

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST
OFFICE OF THE FACULTY SENATE

From the 637th meeting of the Faculty Senate held on February 10, 2005.

ADDRESS BY REPRESENTATIVE ELLEN STORY (D-3rd HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT)

Interesting is a good choice of words. Several people, since I have come in, have said, “You’re going to bring us the good news!” and I think that interesting is a better choice than good news. I always have mixed feelings when I come to this group and I see that there are reporters here. I am glad, on one hand, that people are paying attention and I am sorry, on the other hand, that I cannot be quite as candid as I might be if we had no reporters here.

Let me talk first about the subject that I am getting lots of emails, not so much from faculty, but from other union members, about the retroactive pay. You will remember that this was an unprecedented situation. It was signed, sealed and delivered and the Governor vetoed it. We asked for it and we did not even try to override his veto because it was at the very, very end and there was a new Speaker. Some of us tried to get us to do it, but we did not do it. But the agreement was that we would do it soon in this next session. The Governor filed a supplemental budget a couple of weeks ago and do you think that the \$37 million for retroactive higher education pay raises is in it? No. It is not. So, the two Chairs of the Ways and Means Committee—one of whom, on the House side, is brand new; he has never even served on the House Ways and Means Committee before and now he is the Chair of the Committee and he just found this out on this past Monday afternoon—are now taking a look at this. What I hope happens and what I think may happen is that the Senate President, the House Speaker and the two Chairs of Ways and Means agree to add to this \$37 million into the supplemental budget. That is what I hope is going to happen.

We are asking for 100% of the retroactive pay. We will not get it. Even if we did get it, the Governor would veto it and we would not be able—I do not think—to get a two-thirds majority to override that. I run into people—more faculty than other people—who sort of think that they are never going to see this money. I think that you will see this money. That was an absolute commitment made in the presence of many witnesses. So, I think that this is going to happen and I think that it will happen sooner rather than later. I put a call into the Speaker’s Office and he called back just as I was leaving. This is about as much as he can say at this point.

The House is starting off pretty slowly. The Senate knew who their Committee Chairs were a long time ago, but we just found out on Monday and there were no formal sessions this week. We do not know if there will be any next week so we are starting out pretty slowly. There has been a massive reorganization of committees for the first time in forty years. There has always been an Education, Arts and Humanities Committee and that was both K through 12 and higher education and higher education always got lost in that committee. It spent much more of its time on K through 12. This time, for the first time, there is a new Higher Education Committee that has been created. I think that that is a very good sign. I had hoped to be Chair of the Higher Education Committee, but, in fact, I am not even on the Higher Education Committee and none of the people who especially wanted to be on that Committee, as in Steve Kulik, Peter Kocot, and me, are on it. The people who are on it are not known for their strong advocacy in the past of higher education.

The way that I chose to look at this is that the Speaker knew that he did not have to put me on this Committee or Steve Kulik or Peter Kocot because we will advocate for public higher education no matter what committees that we are on, which I have certainly done. I have not been on the Education Committee for years and University funding was my top priority. I am hoping that he thinks he will put a new group of people who are somewhat new to this issue and, as they hear testimony and learn much more about public higher education, they will become strong supporters and will thereby add to the advocacy community in the Chamber to advocate for higher education. I think it is good spin, but I think it could actually have some truth in it.

There are nine members [of the Higher Education Committee] on the House side. Four of them have experience in public institutions. They all do have B.A.s; that is not true of all of the legislators. The Chair, Kevin Murphy, is from Lowell. He has the University of Massachusetts Lowell in his district. The Representative from Dartmouth is always advocating—he wanted to be the Higher Education Committee Chairman also—he is always advocating for the University, but Representative Murphy has not been one of those people who has been very active in this field. He went to Boston College and has a law degree from Suffolk Law, which is right across from the State House. Lots of legislators go to Suffolk University Law School, which is a private law school, at night, because it is so convenient. Hank Naughton is the Vice Chair; he is from Clinton. He got his B.A. at Assumption College in Worcester and he also has a law degree from Suffolk. Tom Kennedy, who is a long-time Representative from Brockton and someone that I am very fond of, has degrees from Our Lady of Hope Seminary and from Stonehill College.

The three who have some public education in their backgrounds include Cory Atkins, who is from Concord. She went to UMass Boston. She is the wife of Chet Atkins, who was a Senator in the State Senate and was Chair of the Ways and Means

Committee in the Senate and then went to Congress as a very young man. Now he is a major lobbyist. Cory Atkins has recently, in the past maybe four years, been the Representative from Concord. Deb Blumer, who represents Framingham, has degrees from Framingham State College. Jennifer Callahan was elected two years ago. On the back of her van in the State House parking lot is a bumper sticker, that says "Dr. Jennifer Callahan." She went to UMass Amherst and is a nurse, a feisty nurse, and is in favor of public education and the University, but I think her main interest is the Nursing School. There are two people from Western Mass on this Committee: Chris Donelan, who is just a sweetheart, is from Orange and represents Greenfield, and he went to Westfield State; Alice Peisch, who is from Wellesley, went to Smith, so at least she knows something about this area, and she went to Suffolk University Law School. Smitty Pignatelli, who has also only been there for two years, is from Lenox, and he went to Boston College. That is the make up of the Committee. On the Senate side, there are more powerful people and people who will be strong advocates for public higher education. And we will just hope that some of that will rub off on the House side as well. So, out of nine people, four have experience with public institutions.

