



Delaware Governor Jack A. Markell
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**State of the State
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TEXT OF SPEECH

STATE OF THE STATE 2014

Unleashing the Potential in Every Delawarean

Lt. Governor Denn, President Pro Tem Blevins, Speaker Schwartzkopf, members of the 147th General Assembly, other elected officials, members of the Cabinet, members of the Judiciary, Carla, the people of Delaware. Thank you for inviting me to address you today.

I know it wasn't necessary but I just want to assure the members of the General Assembly that Secretary Bhatt was ready to personally plow each of your driveways to facilitate your travel here.

In all seriousness, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge our terrific state employees who day in and day out provide critical services to the citizens of our State. We all experienced the benefit of their work and commitment during the recent snow storms.

Our public safety, transportation, healthcare, facilities and other staff truly answered the call. We owe a continual debt of gratitude to our state employees for being there when their neighbors and fellow Delawareans need them.

Let me also thank the members of our military – our friends from the Dover Air Force Base, all Delawareans in the armed

forces, and members of the Delaware National Guard. We had more members of the Guard deployed last year than ever.

Two of our Afghanistan veterans are with us today. I ask you to join me in thanking Captain Brian Malloy and Chief Master Sergeant Kevin Gordon. Captain, Chief, please accept our appreciation for all that you and your colleagues have done for us.

This past year, one of Delaware's own made the ultimate sacrifice. Warrant Officer Sean Mullen gave his life serving in Afghanistan. I ask that we all pause for a moment of silence to honor his memory.

Veterans like Captain Malloy, Chief Gordon, and Warrant Officer Mullen, protect what makes America great. Our freedoms. Our liberty. And the promise that any child in America can grow up to be whatever they want to be.

That, of course, is the essence of the American dream. Everybody in this state wants a piece of it. That longing defines who we are as a people.

And while it isn't our job to guarantee success for every Delawarean, it is our job to empower them to make their dreams real. Through several difficult years and this country's worst recession in generations, we have made progress on securing that promise.

The state of our state is stronger today than when I addressed you a year ago. Our job growth has outpaced the nation's, highlighted by a thriving financial sector and technological innovation from companies large and small, whether it's the parts manufactured at Miller Metal, the new pharmaceuticals developed at Incyte, the software made at SevOne, or the cutting edge fuel cells made by Bloom Energy.

Our schools are implementing higher standards while, thanks to legislation passed by the General Assembly, we are better preparing our teachers. And the companies that will hire our students are dealing with fewer and clearer government regulations.

So we've made progress, but to paraphrase Will Rogers, even if we're on the right track, we'll get run over if we just sit here. We have so much more to do.

If you have the right skills and live in the right communities, good-paying jobs are available. But for too many people, that's not reality. Every Delawarean has something to contribute if given the chance. We need to make sure they have that chance.

As governor, I've made repeated visits to the Ferris School. The young men at Ferris often require intense rehabilitation. Four years ago, during a visit to a Ferris art class, a young man, whom I'll call Brian, gave me a drawing he made.

About a year later, a confident young man approached me at a Habitat for Humanity event. He delivered a firm handshake and asked if I remembered who he was. I couldn't quite place him. "I'm Brian," he said. "You met me at Ferris. I gave you the drawing. Look at me now."

A bit stunned, I asked if he was working for Habitat for Humanity. He wasn't. He was just volunteering in his free time while studying to be a nurse. And he was positively glowing.

I think about Brian whenever I see his drawing hanging in my office. It reminds me of the potential in every Delawarean. Unleashing that potential is one of the most important things we can do.

Unrealized potential has always been a human tragedy. Now, it is also an economic calamity. The premium in today's economy is on the human factor – the creativity, talent, and drive in every one of us. A society that squanders the potential of its people is a society that lets its future slip away.

A bright future belongs to the states and nations that empower all of their citizens, transforming those who rely on government resources into contributors to our community. That bright future belongs to places where people like Brian get trained, find good jobs, and build better tomorrows.

