

5.23.08 - Commonwealth Compact Launched

Governor Deval L. Patrick

Commonwealth Compact Remarks

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As Delivered

My Grandfather swept the floors of a bank on the south side of Chicago for 55 years, and when he passed away, the chairman of the bank came to his memorial service and said that had it been a different day, my grandfather would have retired as chairman of that bank himself. I think that day is here. And it's up to us to seize it.

The Commonwealth Compact, at its most fundamental level is about dispelling the notion that we have to choose between doing well and doing good. It's about demonstrating in practical terms that diversity is not just about our idealism; it directly benefits our social and economic interests. Better access and more inclusion in healthcare, education, the job market and so many other places, help drive innovation and cut costs in things like human services.

So we put forward efforts like Commonwealth Compact. Not because we are sentimental about diversity, but because we know that the best way to a prosperous community and future is through broad opportunity, equality and fair play.

China and India and other countries continue to build their educational and economic infrastructures, and their middle classes are expanding. So it's our economic imperative as well, to make sure that all of our residents have the opportunity to play a role in our state economy and in our social opportunities. In an area of limited population growth in Massachusetts, now more than ever, we have to make sure that all of our people are engaged and ready for success. That's an economic imperative that applies to all, including woman and minorities, to individuals with disabilities, to members of the GLBT community, to the immigrant communities as well.

There is concrete evidence, as you've heard in detail from Steve, of what's happening

here in Massachusetts. In the life sciences sector, one of the key drivers of our economic success, one in four New England start-ups has an immigrant founder. According to the Immigrant Learning Center, biotechnology companies in New England with at least one immigrant founder produced over 7.6 billion dollars in sales, and employed over 4,000 workers in 2006. That's very good news. And we'd be nuts not to take advantage of that.

But also, it's a telling example of how the tone we set for diversity in our community affects our communities and our economic future. Consider that Massachusetts is home to some 16,000 Hispanic-owned businesses, and is in the top 10 nationally for businesses owned by Hispanic women. As of late last year, only 1 percent of that 16,000 were certified with SOMWBA, our State Office of Minority and Women Business Assistance.

So we've put in place new leadership and staffed up at SOMWBA and have connected some businesses with some very lucrative deals. Last year, an electric company owned by a Latina went from 150,000 dollars in annual sales to a 4.4 million dollar contract with the University of Massachusetts. Opportunities like that are waiting all across the Commonwealth, and I there are a couple of you hear I know who are looking at each other and looking at me saying, "Tell me where to get that contract." We are about doing just that.

In state government we have been moving to create an atmosphere of inclusion in hiring, board appointments, and enhanced access to state services and contracts for all Massachusetts residents, and we're starting to get results. Within our first month in office, I signed executive order 478 reestablishing our commitment to promote the hiring a diverse workforce. That executive order also outlined a specific process to implement the hiring of people with disabilities, resulting in the creation of the Disability Task Force to establish and implement best practices for recruiting, hiring, and promoting persons with disabilities. 14,000 executive branch employees have been trained on the Commonwealth's diversity curriculum since we took office, doubling the last administration's results.

We've been thorough in ensuring that managerial hires reflect the diversity of the Commonwealth. So far, out of 770 managers hired or promoted one in five is a minority,

over half are women. On our state boards and commissions, 9 out of 10 appointments were new to their boards rather than reappointments; and of those new appointments more than a quarter are minorities- many appointed to boards like the Mass Turnpike, the MBTA and the Board of Education. In over 80 trustee positions, 35 percent have been minorities. And on another very important note, 54 percent of appointments to boards and commissions have come, and understand the spirit in which I say this Mr. Mayor, from outside of greater Boston. We see, and it's simply because I ran to be Governor of the whole state, and it is important that we draw on that talent from beyond Boston as well.

We're seeing, we announced just this week our access and opportunity agenda, which builds on last year's executive order and is very much in the spirit of the Commonwealth Compact. The goal is to reexamine the way that we do business in state government in order to identify, understand, and act upon institutional obstacles that might be holding people back. We've entrusted Ron Marlow who is here, well known to many of you, to lead that effort as the new Assistant Secretary for Access and Opportunity within the Executive Office of Administration and Finance. And Ron, we look very much forward to working with you and to the results that you will help us produce.

So these are just some of the ways in which we've been working to bring about demonstrable change and access and openness to state government. The Commonwealth Compact could not come at a better time in my view.

And one of the really most touching moments of this extraordinary adventure we've been on - I remember the night of the inauguration, there was a gathering at the convention center, maybe some of you were there, and I remember Dianne and I went out on the...we went from room to room and we went into one of the larger rooms and out onto the stage and I looked out and the variety of people - folks who always go to things like that and folks who never go to things like that - the high and the mighty and the meek as well, side by side celebrating with us. And I remember observing the variety of people in that room and the diversity in that room and saying at the time, "Get used to it." Let's get used to it. That's a very good thing for all of us.