

1 NEW YORK STATE SENATE

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4 THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

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9 ALBANY, NEW YORK

10 March 2, 2017

11 11:31 a.m.

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13
14 REGULAR SESSION

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17
18 SENATOR FRED AKSHAR, Acting President

19 FRANCIS W. PATIENCE, Secretary

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The
3 Senate will come to order.

4 I ask everyone present to please
5 rise and repeat with me the Pledge of
6 Allegiance.

7 (Whereupon, the assemblage recited
8 the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.)

9 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: In the
10 absence of clergy, may we please bow our heads
11 in a moment of silence.

12 (Whereupon, the assemblage
13 respected a moment of silence.)

14 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The
15 reading of the Journal.

16 THE SECRETARY: In Senate,
17 Wednesday, March 1st, the Senate met pursuant to
18 adjournment. The Journal of Tuesday,
19 February 28th, was read and approved. On
20 motion, Senate adjourned.

21 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Without
22 objection, the Journal stands approved as read.

23 Presentation of petitions.

24 Messages from the Assembly.

25 Messages from the Governor.

1 Reports of standing committees.

2 Reports of select committees.

3 Communications and reports from
4 state officers.

5 Motions and resolutions.

6 Senator DeFrancisco.

7 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Yes,
8 Mr. President. I wish to call up Senator
9 Phillips' bill, Print Number 3142, recalled from
10 the Assembly, which is now at the desk.

11 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The
12 Secretary will read the title of the bill.

13 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
14 60, by Senator Phillips, Senate Print 3142, an
15 act to amend the Real Property Tax Law.

16 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: I now move
17 to reconsider the vote by which the bill was
18 passed.

19 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Call the
20 roll on reconsideration.

21 (The Secretary called the roll.)

22 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 45.

23 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: I now offer
24 the following amendments.

25 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The

1 amendments are received, and the bill retains
2 its place on the Third Reading Calendar.

3 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: I now move
4 to adopt the Resolution Calendar.

5 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: All in
6 favor of adopting the Resolution Calendar
7 signify by saying aye.

8 (Response of "Aye.")

9 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Opposed,
10 nay.

11 (No response.)

12 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The
13 Resolution Calendar is adopted.

14 Mr. Floor Leader.

15 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Yes,
16 Mr. President, could you please take up the
17 noncontroversial reading of the calendar.

18 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The
19 Secretary will read.

20 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
21 170, by Senator Savino, Senate Print 3913, an
22 act to amend the Penal Law.

23 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Read the
24 last section.

25 THE SECRETARY: Section 4. This

1 act shall take effect immediately.

2 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Call the
3 roll.

4 (The Secretary called the roll.)

5 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 48.

6 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The bill
7 is passed.

8 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
9 209, by Senator Young, Senate Print 3940, an act
10 to amend the Private Housing Finance Law.

11 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Read the
12 last section.

13 THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This
14 act shall take effect immediately.

15 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Call the
16 roll.

17 (The Secretary called the roll.)

18 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Announce
19 the results.

20 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 48.

21 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The bill
22 is passed.

23 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
24 213, by Senator Robach, Senate Print 364, an act
25 to amend the Vehicle and Traffic Law.

1 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Read the
2 last section.

3 THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This
4 act shall take effect on the first of November.

5 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Call the
6 roll.

7 (The Secretary called the roll.)

8 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Senator
9 Krueger.

10 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you,
11 Mr. President. I rise to explain my vote no.

12 As I have pointed out in previous
13 years this bill has passed, the evidence from
14 saliva tests has not been concluded as being
15 damage-proof. They can make mistakes with saliva
16 tests. Drugs that you may be taking under
17 prescription that don't prevent you from driving
18 may show up on the saliva test.

19 Now that we live in a state where
20 medical marijuana is actually legal, you may very
21 well test positive in the standard saliva tests
22 even though that medical marijuana might have
23 been taken days or even weeks before.

