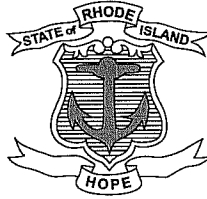


# State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

SENATOR  
LEONIDAS P. RAPTAKIS  
2080 Nooseneck Hill Road  
Coventry, Rhode Island 02816  
District 33

Room 219, State House  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

State House: 401-276-5567  
Res.: 401-397-2720  
Bus.: 401-397-3344  
Bus.: 401-397-6302  
Email: senraptakis@hotmail.com  
Email: sen-raptakis@rilin.state.ri.us  
Web: raptakis.com



## Senate Chamber

Vice Chair,  
Committee on  
Environment and Agriculture

Secretary,  
Committee on Judiciary

September 25, 2009

The Honorable Daniel DaPonte  
Senate Finance Chairman Room 211  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Dan:

Thank you for your rapid response to the letter I sent Senate President Paiva-Weed. The fact that you can take such timely action in response a perceived political challenge holds out some hope that you might eventually move to address the serious economic crisis facing our state.

For the record, I called the Senate President's office and sent my letter to her staff before sharing it with the media. I might have been interested in engaging in a more "behind the scenes" discussion if I had gotten any indication from you or any member of the leadership team that there was a sense of urgency about the budgetary crisis facing the state. Whether you understand it or not, it speaks volumes that you rush to attack an attempt by a rank and file member of the Senate to call for action in response to the crisis facing our state after remaining silent in the midst of daily headlines about such serious issues as the possibility of state employee layoffs, cuts in state aid to cities and towns, declining state revenue numbers, and a RIPEC report which projects a possible budget deficit of half a billion dollars for the upcoming fiscal year.

Quite frankly, your letter rather eloquently underlines the points I put forward in my letter to the Senate President. Instead of addressing the validity of calling an emergency session of the Senate or holding a summit of municipal officials to talk about consolidating city and town services or taking up legislation to address the current fiscal crisis, you chose to scold me for speaking out. When I suggested that the state needs leadership and the Senate needs to weigh in on a major state crisis, that kind of response was not what I had in mind.

What has the Senate done in recent weeks to address the dire economic conditions facing our state? There has been no response to the RIPEC report, no commentary on the Governor's plan to close the current year budget deficit—aside from trying to claim that the legislature did not pass an unbalanced budget—and no response to municipal officials who are wondering if they are going to see a major cut in state aid in the next quarter.


While you hastily point to the passage of Senate bill 1012 as some sort of watershed moment in the history of our state, I would respectfully ask you what you have done to advance the purpose of this legislation. The bill would force communities to consolidate functions between municipal and school departments and sets a deadline of October, 2011 for communities to act before the auditor general steps in to make the change. That's all well and good, but have you convened a meeting of municipal leaders to discuss implementing the consolidation provisions before the October 2011 deadline given the seriousness of the crisis we are facing in September of 2009? If you were serious about promoting real change, you would have embraced my suggestion for a summit of municipal leaders and made the discussion of your bill item number one on the agenda. Unfortunately, you seem content to pat yourself on the back for having passed the bill and then sit back and hope something happens. I think the current circumstances demand a little more than that just now.

I would make that same point with regard to last week's special session of the Finance Committee. Contrary to your remarks, I did not miss the meeting because I was in Greece. I chose not to attend the meeting because I am not a member of the Finance Committee and felt that while it was interesting for you to call in the Director of Administration and the Budget Director to grill them for an hour about administrative expenses, it was probably not the kind of significant conversation I think we need to be having. If the meeting had resulted in a discussion of any of the issues I raised in my letter or produced any actual solutions to the current crisis facing our state, you might have a point in bringing it up. But the fact that you can't detail any meaningful impact this meeting had in terms of addressing our financial meltdown, only reinforces my point that more dramatic action is needed.

I appreciate the invitation to sit in on future Senate Finance Committee hearings and hope my presence will spur you and your colleagues to action. But rather than wait for the promise of what future meetings might hold, I would hope you would take the time to get beyond politics and actually respond to the substantive public policy issues I raised in my letter to the Senate President. Is there a plan to bring the full Senate together to address the current financial crisis as opposed to waiting for next year? Can we begin the essential work of reaching out to municipal leaders and encouraging them to develop an action plan to immediately consolidate municipal services, not only in term of eliminating duplicative services between City and Town Halls and School Departments but across city and town lines? Can the Senate move to take up legislation to revamp the Economic Development Corporation and provide mandate relief to our cities and towns?

Believe it or not Dan, I look forward to working with you and the Senate President to develop a more pro-active response to the current situation facing our state. My intent was not to cause you or the Senate President distress, but to make you aware of what I am hearing on a regular basis from the constituents I interact with on a daily basis in my restaurant—people are scared and frustrated and looking to their elected officials for leadership. Quite frankly, no one should be satisfied with being told that other than the Senate coming back for two days at the end of October to take up a few leftover bills. I'll reiterate what I told the Senate President; the Senate needs to be in session now and with each passing day we fail to address the state's structural deficit, we are guaranteeing more dire consequences for our citizens.

Sincerely,



Lou Raptakis