That future will belong to us if we commit to unleash the potential in every Delawarean. How we do that is what I want to talk about today.

The Opportunity to Work

First and foremost, unleashing that potential requires that Delawareans have the opportunity to work.

Before the end of the decade, 60 percent of our jobs will require training beyond high school. And yet only 20% of our kids graduate from high school ready for college or a career.

The path to middle-class security is not what it was 30 years ago. So our approach to career preparation can't be either.

Let's ensure that all of our children are on a path to realizing their full potential – whether they choose to pursue a degree or take an accelerated career path.

First, we need to make sure that every Delaware student who can succeed in college gets off to a great start. Last week I spoke at a White House event where 100 college presidents announced new commitments to expanding college access. Because of our commitment to be first in the nation working to expand college opportunities statewide, Delaware was the only state recognized.

Thanks to our partnership with the College Board, we are identifying students with the potential to thrive in college, but who

would likely not apply, often because of financial concerns. They have received letters from some of the nation's top colleges, including those from Delaware's institutions, encouraging them to apply, waiving their application fees, and offering financial support.

They are students like Afoma Mbanefo of Christiana High School who was born in Nigeria to parents who never dreamed of going to college. After receiving the information we sent, she applied and has been accepted to six institutions, including the Honors Program at the University of Delaware. Afoma is with us today. Congratulations!

We have 1,000 students in Delaware like Afoma who are capable of succeeding in college, but who do not attend. We can get that number to zero.

We know that students who are challenged in high school with college-level material often rise to the occasion. Studies show that when these students get a taste of college academics, they are twice as likely to enroll and persist to a second year in college.

I propose a scholarship program so that all low-income Delaware students with college potential can take credit-bearing courses during their senior year.

As we send more of our students into higher education, we need to make sure that they have a roadmap from the classroom to

employment, and that our major employers are working with our universities so that our youth are prepared for the workforce. I'm pleased to announce today that DuPont has agreed to partner with our colleges on this effort.

They will work to identify skills needed for entry-level positions, match those skills with courses offered by our colleges, and provide internships. By completing identified courses and practical experiences, they will put students on a fast-track for opportunities, including full-time jobs.

We look forward to other employers joining DuPont on this initiative.

Let's also ensure that those students who choose an accelerated career path – one that doesn't involve a degree – get a head start on their futures.

This fall, we will roll out a new two-year comprehensive program in manufacturing technologies for high school juniors and seniors. The program will focus on mechanical, electrical, and computer engineering – and will lead to nationally recognized manufacturing certificates.

It's modeled after a partnership between Delaware Tech and Red Clay which allows students to attend classes at their home school, while augmenting what they learn by providing access to manufacturing equipment at Delaware Tech.

To make our new program even more meaningful, it also must include real world experience. And that's where a new public-private partnership comes into play.

The Delaware Manufacturing Association and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership are working with us to identify members willing to offer real world opportunities during the summer between junior and senior year. Whether it takes the form of hands-on work or job shadowing, direct exposure to the workplace is crucial. Several manufacturers already have answered this call to action, including Agilent, Siemens, PBF, and PPG.

Matching skilled workers with available jobs is critical. Thanks to our new JobLink capability, it's easier than ever for employers to search our database for employees with the skills they need.

In the last year, hundreds of employers have taken advantage of our new tools to find employees, and those inquiries led to hundreds of new hires at places such as Cabelas, Sitel, and Grayling Industries.

All of our efforts will be most successful when Delaware businesses collaborate with Delaware educational institutions. So I propose creating a competitive grant program to fund public-private partnerships between employers and our schools and

colleges that will develop the skills needed by tomorrow's workforce.

Finally, too many working Delawareans struggle to care for their families and put food on the table. I am glad that the General Assembly is poised to increase the minimum wage. Thank you for helping so many hardworking Delawareans.

A Culture of Innovation

Our ability to put Delawareans to work depends in part on whether we build on our legacy of innovation. We have a rich history of invention in Delaware, and it's time to write a new chapter. From the ashes of the old Chrysler plant is rising a new center of innovation that promises to do just that, the Science, Technology and Advanced Research campus.