24 And of course we even have the
25 scenario we've known about for many years that

1 sometimes poppy seed consumption shows up as a
2 positive for more serious drugs.

3 So I don't believe we need to expand
4 the option to saliva tests for driving. I think
5 we have other tools in our arsenal for being able
6 to find people who in fact are using products,
7 whatever they might be, that prevent them from
8 driving safely and that they should be held
9 accountable through our DWI and other laws.

10 But I think it's a mistake for us to
11 rush forward with a saliva test option, and I'll
12 be voting no.

13 Thank you, Mr. President.

14 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Thank
15 you, Senator Krueger. You will be recorded in
16 the negative.

17 Announce the results.

18 THE SECRETARY: In relation to
19 Calendar 213, those recorded in the negative are
20 Senators Alcantara, Hoylman and Krueger.

21 Ayes, 48. Nays, 3.

22 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The bill
23 is passed.

24 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
25 214, by Senator Little, Senate Print 389, an act

1 to amend the Vehicle and Traffic Law.

2 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Read the
3 last section.

4 THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This
5 act shall take effect on the 180th day.

6 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Call the
7 roll.

8 (The Secretary called the roll.)

9 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Announce
10 the results.

11 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 51.

12 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The bill
13 is passed.

14 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
15 220, by Senator Griffo, Senate Print 2538, an act
16 to amend the Vehicle and Traffic Law.

17 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Read the
18 last section.

19 THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This
20 act shall take effect immediately.

21 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Call the
22 roll.

23 (The Secretary called the roll.)

24 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Announce
25 the results.

1 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 51.

2 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The bill
3 is passed.

4 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
5 244, by Senator Valesky, Senate Print 1093, an
6 act to amend the Social Services Law.

7 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Read the
8 last section.

9 THE SECRETARY: Section 3. This
10 act shall take effect on the 180th day.

11 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Call the
12 roll.

13 (The Secretary called the roll.)

14 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Announce
15 the results.

16 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 51.

17 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The bill
18 is passed.

19 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
20 246, by Senator Golden, Senate Print 29, an act
21 to amend the General Business Law.

22 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Read the
23 last section.

24 THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This
25 act shall take effect on the 30th day.

1 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Call the
2 roll.

3 (The Secretary called the roll.)

4 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Announce
5 the results.

6 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 51.

7 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The bill
8 is passed.

9 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
10 258, by Senator Croci, Senate Print 953, an act
11 to amend the Penal Law.

12 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Read the
13 last section.

14 THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This
15 act shall take effect on the first of November.

16 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Call the
17 roll.

18 (The Secretary called the roll.)

19 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Senator
20 Krueger.

21 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you,
22 Mr. President.

23 So I have voted no on this bill in
24 the past, and I will continue to vote no on the
25 bill, because I think that the language is not

1 explicit enough in the definitions of who would
2 and would not be covered by this bill.

3 But as I read the bill, I do realize
4 that potentially it means that companies who are
5 doing business on the Internet and encourage you,
6 through their marketing, to violate laws because
7 it will be a -- generate income for them from
8 you, could also be considered terrorism under
9 this law.

10 And so I am a little torn. If the
11 language was cleared up -- for example, I have a
12 company, quite a few companies who advertise that
13 you should all participate in an Airbnb-type
14 model in violation of law, because they'll make
15 money even if they are doing harm to your own
16 community, your own building, and to you
17 yourself, who might end up being fined and
18 evicted.

19 So on the theory that this bill
20 might somehow be used to challenge the activities
21 of these companies who continue, day in, day out,
22 to violate New York State law, I am hoping that
23 the Senator will clarify and clear up the
24 language, even though I'm voting no today, so
25 that I can join him in supporting this bill and

1 encouraging it to become law.

2 Thank you, Mr. President. I will
3 remain no for now.

4 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Thank
5 you, Senator Krueger. You will be recorded in
6 the negative.

