



April 9, 2017

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This week some of us will come together for Passover Seders, while others will observe Holy Week. For those of you who celebrate either, I hope your observances bring meaning to your lives, as the natural world around us renews with the coming of Spring. In the meantime, life in Providence goes on, and this week's letter discusses the City Council leadership's failed special meetings," the Mayor's education summit and the need for Presidential credibility.

This past Monday and Tuesday, the City Council President, Majority Leader, Councilman Jackson and three colleagues scheduled a special meeting to inquire into the determination of the Board of Canvassers that the petition seeking Councilman Jackson's recall was valid, and that a recall election will take place on Tuesday, May 2. The meetings did not take place because a majority of the City Council refused to attend, depriving the six proponents of a quorum. The Providence Journal editorial page took a largely negative view of the botched effort, labeling it a "[foil\[ed\] sleazy political stunt](#)." While the editorial has a point, I see a glimmer of hope in the leadership's inability to persuade enough of their "leadership team" members to attend. The current City Council leadership is run largely as a tribal organization, where allegiances and loyalties take precedence over the merits of ideas or interest and ability to help the City. Since the start of this term, the leadership gave their "team" members exclusive access to key committee assignments, support of their legislation and extra budgetary allocations for their priorities in return for their loyalty, a transaction that worked well for both sides for the first two years of this term. The public rebuke these "team members" delivered to leadership by refusing to attend Monday's and Tuesday's meetings supports the hope that future appeals to the public interest may overcome the current ethic of parochial tribalism.

Yesterday, I attended the Mayor's "All-In" education summit, designed to solicit ideas for school improvement from a broad class of stakeholders. More than 200 people attended. I enjoyed a table discussion with a middle school math teacher, a volunteer tutor leader, a parent, and representatives of two nonprofit organizations that provide supplemental programs. We discussed the need to reach every student where they were, to help guide them to (and hopefully beyond) a rigorous set of academic standards. Our proposals included a longer school day, ability grouping (without the stigma of tracking) and better coordination of after-school programs with each student's academic strengths and needs.

At last Thursday's meeting, the City Council approved a [Resolution](#) I introduced in the subject of Presidential credibility. I remember growing up in the 1960's and 1970's, a time when our country's self-image changed from one of optimism to growing cynicism due to the twin tragedies of Vietnam and Watergate. Both of these blows to our country were worsened by Presidents who lied to and misled the American people, betraying for short-term personal advantage the trust we naturally confer upon our leaders. While the credibility issues of the current President (who has made disproved allegations concerning the tapping of his telephone lines and alleged surveillance by the English) are not of the same magnitude as Vietnam and Watergate, the current President's lack of credibility raises concerns that he is capable of inflicting the same type of harm upon the country should the right (or the wrong) circumstances arise. For these reasons, the Resolution calls upon President Trump to restore his credibility as President before any further damage is done.

**On April 24, 2017 at the Hope High School Cafeteria from 6:30 to 8:30, I will hold a community meeting to discuss the proposed suboxone office at Lloyd and Thayer and the infrastructure bond. The speaking portion will begin at 7:00 p.m.**

Sincerely,