The STAR campus represents the potential of university-based innovation to transform industries and spawn new companies. Academic research in Delaware contributed to the technologies that led to smart phones and tablets. Work done by Nobel Laureate and UD Professor Richard Heck yielded chemical processes used in pharmaceuticals, energy, and electronics.

To encourage that kind of research, I ask that you invest in innovation by creating a \$2 million matching grant program that

will leverage federal dollars in support of research that will create the jobs of tomorrow.

One of the most promising areas for research that will have an impact on our economy is cybersecurity. From the financial information held by Delaware's many banks to the technologies being developed by area science companies, our economy is only as secure as the networks that hold our personal data and intellectual property. As customers of Target and many other companies know, hacking and cyber attacks represent a huge threat.

Staying ahead of this challenge is something we and our employers need to do to protect our citizens and our customers, and it is good for our economy. Hundreds of unfilled jobs in this sector exist in Delaware today.

Our institutions of higher education are positioning themselves to take a leadership role in this area and I am pleased to join with them to launch the Delaware Cyber Initiative.

Located on the STAR campus, this initiative will be a public-private partnership between the University of Delaware, Delaware State University, Delaware Tech and the private sector. It will feature a collaborative learning and research network dedicated to cyber innovation, and I'm proud to say it will tap into the resources

of the 166th Network Warfare Squadron of the Delaware National Guard.

Investing in Delaware

Unleashing the potential of our economy also demands world-class infrastructure. The ability to move goods and services efficiently, connect to cutting-edge information technology infrastructure, and access cleaner, cheaper, and more reliable energy, is essential to every industry in our state.

For years, Delawareans tried to avoid the interchange of I-95 and Route 1. But our investment in new fly-over ramps has alleviated congestion, shortening commutes, shipping times, and trips to the beach.

We are making similar improvements at I-95 and 202. That exit ramp was a notorious choke point, but improvements have cut the average number of hours per day of slowing traffic from six to less than one.

DelDOT will soon begin construction on the long-awaited West Dover Connector. In Sussex County, DelDOT is widening SR 26. And across Delaware, new and improved bike paths are improving our quality of life.

Infrastructure investments create high-paying, middle-class jobs today and they lay the foundation for future prosperity. It's

time to stop complaining about the sorry shape of our Transportation Trust Fund and fix the underlying issues.

I propose that we invest \$1.1 billion over five years, a \$500 million increase over our current financial plan. Let's improve our transportation network for generations to come and put thousands of Delawareans to work.

We need to invest beyond our road network.

As Speaker Schwartzkopf and Senator Simpson know full well, investment in our parks, wildlife areas, beaches and other recreational amenities help attract millions of tourists, who in turn spend hundreds of millions of dollars and support thousands of jobs at restaurants, hotels and retail shops across our state.

Look specifically at our waterways. Water is the foundation of our tourism industry. It's vital to agriculture, manufacturing, and everything that we do.

Yet a century of pollution has impaired nearly every waterway in our state. While we have significantly reduced air pollution and cleaned up brownfields, far too many streams remain unsafe, as Senator Lopez keeps reminding us.

We can't eat our fish from the St. Jones. We can't swim in too many parts of the Inland Bays. The Christina and Brandywine rivers are laced with toxic pollutants.

This is embarrassing. This is unacceptable. We must change it.

This won't be easy or cheap – but it is achievable. We must upgrade wastewater and drinking water plants and improve stormwater infrastructure. And we must use cutting-edge technologies to remove toxic substances, like we are doing right outside this building at Mirror Lake thanks to the strong advocacy of Senator Bushweller.

To work toward these goals, next month, I will propose the Clean Water for Delaware's Future Initiative. The goal of this initiative is to clean up our waterways within a generation. Some much faster than that.

In our time, this will create jobs. In our kids' time, we will revitalize communities across our state. We owe future generations clean water. It's that simple.