7 Announce the results.

8 THE SECRETARY: In relation to
9 Calendar 258, those recorded in the negative are
10 Senators Comrie, Krueger and Sanders.

11 Ayes, 49. Nays, 3.

12 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The bill
13 is passed.

14 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
15 259, by Senator Croci, Senate Print 956, an act
16 to amend the Penal Law.

17 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Read the
18 last section.

19 THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This
20 act shall take effect on the first of November.

21 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Call the
22 roll.

23 (The Secretary called the roll.)

24 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Announce
25 the results.

1 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 52.

2 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The bill
3 is passed.

4 Mr. Floor Leader, that completes the
5 noncontroversial reading of the calendar.

6 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Can we now go
7 back to motions and resolutions.

8 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Motions
9 and resolutions.

10 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: And I request
11 that previously adopted Resolutions 692, 693, and
12 694 be taken up, read the title only, and then
13 recognize Senator Golden, please.

14 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The
15 Secretary will read.

16 THE SECRETARY: Legislative
17 Resolution Number 692, by Senator Golden,
18 honoring Nicole Faccio on her outstanding
19 advocacy, support, and fundraising efforts for
20 lymphedema awareness.

21 Legislative Resolution Number 693,
22 by Senator Golden, memorializing Governor Andrew
23 M. Cuomo to proclaim March 6, 2017, as Lymphedema
24 Day in the State of New York, in conjunction with
25 the observance of the second annual World

1 Lymphedema Day.

2 And Legislative Resolution Number
3 694, by Senator Golden, honoring Steve Guttenberg
4 for his outstanding advocacy, support, and
5 fundraising efforts for lymphedema awareness.

6 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Senator
7 Golden.

8 SENATOR GOLDEN: Thank you,
9 Mr. President.

10 I rise today to honor those who have
11 led the effort to recognize World Lymphedema Day
12 and promote lymphedema awareness.

13 The New York State Legislature was
14 one of the very first governing bodies, in the
15 United States and the world, to honor and to
16 recognize World Lymphedema Day. Originally
17 inspired by the National Lymphedema Awareness
18 Day, this effort has grown into a worldwide
19 movement.

20 Today we come together again to
21 proclaim March 6, 2017, Lymphedema Day in the
22 great State of New York.

23 Millions of Americans are affected
24 by lymphedema and lymphatic diseases. The
25 disease is common to cancer survivors, with

1 approximately 35 percent suffering from
2 lymphedema because of diagnostic or treatment
3 procedures.

4 Despite these high numbers of
5 sufferers, research into potential treatment and
6 a cure lags far behind other similar physical and
7 emotionally debilitating diseases.

8 It is with great pride and pleasure
9 that we recognize the advocates who devote so
10 much of their time and effort to this condition.
11 At the top of this list is William Repicci,
12 executive director of the National Lymphatic
13 Education and Research Foundation; Colleen
14 McGuire, outreach director; and Steve Palmer,
15 media director. And thank you, thank you for
16 what you do.

17 This year we're also honoring two
18 individuals, Steve Guttenberg and Nicole Faccio,
19 for their outstanding efforts.

20 Steve Guttenberg, a resident of the
21 Upper West Side of Manhattan, has used his
22 celebrity status to promote lymphedema awareness
23 throughout New York State and the country. As an
24 honorary board member of the Lymphatic Education
25 and Research Network, he has devoted himself to

1 fundraising, supporting patients, and outreaching
2 to corporate supporters.

3 Nicole Faccio, who is here today
4 with us, and her parents, knows firsthand how
5 debilitating this condition can be, but refuses
6 to let it slow her down. With the support of her
7 family and her friends, she formed a fundraising
8 team called In Pizza We Crust, and exceeded their
9 fundraising goal by a whopping 150 percent.
10 Their team has become one of New York's top
11 fundraising teams for the New York Walk to Fight
12 Lymphedema and Lymphatic Diseases.

