

THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 6, 2020

(The House of Representatives was called to order at 5:00 o'clock p.m., Speaker Joe Aresimowicz of the 30th District in the Chair.)

SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):

[Gavel] The House is called to Order. Will our Guest Chaplain Representative Themis Klarides lead us in prayer?

GUEST CHAPLAIN REPRESENTATIVE THEMIS KLARIDES  
(114TH):

Creator and loving God, we bow our heads in prayer on this last day of the 2020 Legislative Session. We invoke your Holy Presence, asking for guidance over this Legislative Body as we navigate the challenges of a global pandemic. Grant the citizens of this great State comfort where there has been loss, peace where there has been anxiety and hope for healing and restoration. We ask Your

blessing for our Legislators as they serve their communities. Amen.

SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):

Thank you very much, Madam. Will Representative Ritter of the 1st District lead us in the Pledge?

REP. RITTER (1ST):

ALL: I pledge Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation, under God, indivisible with Liberty and Justice for all.

SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):

Thank you very much, sir. Is there any business on the Clerk's desk?

CLERK:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, communications from the Governor, Executive Orders COVID-19.

SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):

Order them printed in the Journal [Gavel].

CLERK:

And just the Daily Calendar.

SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):

Thank you very much, sir. Ladies and Gentlemen this is our official end of the Session day. Typically at midnight we would have gone sine die. Given the pandemic that we're facing and the safety requirements we've put into place for not only our members, but the public and everyone else that works up here, we were not able to have a session as we all know. We thought it important to come in today to adjourn this Session. While we may not have been here on a daily basis, we may not have had the Committee meetings, we may not have had the ability to pass legislation, by no means does it mean we were not working. Six to eight hours a day for myself, the other leaders, the Chairs, the Ranking Members, we were on the phone evaluating the Executive Orders. We were on the phone looking at proposals coming forward from other constitutional offices. But most importantly we were there to answer the phone for your constituents with the Department of Labor issues, with nursing home issues. Some of our Reps were delivering food. Some of our Reps were delivering masks. This has

been a very trying time. When the Majority Leader and the Minority Leader mentioned that thought of coming in and at least adjourning sine die, I fully embraced that. As you can tell we are all socially distancing, we are doing all we can to protect ourselves as well as others. But this has been a tough time for us all. In this particular case while we are not going to act on business, I am just gonna open it up to points of personal privilege or comments. With that being said, Representative Candelora of the 86th District, you now have the floor, sir.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, it's hard to imagine when we were first gaveling in for our Session that we would end up ending our Session this way especially when we have two very important leaders here that are retiring. I think that took a lot of us by surprise in some cases and I have to say that we've had so many firsts under this leadership team. You know, on our side having the first female leader but also having one of the first

bipartisan budgets I think this State have ever seen. We had, you know, Ethan's law gun legislation that was actually the first to have the most bipartisan support of any gun legislation in the history of Connecticut. And it's just a testament to you and Representative Klarides, your styles of leadership, you've shown us courage. You've shown us that working together is not a bad thing and I think it's something other states should follow. And I have been proud to serve as a Deputy not only under Representative Klarides' leadership but also under your leadership. It's been a great example and we will certainly have our chances to give remarks to both of you and honor you appropriately. But as we end today in sine die, I just wanted to say that as we are fighting our way through this pandemic, I know of no two leaders that are better suited in this House to help get us through these tough times. Thank you.

SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):

Thank you very much, sir. Are there any other points of personal privilege? Representative

Klarides. Representative Klarides of the 114th you have the floor, Madam.

REP. KLARIDES (114TH):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few comments to make, but first I would like to say, ask for a moment of silence for Jack Kramer, who passed away yesterday, who we all know has made such an amazing contribution to the media in Connecticut whether it be the New Haven Register, Connecticut News Junkie as of late and somebody that has touched all of us in our own way throughout time with all his contributions and showing what the press is really about.

SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):

Let's do a moment of silence. Everybody please stand. [Moment of Silence] [Gavel]. Thank you very much, Madam, please proceed.

REP. KLARIDES (114TH):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I thank Representative Candelora for his kind words. I'm going to not to try to address all of this right now, cause I can't go through this twice and I know

we are going to do this another time when we are here with our Caucuses and our staff, but I will say that it has been an honor to serve with you, Representative Ritter and Vincenz. There is nothing, you had to do this and now I'm upset and you're gonna suffer. There is nothing more important as we all know as leaders or heads of anything than having somebody by your side who you totally trust and rely on and I have been able to say that. So that's all we're gonna say for now about that.

We have found ourselves in a place where normally at this time, on this day, we are all being to be completely frantic about what the next seven hours will bring. We're exhausted from being here day in and day out all session, particularly the last day or two or arguing over whose Bills are going to be called. We are arguing over how long those Bills are going to take and we're waiting anxiously for midnight so we can actually finally get a good night's sleep. And I will just speak for myself when we complain about a lot of that, which

we do every session, and every year, not being able to it this year, has been a very jarring experience. Because for me it has made me appreciate the franticness, the hectic nature of this, the happy moments, the sad moments, the angry moments and what we do together and how we do it, and how we usually agree that working together particularly in this Chamber gets us the best result for the State of Connecticut. So this is bittersweet in so many ways this day, but I will tell you that everyday when we all drive up here, I know there are some days more than others, we look up at that building and that gold dome and then we walk in this building and we look up and we say, this is a pretty cool place to work. And there are some days we say we can't get out of here fast enough as anybody does with their job. But this is an experience almost nobody ever gets in their lives and I think that this experience, in this pandemic, and people being afraid for their lives, and afraid for their families and afraid for their livelihoods and our ability to help them in any way we can and the fact

that we were working probably not being in the building, but not being with each other has to me, made this experience an even more important one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):

Thank you very much, Madam. And to echo a little bit of your comments, I said to somebody today the hardest part has been missing my friends and for you, Madam Minority Leader Themis you are really one of my friends, I genuinely love you and I am going to miss our interactions, sometimes a little more spirited than others but at the end I always knew you were my friend and I hope you always knew I was your friend and we both understood our roles and working with you has been incredible. And again, I will say more when we have everybody else here, but it is a bittersweet day. With that being said, Representative Ritter of the 1st District, you have the floor, sir.

REP. RITTER (1ST):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minority Leader and Representative Candelora and

their nice comments, and I do want to recognize our Senate Leadership that is here, Senate President Looney and Senate Majority Leader Duff. I know that Senator Fasano did stop by briefly but it's nice to see you all under these unusual circumstances. We also had scripted to the two moments of silences but we did also want to do a moment of silence, all the Leaders gathered in this room here, for everybody here in the State of Connecticut who has lost their lives, to those who inevitably and unfortunately will lose their lives in the coming weeks and months as we face the worse health crisis this State has probably seen since 1918-1919. So, Mr. Speaker with your permission, I would ask for a moment of silence in the Chamber for all their families, loved ones and residents that are going through an absolute nightmare right now. Thank you.

SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):

Very appropriate, Mr. Majority Leader. [Moment of Silence] [Gavel] Representative Ritter, you still have the floor, sir.

REP. RITTER (1ST):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I am trying to talk through this thing. I hope I don't get too good at it cause means were doing this for a longtime and we hope that the people that work on our behalf will find a way whether it is through science or research that there's better days ahead and I am sure for this State and this Country. I want to echo what Representative Klarides and Representative Candilora, thanking our health care workers, our nurses, our doctors, our first responders, people who have been deemed essential employees. None of us ever thought a few months ago that that designation could mean the difference between having the ability to work from home and having to go in everyday on the frontlines. And when I walk around or I'm walking the dog, I'm amazed at how many people, you know, you see people and what they're doing, going about their business. As we all know a simple trip to the grocery store can set us all off just as people who are shopping. Imagine the folks that are working everyday for us. So they deserve our praise, our love, our appreciation, and I hope

there are ways we can do that beyond words in the coming months and coming years.