Opportunity to Learn

We all agree that a quality education is essential for anyone seeking to unleash his or her potential – and this begins at a very early age. Teachers tell us that the number one barrier to academic success is when kids do not come to school ready to learn.

Six years ago, Senator Blevins set us on a path to improve the quality of our children's early learning experiences, as prime

sponsor of the legislation that created the Stars quality rating system in Delaware. The Stars program has provided the critical base for the investments we have made over the last several years.

We have made significant progress. Last year alone the number of low-income children attending a high quality program increased by 50%. That means 2,200 more children are getting better opportunities to be prepared for success in school.

I am grateful to Senator Blevins and all of the members of the General Assembly for your support of early childhood education opportunities for low income Delawareans.

But our work on behalf of our most vulnerable children isn't done. We can do more to support the national Nurse Family Partnership program, through which nurses visit first-time low-income mothers, and teach them how to care for their newborns. The results around the country have been stunning, including better academic performance, less juvenile delinquency and better overall child health outcomes.

As our next step, I propose that we more than double the number of first-time mothers who are served in Delaware by this proven program. That would give us a higher percentage of eligible mothers who are benefitting from this program than in any other state in America.

I want to thank Lt. Governor Matt Denn for championing this proposal.

We are making significant strides in our schools, thanks to this General Assembly, including education chairs Senator Sokola and Representative Scott, and so many talented educators across our state.

The world language immersion programs you funded now have 850 students in ten schools spending half of their school days learning in either Chinese or Spanish. Parents of those students have been thrilled with the results, telling us these programs have enriched their children's education.

Our professional learning communities and implementation of higher standards are producing positive results. Two-thirds of our educators say their improved professional development is having a positive impact in their classrooms.

We are particularly focused on supporting our teachers of science, technology, engineering and math. Many jobs of the future will be in these STEM fields. But we have trouble recruiting and retaining talented STEM teachers who have more lucrative options.

Today I'm delighted to announce that this fall the Delaware STEM Council, in partnership with Ashland, will be giving awards

to support our best STEM teachers, so they can share effective teaching strategies.

The magic of education happens with our teachers. It doesn't happen in Legislative Hall or in my office. But if you look at the way we fund education, you would think politicians have all the answers.

State government sets rigid funding formulas that determine how many assistant principals, reading instructors, and administrative assistants a school will have. In fact, we have one of the most rigid funding systems in the country. This leaves little room for school leaders – those who know our students best – to innovate, create a vision, and pursue it.

It is time to give those school leaders more flexibility to make a difference in our kids' education.

Starting in a handful of districts, I propose that we give school leaders the ability to spend some portion of their state resources in implementing their own school improvement plans. We should track their choices, measure the results, and see how we can best provide greater flexibility to more schools.

I thank Representative Heffernan for taking the lead on this issue.

Unleashing every student's potential also demands that we make it more attractive for our best teachers to continue doing

what they love – teaching. Since last year, my administration has been listening to educators about how we might set up a compensation system that attracts and retains great teachers.

Our best teachers deserve a path to receive additional compensation for pursuing leadership opportunities while remaining in the classroom.

We also must recognize that our starting salaries are not competitive with our neighbors.

I want to thank the Delaware State Education Association and the teachers who are working with us on an improved approach to educator compensation. We are pleased with the progress we've made, but there is still work to do and I hope we will be in a position to introduce legislation this spring.

A New Day in Delaware Downtowns

Much of our success as a state will depend upon whether our cities are safe and vibrant.

We know revitalizing neighborhoods is an important part of making our streets safer. We can replicate the success other communities have had in strengthening neighborhoods, while also harnessing the attraction that vibrant downtowns hold for talented young people and innovative small businesses.

To do so, I propose we create “Downtown Development Districts” – a small number of designated areas in our cities that will qualify for development incentives and a host of other benefits in housing and transportation. Builders looking to make investments in these Districts would receive grants for a percentage of their investment.