13 Nicole, keep up the good work.

14 I also believe we have -- and we do
15 have -- in our presence today last year's
16 honoree, our past honoree, with her parents,
17 Emma Detlefsen.

18 And of course, Emma, welcome back,
19 Emma. You're an inspiring individual. And you
20 come from Senator Amedore's community. And you
21 are definitely -- when you come down here and
22 this audience sees you, they will be impressed by
23 your greatness and by what you're fighting and
24 what your fight has done to bring these lymphatic
25 diseases to the public forum.

1 And I commend all the advocates for
2 their tireless and ongoing efforts to bring more
3 attention to lymphatic research, and I applaud
4 them for their unwavering advocacy. Let's give
5 them a great round of applause, ladies and
6 gentlemen, for all that they do in all of our
7 communities for those people that suffer from
8 these diseases.

9 (Standing ovation.)

10 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Thank
11 you, Senator Golden.

12 Senator Amedore.

13 SENATOR AMEDORE: Thank you,
14 Mr. President.

15 And I rise to congratulate everyone
16 here that represents this great cause and this
17 resolution. And thank you, Senator Golden, for
18 bringing this to our attention and honoring it.

19 And today in the chamber we have, as
20 has been mentioned, some special guests. And you
21 know, just about three short years ago I
22 showcased a very special constituent of mine, and
23 that's Emma, who stood on my chair over there, in
24 the end of the desk there, with her purple cape.

25 And Emma, who has been battling,

1 fighting hard this horrible disease, against
2 the -- what she feels, the sickness that she
3 undergoes, she goes against all odds. She does
4 not let it get her down. And she's gone on to
5 raise a boatload of money for research as well as
6 to help others who struggle with lymphedema.

7 That she -- being the superhero that
8 she is, she's here today, and I want to highlight
9 her again because she does have her purple cape
10 on. And she wants to show you that she is so
11 appreciative of everything that you have done
12 here in the State Senate to help her and everyone
13 else in this great state who battles with
14 lymphedema.

15 So to Emma and Nicole, I know you've
16 got -- Emma, I know you have the most colorful
17 sneakers on. If you could also show us those
18 great sneakers with your cape, I would appreciate
19 that. She's up in the gallery, if you're
20 wondering where she is.

21 So we, Mr. President, want to honor
22 her and Nicole for all of their efforts and --
23 their courageous, valiant efforts, as well as her
24 recognition, now, all the way to Washington, D.C.

25 So thank you, Mr. President.

1 (Sustained applause.)

2 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Emma, you
3 are a pint-sized inspiration who packs a very
4 powerful punch.

5 To Nicole and Steven, we welcome
6 you, the New York State Senate does, and we
7 extend all the courtesies of the house.

8 Mr. Floor Leader.

9 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: I object to
10 that pint-sized designation.

11 (Laughter.)

12 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: If you'd now
13 take up previously adopted Resolution Number 106,
14 by Senator Breslin, read the title only, and call
15 on Senator Breslin.

16 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The
17 Secretary will read.

18 THE SECRETARY: Legislative
19 Resolution Number 106, by Senator Breslin,
20 congratulating the Troy High School Football Team
21 and Coach Bob Burns upon the occasion of
22 capturing the 2016 New York State Public High
23 School Athletic Association Class AA
24 Championship.

25 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Senator

1 Breslin.

2 SENATOR BRESLIN: Thank you,
3 Mr. President. It's a pleasure to rise to honor
4 the Troy High School Football Team.

5 Now, Troy High was in Class A. And
6 as many of you know, there's classifications.
7 And if you go down to a lower classification,
8 sometimes you're a lot better than the
9 competition you play.

10 But when you go to the next
11 classification, as Troy High did, from Class A to
12 Class AA, the opposite is true. Oftentimes the
13 competition is much more severe and much more
14 difficult in front of you.

