



May 14, 2017

Dear Fellow East Siders:

Whether you are a mother, a grandmother, a child, a grandchild or some combination, I wish you a wonderful Mother's Day. This week's letter discusses the City Council President's indictment and repairs to gas leaks.

Wednesday's indictment of City Council President Aponte on felony charges of embezzlement and misappropriation of campaign finance funds was yet another dark day for the City. Friday's [front page story](#) in the Providence Journal linked the two recent City Council indictments to the City's legacy of corruption of the Cianci administration. I joined four colleagues in a [Statement](#) calling for Mr. Aponte's immediate resignation from the Presidency. After originally issuing [neutral statements](#), the current Majority Leader and President Pro Tempore later joined their colleagues in calling for a special meeting to hold a "no confidence" vote in President Aponte's continued leadership Monday evening. As of this writing, Mr. Aponte has not resigned. While he has forfeited the opportunity to leave gracefully, he may yet listen to the rising chorus of voices seeking his removal, and thus begin the process of restoring the public's trust in the City Council, and salvaging the most he can of his political legacy and/or his remaining career in public office.

While Friday's decision by seven City Council to hold a "no confidence" vote is welcome, their initial vote of confidence two years ago for Mr. Aponte as President and Mr. Jackson as Majority Leader badly damaged the public trust in the City Council. To start restoring that trust, I will now urge prompt passage of several pieces of legislation I introduced almost a year ago (after Mr. Jackson's arrest). The [first ordinance](#), will require all indicted City Council members to forfeit their leadership positions. Had my colleagues considered and passed this bill by now, we would not be suffering through the present drama with Council President Aponte. Unfortunately, they made the wrong choice, burying these measures in committee without a vote. In response, more than 50 public-minded constituents signed a petition I filed with the City Clerk, which will require a public hearing despite my colleagues' resistance. The hearing likely will take place in the week after Memorial Day. I will let you know the scheduled date, and urge you to join me in City Hall to tell the City Council how much you value the principles of good government. I introduced several other pieces of legislation as well as described in my [May 29, 2016 letter](#). With your help, we can generate new momentum to clean up the City Council.

Two weeks ago, the City Council finalized a tax stabilization agreement with Dominion Power. Some thoughtful constituents expressed concern that the City should use the agreement as an opportunity to spur the company to reduce the incidence of harmful underground gas leaks. Since that time, the Providence Journal has published a [Special Report](#) on the subject, clarifying the scope and urgency of the problem. From the article and correspondence I have learned that it is National Grid, not Dominion Power, that is responsible for maintaining and repairing the State's leaking gas lines. I also have learned that the Mayor's new budget calls for the hiring of an additional engineer to monitor utility road cuts across the City. To address the gas leak problem, I will introduce a Resolution at Thursday's City Council meeting urging the administration to assign to the new engineer the additional responsibilities of monitoring National Grid's gas line repair program, and urging the Public Utilities Commission to impose the fastest possible repair timetable.

Sincerely,