I propose dedicating \$7 million toward these kinds of projects, which will leverage tens of millions of dollars in private capital. And more importantly, this program can improve our housing stock and revitalize our downtowns.

Making our downtowns more vibrant and safer must start with Wilmington. Wilmington is the business capital of the state and our cultural center, yet violent crime has engulfed neighborhoods and taken many lives. When people do not feel safe in their communities, little else matters.

There is no quick fix. Mayor Williams has a significant task ahead of him. But it will take all of us doing our part—all levels of government, neighborhood leaders, faith communities, businesses—all of us. The Delaware State Police, Secretary Schiliro, Attorney General Biden, New Castle County Executive Gordon, and others all stand ready to help address the crime problems in Wilmington and beyond.

Far too often, gun violence is committed by shooters who cannot legally own guns, so it is critical that we do a better job tracing these weapons back to their sources. We must redouble our efforts to confront the gun-trafficking that is escalating the gang wars.

To do so, I am proposing a new Division of Special Investigations within the Department of Safety and Homeland Security that will focus on gun-trafficking.

At the same time, we must place as much focus on addressing the causes of crime. Much crime is committed by people with substance abuse problems. Seventy-one percent of men arrested in 10 U.S. cities in 2011 tested positive for an illegal substance.

Too often, our solution is to simply throw the drug user in prison, but many of these individuals need treatment more than a prison guard.

For many addicts, it's possible to deal with their disease successfully and go on to live happy, productive lives. There are stories like the young man recovering from a life-threatening addiction to heroin and becoming a business owner.

Or a teenage girl who lapsed into drug and alcohol use following her father's suicide and landed in jail, but with assistance

of a Drug Court program overcame her addiction and got a college education.

We all know people with addictions who, with the right intervention, could live fulfilling lives. It's time for us to put into practice what we already know: addiction is a disease. It can and must be treated.

Representatives Keeley, Barbieri, and Mulrooney along with Senators Henry and Hall Long, together with Secretary Landgraf and my wife Carla, are reviewing the addiction treatment needs in our state and the resources available to meet those needs.

Later this year, I will propose changes that better align our resources to fill the gaps in our drug treatment system and I look forward to working with you to fill these gaps.

The Opportunity to Contribute

We cannot meet the potential of our great state and our great country if we give up on a great number of our people. Today, America incarcerates more than 2 million people, and each year we release more than 700,000 inmates. 25 years ago, the total number of people incarcerated was 700,000.

For released inmates, their criminal record makes it difficult to be productive members of society.

There are those who belong behind bars and it is worth every penny we spend to keep them there. But when a person has served their time, it's up to them – and to us – to make sure they transition effectively, achieve their potential and contribute to society.

In 2009, with the leadership of Secretary McMahan and Director Ben Addi, we began our I-ADAPT initiative to help offenders prepare for their eventual release by giving them some of what they need to return to our communities. Identification. Access to medical care. A transition plan. Job training opportunities.

Five years of experience has taught us that those little things make a big difference. But for many offenders there is one thing we can't give them – a driver's license. Many offenders guilty of drug offenses are denied a driver's license – regardless of whether their crime had anything to do with a car. This penalty is just one more punishment that prevents them from seeking employment and accessing job training.

This should change. I ask you to eliminate the arbitrary loss of a drivers' license for crimes that have nothing to do with automobiles.

Too many of the inmates we release end up going back to prison. One of the best predictors of whether a person will commit another crime is whether they have a job. If we know employing

ex-offenders helps make our communities safer, why are we putting so many hurdles in the way of job opportunities for ex-offenders?

We need to start by looking at employment discrimination against people who have repaid their debt to society. Here is an example: If there is one employer in Delaware that should be able to decide whether hiring an ex-offender makes sense, it's the Department of Correction. But the Department is prohibited from hiring anyone with a felony record, even on a part-time basis.

As Representative JJ Johnson has suggested, we can do better.

Many communities have started to "ban the box" on job applications by eliminating the box that says "check here if you've been convicted of a crime." I believe we should ban the box for state government hires this year.