15 This Troy High team didn't respond
16 to that. They started off last season by rather
17 easily beating Shenendehowa, one of the biggest
18 and best football programs in the State of
19 New York, and really marched through the season,
20 and marched through the season ending up beating
21 state powerhouses Newburgh Free Academy,
22 New Rochelle, which is frequently there at the
23 end -- and finally, on November 26th, in a very
24 close game that I enjoyed, beat Victor, a
25 perennial state favorite.

1 And this was a special, special
2 Troy High team with a lot of gifted athletes,
3 with a coaching staff led by Bob Burns. And I'd
4 be remiss if I didn't emphasize that entire
5 coaching staff, from Assistant Coach Sam Marro
6 and Offensive Coordinator Mike Grasso, the
7 offensive line coach, Jim Canfield, and other
8 coaches -- Mark Galuski, Pat Haggerty, Matt
9 Marsh, Chris Stack, Matt Robinson, Mike Barnes,
10 Jason Kritz, and Jerry Jobs {ph}.

11 And it just was a special season.
12 At the top of Troy High, you have your wonderful
13 superintendent, John Carmello. Coincidentally,
14 his son was also a member of the team.

15 And when I looked after the season
16 to see some of the -- it's hard to keep track of
17 the awards you got. And I know I didn't look at
18 all the different sources of All-States, I only
19 looked at several of them. I know Joey Ward, who
20 had such a terrific season, made first string,
21 first team All-State. And John Germinerio, the
22 quarterback, made a couple of All-State teams.
23 And Joey Casale -- and the Casale family, as many
24 of you know, is very well known, and I'm making
25 an assumption related to a long-time friend of

1 mine, former Assemblyman Pat Casale. And Dev and
2 Saverio, again, All-State teams.

3 And there was just a specialness
4 about what Bob Burns brought together. And
5 you're to be commended for what you did this year
6 in coming up with a 13 and 0 record. Troy High
7 earlier had won state championships at Class A,
8 but what you did is an enormous feat. It's
9 something that will be long remembered. And you
10 will be able to come, any time you want in your
11 history, to show your families that you are in
12 the permanent records of the New York State
13 Legislature.

14 Congratulations for everything
15 you've done. Have a successful next four years
16 as you move on, and a successful career in life.

17 Thank you very much.

18 (Applause.)

19 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Thank
20 you, Senator Breslin.

21 Senator Marchione.

22 SENATOR MARCHIONE: Thank you,
23 Mr. President.

24 I have the honor today of having
25 guests on both sides of our chamber. So I would

1 first like to welcome a group of constituents
2 from Saratoga County who are down here visiting
3 and touring today and wanted to stop in here and
4 just see exactly what's going on in our chamber.
5 So I welcome them here today.

6 But I also have the Troy Football
7 Team in my district. I represent Lansingburgh,
8 in the City of Troy, a much smaller section than
9 my colleague Neil Breslin.

10 I also can't stand up and talk about
11 how great it was that you beat Shenendehowa,
12 because they're also in my district.

13 But I can stand up and congratulate
14 you on this wonderful accomplishment. I can
15 recognize, I can honor you, I can tell you I am
16 absolutely thrilled at your achievement. I want
17 to tell your coach, Bob Burns, how terrific I
18 think he is, and all of the coaches that surround
19 all of you.

20 I also have a Casale connection, as
21 Danny Casale, who was the Assemblyman's son,
22 works in my office and just told me such terrific
23 things about all of you.

24 So I add my congratulations to each
25 and every one of you on this tremendous

1 accomplishment.

2 Thank you, Mr. President.

3 (Applause.)

4 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Thank
5 you, Senator Marchione.

6 Senator Funke.

7 SENATOR FUNKE: Thank you,
8 Mr. President.

9 Well, as the Senator who represents
10 Victor High School, I would just like to
11 congratulate Coach Burns and everybody on the
12 Troy Football Team. Senator Marchione and I had
13 discussed a wager on this particular game. She
14 declined, or I'd be wearing a Troy football
15 jersey right now, I think.

