and **enterprises** which have been temporarily entrusted to our care.

It has been a great honor to have the opportunity to speak to you today.

Thank you for your attention.