

Journal of the Joint Assembly

IN JOINT ASSEMBLY, JANUARY 7, 2021

2:00 P.M.

The Senate and House of Representatives met in the Hall of the House of Representatives pursuant to a Joint Resolution which was read by the Clerk and is as follows:

J.R.S. 5. Joint resolution to provide for a Joint Assembly to hear a message from the Governor.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the two Houses meet in Joint Assembly on Thursday, January 7, 2021, at two o'clock in the afternoon to receive a message from the Governor, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Joint Assembly shall be concurrently conducted electronically.

Presiding Officer

Honorable Molly R. Gray, President of the Senate, in the Chair.

Clerk

John H. Bloomer, Jr., Secretary of the Senate, Clerk.

Introduction by Chair

The President of the Senate, Lieutenant Governor Molly R. Gray, then introduced the Governor of the State of Vermont, Philip B. Scott, for the purpose of presentation of his Message to the Joint Assembly.

Message to the Joint Assembly

Governor Scott then presented the following remarks.

“Madam President, Madam Speaker, Madam President Pro Tem and members of the General Assembly: Thank you for inviting me to share a few words with you today as you open a legislative session like no other.

“First, I just want to acknowledge the historic nature of what I just said. For the first time in our state’s history, we have female leadership in the House,

Senate and Lieutenant Governor's office, and I have to say, it's been a long time coming and long overdue. As well, the House caucuses are all lead by strong female leaders: Representative McCoy, Representative Long and Representative Colburn. We should all be proud of these milestones and appreciate the history they've made.

"Now, before I go any further, I want to address what we saw yesterday at our nation's capitol. Like many of you, I was shocked to see this attack on the fundamental principles of our republic. Seeing our capitol—a symbol of democracy around the world—stormed by this mob of traitors was heartbreaking. The fact that these flames of hate and insurrection were lit by the President of the United States will be remembered as one of the darkest chapters in our nation's history.

"It also shows just how divided our country has become and how desperately we need to heal and be united once again. Because we simply can't go on like this any longer, and as elected officials, we all have a responsibility to step up and show the way. Because if we don't, who will?

"Now, moving on from that somber note, I want to congratulate all members, whether you were reelected or just beginning your first term. You're all here because your constituents entrusted you to serve them well and to represent their interests here in Montpelier. Having served in the legislature myself, I know what an incredible honor it is, and I look forward to working with you to repay that trust with results.

"While I wish we could respect tradition and all be together in person, I'm grateful technology allows us to at least connect virtually. Most of us have become accustomed to remote work at this point but beginning a legislative session this way will be different as well as frustrating at times. And I know most of you would rather be conducting the people's business at the "people's house" but throughout these difficult months, I've found it helpful to try and find silver linings and take advantage of new opportunities. The ability to livestream and record committee hearings, and the transparency and accessibility it brings to Vermonters, are certainly benefits, because it's important to keep our doors open to the people, even when those doors are virtual. Staying connected to Vermonters is critical and so is the way we conduct our business, set our priorities and achieve results.

"Vermonters turned out in record numbers this election, and they delivered what I believe was a clear mandate for practical, principled and cooperative leadership. They also delivered us split-party government, asking us to listen to all voices and all ideas and work together. Throughout my political life, that's what I've tried to do, and I'm committed to doing it again—and I'm

confident many of you are as well. I believe, with thoughtful and honest leadership, there's nothing we can't accomplish by working together.

"Now, I'm not naive—I know we won't agree on everything, but that's okay. That's how our system is supposed to work. No one person, party or branch of government has a monopoly on all good ideas or solutions. Challenging each other's proposals and asking tough questions to better understand leads to better policy and better outcomes. I believe if we take the time to listen to and learn from one another, seek consensus where we can and compromise when we can't, Vermonters will benefit from our work. After watching the antics in Congress, Vermonters are pleading for consensus building and pragmatism, and I'm confident we can deliver.

"When I became governor four years ago, combating a global pandemic wasn't something I expected and I'm sure that's true for you as well. These past 10 months have been difficult for each and every one of us. Too many lives and livelihoods have been impacted by this invisible enemy. Too many Vermonters are still out of work, struggling to pay bills and wondering how to take care of their families. Kids are falling behind as remote learning continues, and they're missing out on really important social interactions. The pandemic and its economic consequences have deepened some of the challenges we've faced for a long time and exposed new ones we'll need to address this biennium.

"But it's also brought out the best in Vermonters. Neighbors helping neighbors, communities banding together to lift each other up. We've seen the profound impact of simple everyday acts of kindness, Vermonters going above and beyond to protect our most vulnerable, following public health guidance to help make Vermont's response the best in the nation. All these acts—large and small—have been inspiring as we confront this once-in-a-century crisis.

"Like governments before us, and ones that will come after, we're asking a lot from people during this crisis in order to save lives. We're asking them to make sacrifices that impact their businesses, livelihoods, mental health, social lives and more, all to help keep people safe. As elected officials, we must also do our part. Let's set priorities that support Vermonters in all 14 counties. Let's help them not only get through this crisis but get through it stronger. Let's learn the lessons of this pandemic and resist the temptation to do things the way we've always done them.

"These next few months will be difficult—perhaps the hardest of the pandemic—but as vaccinations are underway, there's finally light at the end of the tunnel and it's getting brighter every day. In the short term, we must reach the end of that tunnel with as little loss of life as possible, and we must focus like a laser on laying the foundation for our economic recovery.

“On my very first day as governor in 2017, I set three strategic goals for my administration: To grow the economy, make Vermont more affordable and protect the most vulnerable. I know some may tire of hearing them, but I believe they’re just as relevant today, as we recover and rebuild, as they were four years ago. So, these priorities will continue to guide me and my team as we make our way out of this pandemic and start building for the future.

“I look forward to presenting my budget and proposals in the coming days and talking about how we can work together as we get this legislative session underway. We have so much work ahead of us but working together, as partners, I know we’ll get it done.

“Thank you for having me today. I look forward to working with you and I hope you’ll tune into my inaugural address tonight at 7:00 p.m.”

Dissolution

There being no further business, the President declared the Joint Assembly to be dissolved.

JOHN H. BLOOMER, JR.
Secretary of the Senate
Clerk of the Joint Assembly