Let's stop denying ex-offenders their first interview. Let's be a model for the private sector, because marginalizing ex-offenders helps none of us.

Delaware's incarceration rate is higher than the national average in a country whose average is higher than the rest of the world's. That's not a point of pride, it's incredibly expensive, and it hasn't worked.

We lock up too many people for not making bail and not appearing at hearings. Forty percent of the women incarcerated at Baylor are pre-trial detainees, many charged with non-violent offenses.

Based on guidance from Commissioner Coupe, I propose that we pilot, in the City of Wilmington, a program of pre-trial community supervision for non-violent offenders. Based on a model from New York, this pilot program will allow the Department of Correction and social service providers to help get offenders to hearings and avoid trouble while awaiting trial.

By supervising some offenders, we can keep them out of prison in the first place and link them with services to address addictions or mental health concerns in the community, and not a prison cell.

In addition to filling our prisons with pre-trial detainees, we also impose longer sentences than other states do. One reason is that we are the only state in the country that forces our judges, without exception, to impose consecutive rather than concurrent sentences for multiple offenses.

That hasn't made us any safer and contributes to overcrowding in our prisons. I ask you to join me in giving judges greater discretion when it comes to concurrent and consecutive sentencing.

Lastly, we need to change the trajectory of kids who enter the criminal justice system at a young age.

Many of these kids are bright and full of potential. And, after living in a facility with structure, education, and medical care, they have the same goals and determination as any of our kids.

But here is the reality. As well as those kids do while they are in a secure facility, when they leave our care, they often return to the same exact circumstances that led them to us in the first place, only now they are returning with the burden of a juvenile record. Many of them won't complete their education.

Of 184 kids in custody at our Faulkland Road campus last year, only 11 were back in traditional schools six months later. Many kids drop out, are expelled, or are re-incarcerated. This is our failure. We have seen the progress many of them make while under our care and we must do better when they transition away from our facilities.

I am asking you to fund community-based advocates to work with these families and kids after they leave the custody of the Kids Department. A 15 year old doesn't know how to access mental health services, re-enroll in school, and get on a path to success. These advocates can make that happen.

We also need to break the cycle of incarceration by getting these kids back into school. I am asking Secretary Ranji to lead a

task force focused on how to get these children into an educational environment that is sensitive to their unique challenges and experiences.

Realizing Our Potential

One of my favorite parts about being Governor is that I get to meet Delawareans from every walk of life. The budding entrepreneur. The ex-con trying to get back on his feet. The first generation college student. The third generation farmer. The excited new mother. The hopeful immigrant.

And you know what? We all really want the same thing. We want to give life our very best shot. We want to make the most of the talents God has given us.

Much has been written in recent months about inequality in America. About a lack of economic mobility, declining incomes for working families, and a shrinking middle class. About a lack of opportunity for people born into difficult circumstances or who make a poor decision early in life.

The very promise of America – the essence of the American dream – is that while we are not guaranteed equal outcomes, we are guaranteed equal opportunities to achieve our potential.

That's why in recent years, we have focused so much on strengthening our schools, creating good-paying jobs, and enhancing our quality of life.

That's why, with the help of Representative Melanie Smith and Senator Greg Lavelle, we passed the Justice Reinvestment Act to rehabilitate and not just incarcerate.

That's why we passed new laws to make it clear that Delaware is a welcoming state no matter whom you love.

We do all of this because of our core value – our shared belief – that we all stand to gain when everyone gets a fair shot.

Isn't that why we're here?

Years from now – after the roads have been built; after today's kindergartners have retired from jobs we helped create; after our cities thrive and our waters run clean; the people of Delaware may not remember us by name or know about the laws we passed or the bills we debated.

But in the end, that's not what's important. What they will know is that we were here for them and that our focus was to unleash the potential of every Delawarean now and help ensure that future generations will be able to go further than we could ever have dreamed.

I know we have the resolve to do our part to realize the promise of our great State of Delaware.

Thank you. God bless you and all the people of Delaware!