And what about our teachers? I can tell you that Jack and Emma don't think their dad is a very good teacher and probably don't think mom is a very good teacher. And what they do, we all know what they do on a daily basis, and paraprofessionals but what an appreciation you have. For me, it's two young children, many of them have 20 to 22, or high school kids with a lot of different things going on. They are able to do it daily and touch lives and I think one of the hardest part is breaking up that relationship between students and teachers, and coaches, which Mr. Speaker which you do. So we thank you. And again we know how hard your job is in case we ever forgot it for a second.

To the Minority Leader, we are going to have time to say good-bye, I agree. So I'm not gonna do some long thing but I will leave you with a thought. When I was sitting in the Chamber when Representative Kaffara retired, and you know, Larry, he had, you know, the drama, and it was a great

speech, as good a public speaker as I've ever seen in this Chamber, and one thing that the people were saying when I was sitting, I don't know where I was sitting, somewhere over there, I was Chair of Public Health. People said, you know, everybody really respected Larry, and they respected his preparation, and they respected that way when he came in the Chamber there was sort of a buzz. You probably topped Larry, to be honest with you, you were prepared every single day with the help of your team and your staff so that our knew on this side, don't go there. If you're gonna call a Bill, be prepared. If you're gonna debate it, debate it professionally. Know your stuff, know your information. Be respectful of the Committee process. Be respectful of your Ranking Member. You set a tone with your skillset, with your drive and it trickles down in this Chamber. You can tell when there is no respect, you can tell when there is no give and take. We can see it in Committees. Everyone on the Democratic side of this aisle, when you walked in paid attention, when you spoke they listened. That

is a leader of a caucus. You're formidable. So we are not going to miss you in that formidableness that you bring, but I have a feeling that your heir apparent is going to bring the same level of determination, intelligence and cooperation, but that is the ultimate measure of leader is when you walk in, what happens, people pay attention. I assure you on this side we always did.

I also want to say to Senator Fasano who is also retiring, we're going to miss you too. You know, Len is the classic legislator in my opinion from, I won't say a different time cause that sounds like I'm dating and that's not what I mean. But he likes to pen his letters, long, long letters. But with Len you can get there with him but it takes time, right. So Senator Fasano makes you work on deals, he makes you look at his letters, he wants to understand your viewpoint and that's all you can really ask from somebody. Is do they give you an opportunity to strike a deal with him on legislation. Too often in this building its just yes or no. He gave you a road, he gave you a map,

sometimes it was a long road, but you could figure it out and you could take the choice whether you wanted to work with him or not. And in many cases it was better for you to work with him than not to work with him. He will be sorely missed up here.

I also want to acknowledge the Governor's staff that is here. I mean the Governor is not here, but I saw Josh, I saw Paul Mounds, I know Bob Clark is working night and day, Melissa McCaw. Because of our inability to come in and do some of the things we normally do, a great burden has fallen on you that is also the burden of people yelling at you for the things that you do and that is part of the job we have. But to do the things they've had to do in the last 60 days, is unprecedented in the history State government. No one has had to do that, the things we had to think about by Executive Order, a different design, I think we all owe them a great deal of appreciation and the same with the Governor. The Governor has been a steady, calm force for the State of Connecticut in a time when we sorely need that. He is, I'm sure, wishing. You know, I think

Governors love when we're not in the place, right, in the building. I wonder if they kinda wish we were here to share in that burden. But we are, we are equal partners and as you said we are coming back in and the legislative function will continue and being here tonight is a symbol of that. That our responsibility is not punted, just delayed until we can get this under control.