16 But I just want to congratulate you.
17 You know, I think football is the greatest game
18 of all, because it teaches so many things that we
19 don't necessarily learn in the classroom -- big
20 people, little people, slow people, fast people,
21 everybody comes together.

22 And, you know, every play in
23 football is designed to be a touchdown. If you
24 draw it up and Coach Burns draws it up on the
25 board, everything is designed to be a touchdown.

1 One person breaks down, and it doesn't happen
2 that way. It just shows how it's essential for
3 people to work together, on both sides of the
4 aisle, in government and in life.

5 So I appreciate everything that you
6 do. Congratulations for playing the great game
7 of football. I know it's going to pay a lot of
8 great dividends for you as you go forward in your
9 lives.

10 So congratulations on a great win
11 over Victor High School, and good luck next
12 season for those of you who are not seniors.

13 Thanks.

14 (Applause.)

15 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Thank
16 you, Senator Funke.

17 To Coach Burns, to you and your
18 team, and to Senator Marchione's special guests,
19 we welcome you to this great chamber and we
20 extend all the courtesies of the house to you.
21 Thank you.

22 Mr. Floor Leader.

23 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Yes, this
24 resolution can be opened up for cosponsorship.
25 If you want to be a cosponsor, please notify the

1 desk.

2 The next item is a resolution by
3 Senator Comrie that was previously adopted,
4 Number 800. Could you read the title only and
5 then call on Senator Comrie.

6 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The
7 Secretary will read.

8 THE SECRETARY: Legislative
9 Resolution Number 800, by Senator Comrie,
10 commemorating the 23rd anniversary of the
11 UniverSoul Circus.

12 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Senator
13 Comrie.

14 SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you,
15 Mr. President.

16 Today I wanted to acknowledge a
17 person that is here visiting our chamber today.
18 The UniverSoul Circus is a single-ring circus
19 established in 1994 by Cedric Walker, an
20 African-American man who had a vision of creating
21 a circus with the majority of performers being
22 people of color.

23 He has traveled all over the world
24 to find people with incredible talents. He was
25 able to find entertainers from approximately

1 24 different countries.

2 I wanted to pay homage to
3 Mr. Walker, who is in the chamber today, along
4 with his great assistant, Ben Johnson, who is the
5 director of operations.

6 Mr. Walker was born in Maryland. He
7 always had an entrepreneurial spirit, starting
8 from the age of 6. Determined to make extra
9 money, he was inventive right from the start. He
10 sold Christmas cards, Kool Aid popsicles, fruits
11 and vegetables from a horse-drawn cart. He even
12 collected for UNICEF, because he understood back
13 then that he wanted to try to help people from
14 all over the world.

15 He was first bitten by the
16 entertainment bug in the early '70s when he moved
17 to Tuskegee to live with his uncle, a nightclub
18 owner. That's where he met and later teamed up
19 with a promising young musical group called the
20 Commodores -- where's Robach? He's not here
21 today.

22 (Laughter.)

23 SENATOR COMRIE: He became their
24 production and stage manager and toured with them
25 around the world. He later worked as a promoter

1 for the Jackson 5.

2 Cedric Walker struck out on his own
3 in the '80s, when he organized the Fresh Fest,
4 the world's first rap music tour, featuring the
5 likes of Queens' own Rock & Roll Hall of Fame
6 inductees, Run DMC, Salt-n-Pepa, and many other
7 artists.

8 In the early days, when no one
9 believed rap music was viable, Mr. Walker turned
10 that around by putting on safe, successful and
11 profitable shows around the country.

12 In the early 1990s, he branched out
13 further, turning his attention to bringing
14 community together through the church. He
15 underwrote and coproduced the highly successful
16 gospel plays "Wicked Ways" and "A Good Man is
17 Hard to Find," among many others.

