

7.25.11 State of Black Boston

Governor Deval L. Patrick

"State of Black Boston" Conference

Hynes Convention Center, Boston

Monday, July 25, 2011

Thank you very much, thank you so much Darnell for your friendship, your leadership, and your reminder that I have to keep an eye on the time over here - I notice that I am the first person brought to the podium to whom that was pointed out . So I will try to be brief. I want to welcome back to Boston Mark Morial, Mark thank you for your leadership. I want to tell you on behalf of all of us in the Commonwealth how excited we are that the National Urban League Conference is coming right here to Boston this year. It's a very different Boston than the last time we were here back in 1976, so I want to welcome you back.

Back in 1976 I was a junior in college here, and I came to Massachusetts in 1970 from the South Side of Chicago, which I think most everybody here knows. When I first came here to go to Milton Academy, that to me was like landing on a different planet. The campus was a relatively safe and comfortable place to be, friendly enough, but you never knew then what you were going to get when you went off-campus. The city, between 1970 and really including up to 1976 was totally engrossed, involved, and riveted over the question of public school busing. Today, Boston is smarter, more diverse, younger, more dynamic, prettier in many respects. There are places that my niece and her pals hang out in the city that were just totally off-limits back in 1976. Heck, in a state with six point six percent of the population who are African-American, we even have a black governor, the first in Massachusetts. And the first in America ever re-elected.

But you know what, some of the things you get in these jobs, the most interesting introductions, people often exaggerate your accomplishments and so on, as part of the public life I guess, but the most touching and in some ways provocative introduction I was ever given was by Governor Wilder, who was the first African-American elected as a governor of a state in the United States. He said to me, in the beginning of the introduction, "You know, people always point out how I'm the first." He said being the first doesn't mean a thing unless there's a second. Doesn't mean a thing. The important part is that we owe a generational responsibility to do what we can, to leave things better for those who come behind. It can't be just about our own accomplishments, our own goals, but what moments, what accomplishments do we enable for the next generation. And that's why the cause that we have been focusing on, our generational responsibility, that's why we get it, that's why Massachusetts is number one in the nation in student achievement, in the top ten in the world in math and science, that's why today we are number one in

health care with over ninety-eight percent of our residents insured, ninety-nine point eight percent of children, it's why we're number one in the nation in investitures and clean energy initiatives, it's why we're growing jobs faster than forty-six other states, it's why our state's GDP is growing twice as fast as the national growth rate, it's why for the first time in twenty years young people and families are moving into the Commonwealth faster than they're moving out.

None of that is happening by accident: we're getting those results because we have a strategy. It isn't just about how we trim government, cut programs; we don't beat up on unions as some in other places do and then wait and hope that that'll start to talk. We are driving to a better place through a strategy based on education, innovation, and infrastructure. Education because it's our calling-card around the world: it's what we are best known for, it's our national resource. Our well-educated work force, our reverence for intellectual capacity. And so we have invested in the public schools at the highest levels in the history of the Commonwealth ever single year since I've been in office, even when the bottom was falling out of everything else.

There are hands-full of industries that depend on a highly-educated work force. Innovation industry, like the life sciences and biotech, like clean energy where we've seen a sixty percent growth rate in the last few years, again during the worst economy in living memory. And because we are making more of the things we are inventing here in Massachusetts, precision manufacturing is coming back. So education, then innovation, and finally infrastructure. The unglamorous work of governing but essential to everything else: it's the black mark for future growth, and it's creating jobs right now. Roads, rail, bridges, draw bridge expansion, public and affordable housing investments, building up our public college and university campuses again. As I say, the unglamorous work of government, but it has been neglected for a very, very long time and we're trying to turn that around.

We're doing everything we can while pursuing this strategy to make sure that everyone is a part of our renaissance. There's been a twenty-two percent increase in state procurement with minority-owned businesses; ten percent of managers in state government are now minorities; new tools now through legislation and new resources through the Race for the Top, to reach the kids who are stuck in the achievement gap in schools all across the Commonwealth: poor children, children with special needs, or who speak English as a second language. A disproportionate number of whom are children of color. You know that it's educational and economic issue to have an achievement gap at all. But to let it go to be eighteen years we have us a moral question, those are our children too. And now we have the tools to be able to reach those children as well.

We have a lot more work to do. But there's a framework for that work. It is with that generational responsibility, and it's about understanding our role in the community. When I was growing up on the

South Side of Chicago as I have told many of you in this room before, it was a time when every child was under the jurisdiction of every single adult on the block. You messed up down the street in front of Mrs. Jones', she would straighten you out as if you were hers and then call home, so you'd get it two times. What those adults would try to get across to us was that they had a stake in us, and that membership in a community is understanding the stake that each of us has, not just in our own dreams and our own struggles but in our neighbors' as well. If we keep that sense of community alive, if we make it an integral part of the work we are doing at the practical policy level in government and with the private sector, and between is the best of government, I'm confident our best days are ahead. God bless you all and thank you for the work you do.