On our side of the House, and we will recognize them. I know, Mr. Speaker this will be your last, last day before your retirement but not your last day in session. We also have six members that are not running for reelection on our side Buddy Altobello a Deputy Speaker and a longtime legislator, Rick Lopes who is running for State Senate, Representative Russ Morin, another Deputy Speaker, Representative Kim Rose, Representative Joe Serra, who served a very, very long distinguished career and the Chair of our Public Safety Committee Representative Verrengia and we look forward to recognizing them.

And just to your point, Mr. Speaker you hit it

perfectly, there is this is question, what is our role in the legislature going forward in the next couple of months but it also misplaces that question of what have we done and although the state library will have a very thin paper record of what we did when you think about it, if someone researched the 2020 Session you would find all of maybe three or four days that we went in. You would find all votes, I believe, unanimous, I don't think there was any vote where someone voted, "no", although I could be wrong a couple of no votes. But at the end of the day it will not go down as the most productive session in terms of Bills passed and Amendments debated.

But to your point everyone has taken on a new role and it is facilitating answers to constituents questions which in some cases are life or death because it means their ability to feed their family, it means their ability to get unemployment compensation. And the State will have to do a look, the Legislature with the Executive Branch, on what we could have done better, right. We probably

should have upgraded our systems a longtime ago in DOL. What other systems do we have that are outdated like that? That's no one's fault today, that was peoples fault for the last 20 years. But we've got to think about that. That's what the legislative role is going to be going forward and that what it's been today. It's doing the volunteer work and being in your community and the amount of questions I know we all get from our colleagues is staggering and we know how hard they are working on every subject and every member's requests and answers, we do our best to do that.

I do also want to say in our Chamber we've had some losses on our side, and I know I'm probably going to leave people out, but I know Jim Tambura our Head of Legislative Management lost his father. In the same nursing home Representative McGee lost his grandmother. I know Representative Porter has lost family and I'm sure I'm leaving other people out, but again our thoughts and prayers are with them during this incredibly time for so many people.

And also, Mr. Speaker I think about

Representative Garibay, the only member, to my knowledge of the General Assembly that tested positive for COVID-19. She called me when it broke, and said I can't believe this is on the front page of the newspaper and I said, I know Jane but you're a State Legislator and you are a public official and she handled it with incredible grace but it was a struggle for her and she would text and explain the symptoms she was feeling to all of us. And she is as tough as nails, she's doing great. To the people of Connecticut Representative Garibay is somebody that you had to go through a battle with you would want her on your side. She is a very tough person.

So, Mr. Speaker before I get to you, really quickly because I do want to do more when we get into June into our special session because we do want to talk about that and so I think we have acknowledged that to the public. We understand there is a role at some point, we just have to figure out how to do it safely. We have to figure a way that this Chamber isn't packed, that people aren't walking up and down the aisles but there are

things we're gonna have to do and then I think long-term maybe those folks who are retired, it's not as important, our rules need to be updated to reflect maybe modern reality. Maybe we gotta be honest that our traditions are critical but they also have to reflect modern technology and we have to find a way to balance that. Sometimes our rules are really unique and allows us to have days like this that have been going on for decades and you can point back to following the same procedures but when your democracy is uprooted like this, it is a good reminder to say, wait a second maybe there are other ways to have people testify in public hearings, maybe we should let people consider ways of voting that consider technology more in this building. That is a challenge for us for all us legislators going forward.

And to you Mr. Speaker, just to wrap up, about you. There was a quote and I don't know who John Maxwell is, I guess he is a famous author, so I apologize, but I found it. I thought it was really good about you, "The pessimist complains about the