18 By the mid-1990s, Mr. Walker and his
19 associates began to look for new forms of family
20 entertainment, with a vision to explore the
21 various talents of African-Americans, Caribbeans,
22 and Latinos other than singing and dancing, and
23 the Universal Big Top Circus was born.

24 The UniverSoul Circus employs
25 hundreds of workers that are rigorously trained

1 in Olympic-style fashion at various schools
2 around the world financed Mr. Walker and his
3 conglomerate.

4 I would also like to acknowledge
5 that the circus employs many local community
6 youth and military veterans, like Purple Heart
7 recipient Sergeant Lester Muse, who is also here
8 today -- please stand up, Lester -- who is in the
9 chamber with us.

10 UniverSoul Circus is highly regarded
11 as the top-rated circus in the country in regards
12 to safety and compliance, even with all the
13 pressures that they've been put upon lately by
14 folks with small minds.

15 UniverSoul Circus has successfully
16 turned the traditional circus world upside down.
17 By 1997, the tour had grown to 10 cities; two
18 years later, 19 cities. They've been asked to go
19 to South Africa more than once. They have an
20 Emmy-nominated HBO special. And now they're
21 playing to packed audiences around the world.

22 If you haven't had an opportunity to
23 go to a UniverSoul Circus performance, I would
24 invite you to go. It is a totally different
25 experience. It's very interactive, and you go

1 there and you wind up having a lot of fun.

2 Again, I want to congratulate Cedric
3 Walker, who has been a true pioneer and a
4 trailblazer, making sure that the UniverSoul
5 Circus is a family-friendly circus, is a circus
6 that embraces the arts in all forms, and is a
7 circus that we can celebrate all of the positive
8 things that happen in every culture, not just
9 one.

10 So thank you, Mr. President, for
11 having them here today. And I would ask that
12 everyone give Mr. Cedric Walker and the
13 UniverSoul Circus a round of applause.

14 (Applause.)

15 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Thank
16 you, Senator Comrie.

17 Senator Sanders.

18 SENATOR SANDERS: I too have to
19 congratulate the UniverSoul Circus.

20 Well, where do you start? One of my
21 favorite, favorite R&B groups was the Commodores.
22 And I'm finally meeting the stage producer, and
23 we were talking about trying to get them to do a
24 reunion. I think that this great Senate should
25 go on record in saying that we want a reunion of

1 the Commodores. And they should play here first.
2 Okay, well, maybe we won't go on record to do
3 that. But I would like to see it done.

4 It seems that my life and his were
5 chasing each other. We were always in a
6 entertainment facility -- you can't call it a
7 club -- Maverick's Flat, and other places that he
8 was in and I was in. But maybe that's what led
9 him to gospel. Maybe those type of places after
10 a while would lead you to understand the beauty
11 of gospel, and the gospel plays at that.

12 I want to of course thank Sergeant
13 Lester Muse, who brings everything together,
14 including us.

15 But I want to draw your attention,
16 sir, that politics is very much like the circus
17 that you speak of. However, we do it rougher.
18 We do trapeze acts without nets. And I'd like
19 your performers to try that one.

20 And every two years -- you have a
21 great training facility, but we have a great
22 place that we -- it's called the election. Every
23 two years, we also get to see how close we can
24 walk across things without nets. And if you
25 believe that you have lions and tigers, well, we

1 have sharks. We have sharks out here.

2 So I'm saying that you should look
3 here, sir, for performers for your circus. And
4 if the pay is right -- mmm, I won't say anything
5 about our pay. If the pay is right, then perhaps
6 we can strike up a deal.

7 But on a very serious side, I want
8 to congratulate you and your team, but I also
9 want to draw attention to Senator Comrie, who is
10 wise enough to bring them all here.

11 Congratulations again.

12 (Applause.)

13 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Thank
14 you, Senator Sanders.

