



March 30, 2014

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This week's ward letter discusses a Constitutional convention, the upcoming General Assembly vacancy in our district and my own plans for the upcoming election.

The Hassenfeld Institute sponsored a forum yesterday on a Constitutional convention, a matter which will be on this November's ballot for the first time in a decade. Rhode Island's last convention was in 1986, and the voters disapproved conventions in 1994 and 2004. Not coincidentally, the General Assembly placed significant specific Constitutional reforms (relating to term limits, separation of powers, etc.) on the 1994 and 2004 ballots, allowing voters to approve these reforms without a convention. As explained yesterday, these limited initiatives supported important reforms, while saving the General Assembly from the risks of the broader-ranging changes possible through a Constitutional convention. Yesterday's panelists foresaw a similar dynamic this year – the General Assembly may place specific Constitutional reforms on the ballot (such as restoring the Ethics Commission's full authority over the General Assembly, clarifying the Constitutional right to education, etc.) to displace the need for a general Constitutional convention. I am hopeful the General Assembly will take advantage of this opportunity, which would lead to much-needed progress. Some groups point to regressive constitutional amendments in other states (in such areas as marriage [in]equality and restrictions to reproductive freedom), and oppose a convention under any circumstances. In contrast, proponents place greater faith in a convention's checks and balances and the general common sense of the people of Rhode Island. Speaking personally, I am ready to support a convention if the General Assembly does not make adequate use of this opportunity.

Last weekend brought a major disruption to our State government when Speaker Fox (whose district overlaps much of Ward 2) resigned his leadership position and announced he would not to seek re-election. I am concerned by the alacrity with which events transpired in the investigation's immediate aftermath, and the potential long-term ramifications as it proceeds, but we have no choice but to move forward. Some of yesterday's panelists expressed hope this latest apparent scandal will highlight the case for reform. In the meantime, people in our neighborhood are expressing interest in replacing Speaker Fox in the General Assembly next year. It is my hope we will fill this vacancy with a candidate who combines a forward-thinking Statewide agenda (beginning with needed Constitutional reforms) with a commitment to serve our City and our neighborhood. It may be a while before we know Speaker Fox's complete legacy, but I am reminded of part of it almost every day. On my way to work, I often drive past Nathan Bishop, which would not have been renovated without his last-minute extraordinary intervention in the face of an imminent Statewide moratorium on school construction funding.

As people have begun discussing our neighborhood's General Assembly vacancy, several have asked me to become a candidate myself. While these inquiries are flattering, I believe my best opportunity to serve our community and our City is to seek re-election to the Providence City Council this fall. In the coming weeks and months, I will develop and present my ideas concerning the major issues our City faces, and how I can contribute to their solution. In the meantime, I welcome any thoughts or suggestions you have concerning my work on the City Council to date, and the issues you believe the City Council should address going forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,