wind, the optimist expects it to change, and the leader adjusts the sails." And so for you, became onto Speaker with a razor thin majority, a tied Senate, and we had to, as alluded to, our historic budget that I think left our State in a better position and you leave with a global pandemic. And for some people they may look back and go is that really the fair hand I was dealt but I think circumstances find people the same way people find circumstances. You were the perfect person to bring a Chamber through those two crisis. The first one wasn't a crisis but it created a budget crisis and this one certainly is a crisis. You're calm, you're direct, you're honest, you're approachable, affable, you are available to the media, you are available to your members. You are that rare combination of a football coach and knowing how to bring the best out of people coupled with the seriousness of a legislator. You've gotten to policy more, I think, than anyone appreciate on issues than I am not sure why you dug in on 'em because you had that side that you felt this was right for the State and so you

combined the affability with the intellect, you combined the coach's mantra with a Chamber that sometimes needed to be treated with a heavy hand to and so we're a team but I'm still the boss and you knew when to play that card, when to bang that gavel, but also when to bring people together. It's a really unique skill set. I'm gonna miss you, I know our friendship and our relationship will continue on long after this just like it will with the Minority Leader and others, but I truly love ya as a person and as a friend and I'm sorry this is your last day that you had scripted in your mind, that video would have been really cool and I know we may have it later but just know that this was meant to be on your watch because not everybody could handle this the way you have with the class that you have. So congratulations on your wonderful career and we'll do it again in June. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):

Thank you very much Mr. Majority and I obviously, I've said it multiple times, you really

are one of my best friends and I love you to death and we will have far more time to talk about this. While we are joined by our Senate friends, Senator Duff, I wasn't in the House with you, you had already gone up to the Senate but working with you over these past few years has really been great. I not only enjoy your company, I enjoy you as a person and it was always nice for you and I to say, "As the two non-lawyers in the group" cause we were always outnumbered by lawyers but what I think we had on our side maybe that was not the exact interpretation of the law but more times than not, your simple question of "Well wait a minute that doesn't make sense" would always make us pause and bring us back to a discussion that was fruitful. I appreciate you and your partnership. And Senator Looney, again, I tell Bitty all the time, I said I just really love that guy. You are an amazing leader. You are one of the hardest working, most dedicated public servants I think I've ever been around. There was no more truer testament than a major organ transplant and here you are on opening day. The

State is far better for everything that you have ever done and working with you has been a pleasure and we had some challenging times. As the Majority Leader mentioned I walked in to the budget and I'm walking out in a pandemic. But Marty, we were both Majority Leaders when we walked in to, my first official act as Majority Leader was the Sandy Hook tragedy and that's when we started working together. So I came into leadership with Sandy Hook and I'm going out with a pandemic so you should all be saying will you hurry up and get out of here already, you're just not bringing us good luck. But Marty, thank you for everything over the years, it really has been pleasurable. Again we will have our members here, I know I'm getting to be far more emotional. There are so many people I could thank but we will do that when we have the appropriate time.

Mr. Majority Leader typically there is a Motion that comes before us so that we can close out what is the Session.

REP. RITTER (1ST):

So, I thought, I don't know if the Minority Leader would want to do it, but I would have no problem in an unusual break of tradition but it seems like we've done a few things differently in the last couple of months, turning over that responsibility to the Minority Leader if she would want to bring us to sine die here in the House Chamber.

SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):

Is there a Motion to come before the Chamber?

REP. KLARIDES (114TH):

Well thank you, Mr. Majority Leader, I've never really paid any attention when you did it so I don't really know [All laughing]. Mr. Speaker, I make a Motion that we adjourn sine die.

SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ (30TH):

The Question before the Chamber is adjourning sine die, is there objection, is there objection. As I do it, I want us to remember one of our colleagues and as we're doing the sine die we are going to do it as bye-bye now for Linda Orange. So without objection, we are Adjourned sine die, bye-

bye now. [Gavel] [Applause]

ADJOURNMENT

(On motion of Representative Klarides of the  
114th District, the House adjourned at 5:31 o'clock  
p.m., sine die.)

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing 26 pages is a complete and accurate transcription of a digital video recording of the House Proceedings on Wednesday, May 6, 2020.

I further certify that the video recording was transcribed by the word processing department employees of Alpha Transcription, under my direction.

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