15 Senator Hamilton.

16 SENATOR HAMILTON: Yes,
17 Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to the
18 UniverSoul Circus.

19 This circus has played a pivotal
20 role in my life, with my wife and two young
21 children. My children were so delighted to go to
22 this circus because we wound up in a bleacher
23 section. We were literally on the ground, seeing
24 the actors perform. And it was a much-needed
25 alternative, being involved and seeing people who

1 resembled yourself.

2 So I just want to commend the
3 UniverSoul Circus for doing a great job. I want
4 to commend Senator Comrie for having them come
5 here.

6 And we need to have more cultural
7 institutions of diversity that reflect this great
8 State of New York. And also Ringling Brothers
9 Circus, I'm sorry to see that they're gone. That
10 was a cultural and as far as an American
11 tradition that is now lost. So now that we have
12 the UniverSoul Circus to continue, as far as
13 entertaining families throughout the state, it is
14 much -- desperately appreciated for what you have
15 done, for your foresight in getting things into
16 our communities.

17 I remember seeing you at Randall's
18 Island, in Newark, New Jersey. I mean, you guys
19 were all over in the tri-state area. Even on
20 Randall's Island, you were there also. And you
21 kind of infused the African-American culture,
22 hip-hop culture, into the circus, so it was
23 always entertaining.

24 And Coney Island, I saw you guys
25 there. I had, you know, tickets that were great

1 tickets. And to this day I have a picture in my
2 house of my children near the rink at UniverSoul
3 Circus, and they kind of like -- when they saw
4 the elephants come so close, they jumped back. I
5 said, "It's okay, Daddy'll protect you, don't
6 worry about it."

7 But I just want to say keep up the
8 good work. I commend you for bringing something
9 to the forefront that was much needed in my
10 family. And I always say God bless UniverSoul
11 Circus. Thank you so much.

12 Thank you.

13 (Applause.)

14 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Thank
15 you, Senator Hamilton.

16 Senator Stavisky.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you,
18 Mr. President.

19 Thank you, Senator Comrie, for
20 bringing up some illustrious Queens residents.

21 Those of us who represent Queens
22 County are very proud of what goes on in Queens,
23 the diversity, the sense of community, the sense
24 that people care about one another in Queens.

25 And again, I thank you for coming

1 up. We recognize your contributions, Mr. Walker.
2 And Sergeant, thank you for your service. And
3 let us do more of these community-based
4 organizations.

5 Thank you.

6 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Thank
7 you, Senator.

8 Senator Comrie, we welcome
9 Mr. Walker and your colleagues to this great
10 house, and we extend all the courtesies.

11 Thank you.

12 (Applause.)

13 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Mr. Floor
14 Leader.

15 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: I was going
16 to sing "Once Twice Three Times a Lady," but in
17 the interests of time I won't do that.

18 (Laughter.)

19 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: This
20 resolution is up for cosponsorship. If you want
21 to be a cosponsorship, please notify the desk.

22 I'd like to now hand up committee
23 assignments. Senator Flanagan makes the follow
24 Republican committee assignments.

25 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: The

1 committee assignments are received and filed with
2 the Journal Clerk.

3 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: And
4 similarly, Senator Flanagan, in consultation with
5 Senator Stewart-Cousins, makes the following
6 Democrat committee assignments.

7 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: Those
8 assignments are received and filed with the
9 Journal Clerk.

10 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Is there any
11 further business at the desk?

12 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: There is
13 no further business at the desk.

14 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: That being
15 the case, I move to adjourn until Monday,
16 March 6th, at 3:00 p.m., intervening days being
17 legislative days.

18 ACTING PRESIDENT AKSHAR: On
19 motion, the Senate stands adjourned until Monday,
20 March 6th, at 3:00 p.m., intervening days being
21 legislative days.

22 (Whereupon, at 12:06 p.m., the
23 Senate adjourned.)

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