



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
GOVERNOR DANIEL P. MALLOY

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2012 JOINT SESSION CLOSING REMARKS**

Lt. Governor Wyman, Mr. Speaker, Senator Williams, Representative Cafero, Senator McKinney. Thank you. It's always an honor for me to address this chamber.

I'll be brief in my remarks tonight, but there are a few things that I'd like to say.

Over the course of the last 16 months we have pushed more change through these two chambers than has occurred in Connecticut in a long, long time.

Positive, meaningful change.

We've changed our economy – growing thousands of new, private sector jobs for the first time in years. We've created 18,100 new, private sector jobs in the past 16 months, and the unemployment rate is 20% lower than it was the first time I spoke here. We've gone from being 2/10 of a point above the national unemployment rate to a half point below.

With our Design Build legislation, and with our project labor agreements, we've changed the way construction projects will get done in Connecticut – and, in the process, we'll create thousands of good paying jobs.

We've changed our state's finances – we've closed the worst-in-the-nation deficit and we're firmly committed to keeping our books honestly for the first time in a long time.

We've changed our blue laws to bring us in line with our neighbors – and we've begun the process of making our liquor laws more consumer-friendly.

We've changed our election laws – and in the process we are making it easier for people to participate in their democracy.

We've changed the way that we respond to major weather events – and in the process, the state and its utilities will be better prepared to handle emergencies.

We've made more intelligent changes to our criminal justice system – and in the process we're continuing to restore confidence in the system's accuracy and fairness. Those changes are part of the reason crime is at its lowest rate in 44 years.

And now, thanks to votes you made over the past few days, we're changing our public schools.

We're putting more education dollars into our lowest performing districts, something almost no other state is doing – and we're ensuring that those dollars will be spent wisely.

We're creating a thousand additional seats for young children to have a chance at pre-kindergarten learning experiences.

And we're recognizing and supporting our teachers, administrators, parents and students in ways they've been asking us to for years.

That's a lot of change. It's required a lot of tough decisions to be made. Along the way it's ruffled a lot of feathers. That's because change is hard.

Let me repeat: change is hard.

But change is also necessary. While the world changed, and while states around us changed, Connecticut stood still.

Thanks to the men and women in this chamber, that's no longer the case. Now Connecticut is changing, too – for the better.

Before my friends on either side of the aisle get nervous, let me say that I'm not declaring victory or suggesting our work is done. Far from it.

But just as it would be a mistake to declare anything resembling victory, it would also be a mistake not to acknowledge how much good work has been done in the past 16 months. You should be proud of what you've accomplished, but we should all remember how much more there is to do.

We need to continue to focus on creating jobs – every day, that should be our first thought.

We need to continue to be vigilant about the state's finances.

We are in much better shape than we were 16 months ago, but we're not where we need to be yet.

Let's keep squeezing every dollar we can out of state government. Let's make government more efficient. Let's continue the conversion of the state's books to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

And now that we have passed a bold education reform package, a package that has the potential to allow our state to pull ahead of other states instead of lagging behind, we must implement that change. If we do this, someday our children will thank us.

As we end this legislative session, I want to acknowledge all of the legislators, Republican and Democrat, who've decided not to seek reelection. Thank you for your service.

But I do want to make a specific point of acknowledging two of those who will be leaving.

First, Senator Edith Prague. Your advocacy on behalf of your constituents, and on behalf of every senior citizen in this state, has been admirable. Senator, you are a remarkable woman, and this place won't be the same without you.

Second, the Speaker of the House, Chris Donovan, who after 20 years as a state representative, including the last four years as Speaker of the House, is leaving to run for another office. Mr. Speaker, you've fought hard for what you believe in. Congratulations on all you've accomplished in your time here.

I want to thank the hardest working Lieutenant Governor in the nation, Nancy Wyman. I could not have a better friend, partner, or confidante.

Finally, I want to say something to every member of the legislature. Being a legislator is supposed to be a part-time job, but it's turned into a full-time commitment.

What you do is not easy. There are nights, like this past week, when you don't get to go home. Nights when you miss dinner with your family or your child's soccer game or recital. Nights when you're so tired you have to pull over when you're driving home.

Simply put, citizens may not see how hard you work. But I do.

And you do this for only one reason: because you believe in public service. Because you believe you have an obligation to give something back to your community. Because you know we all have a responsibility to leave the world a better place for our having been in it.

So on behalf of your constituents, let me say thank you.

We might not have always agreed, but I respect the passion and commitment you bring to the work you do.

Together we've made a lot of progress in 16 months. But we have a lot more to do.

So let's get it done.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless the great State of Connecticut.