You probably read that yesterday the Administration and Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees met and have decided to increase fees and increase room and board. Fees will go up by 3.2% and room and board by 5%. This is for in-state students and that means for in-state students the cost here is \$15,800, which is much higher than I wish that it were, but it is less than half as much as many of the private institutions. The full Board meets on the 16th of February and I imagine that they will vote for this.

I requested three committees. One was Higher Education; one was Mental Health and Substance Abuse, which is a brand new committee. There used to be a Human Services committee that dealt with all human services, so many things got lost in that. Now there is a new committee that will focus specifically on mental health and substance abuse, which I think is excellent and I am on that Committee. There is also another new committee called Tourism, Arts and Culture. I thought that sounded interesting and maybe even fun, as opposed to grim, which I am sure Mental Health and Substance Abuse will be. So I asked to be on that Committee and I am the Vice Chair of that Committee. The Chairman is from the Cape and I think that the Speaker thinks that I am from the Berkshires, so that covers both of those bases.

I am hopeful. It is still very early in this new term. Basically what we know are lots of words. Describing his appointments, *The Globe* says, "DiMasi shifts the House to the left." The Minority Leader, the crusty Republican Minority Leader, said to *The Globe*, "Well, that wouldn't be very hard, would it? That wouldn't take much." But it is more. If you look at his appointments, it is very Boston-centric. Many, many of the new Chairs and Vice Chairs are from Boston, which is not surprising. Sal DiMasi is the new Speaker. He is from the North End in Boston, been there for twenty-six years, is a good guy, is an attorney, and can argue equally well on either side of any issue.

He has been in leadership since I came in, when Charlie Flaherty from Cambridge was Speaker and then under Finneran. It was just interesting to watch him, because this happened so fast; this happened really in about twenty-four hours. He did not have much time to fantasize about what it was going to be like to be Speaker and, all of sudden, he was Speaker. You could just watch him gradually absorb this new role and realize that no longer was he a spokesperson from somebody else, that now he is "the man." He now can make decisions about the way he wants things to run, instead of trying to defend somebody else's decisions. He always had a detached air, very friendly, but detached. My aide called it a "whatever" air. That is good, that is right. Now, he looks happy, just happy. He feels like he is going to be able to make some differences in areas that he really cares about and he is really enjoying it to the fullest. He also does not want to work [all the time].

Tom Finneran was very bright and very driven and worked all the time and did not trust anybody else to do anything. So, he had to manage all the committees. The committee chairs did not even know what bills were coming out of their committees. The committee chairs were chosen by loyalty, not by *any* interest or expertise in the subject matter. Sal is not going to do that. Sal wants this to be much more like it was under Charlie Flaherty, who knew that you appointed smart people to be heads of committees and you gave them a lot of authority and you had them do work. Sal has recently remarried, about four years ago. He married a drop-dead, gorgeous woman, who is a former model, twenty years younger than he is and he does not want to work all the time. He likes to take us out to the North End and have a big Italian dinner and lots of wine and have a good time. He wants there to be more camaraderie in the Legislature, which is the way it used to be and the way it has stopped being over the last eight years, especially over the last six years with Tom Finneran.

Over half of the Representatives have been there since Tom Finneran, so they do not know that there is any other way to run a House than the way he did it. So, Sal is getting a kick out of thinking that this is going to be different. People are going to have to read and they are going to have to think and they are going to have to take stands on issues that they have not had to do, especially for the past six years. You walked into the Chamber and you saw what color the Speaker's button was and you punched your button that same color, often not even knowing what the topic was that you were voting on. That is not going to be true anymore. We are actually going to have debates on bills that we do not know what the outcome is going to be. Speaker Finneran would not let anything come to the floor unless he knew that he had the votes for it to pass. Sal DiMasi is not going to do that. He remembers the time, as it was when I was first elected, when there would be passionate, wonderful speeches and everybody would make up their mind based on the arguments that they heard. There has been none of that in the past few years. Sal wants to get back that situation. So this should be much, much better for people like me who want that

kind of atmosphere in the House and not so nice for people who like never having to work and being able to spend a lot of time in their private law practice and come in very occasionally to the State House. So, I think that we are headed for much better times.

Tom Petrolati, who is a long-time Representative from Ludlow, is a very close friend of Sal DiMasi and has just been made, for the first time ever, Speaker Pro Tem of the House. We have never had that position. Some of us were counting and decided that nobody with an Italian last name was rank and file any more, that all the Italians had some kind of leadership position. Chancellor Lombardi thinks that is a terrific direction to go in. In fact, that is not true, there are two who are not in a leadership position, but the leadership is now heavily Italian. Robert De Leo from Winthrop is the new Chair of Ways and Means. I sat next to him when I first came in. I am crazy about him. He is a wonderful man, smart, very quiet and one of the few people in leadership who does not always have his own interest before anything else. He does not have a large ego which distinguishes him immediately from most of our colleagues. So it will be very nice to work with him. He also is very interested in education and his former wife got a degree from UMass Boston, so hopefully that will sort of help in his deciding about all of this.

I am much, much more hopeful than I have been in a long time. Byron Rushing, who is my good friend from Boston, is the first person of color to ever be in the top four in leadership. There is the Speaker, the Majority Whip, and the Assistant Majority Whip and Byron is the Second Assistant Majority Whip, so in the top four. That is very exciting. He is the one that some of us voted for two years ago as a protest vote against voting for Tom Finneran. It is very nice that Sal has done this symbolic gesture of bringing Byron into the Leadership. That was a very smart move for him to make. He is much more progressive than the former Speaker was. I think maybe some of that will come out.

I would be delighted to answer any questions or listen to any comments that any of you have.