

CANDARAS FORMALLY ANNOUNCES HER SENATE CANDIDACY
FOR THE FIRST HAMPDEN AND HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT

Remarks of Representative Gale D. Candaras
at Western New England College, March 2, 2006

Thank you, Vice-President Campanella for your generous words and I want also to thank President Anthony Caprio for your wonderful hospitality here this morning. I also want to thank my good colleague and friend, Majority Whip, Lida Harkins. The lady from Needham is the highest ranking woman in the Massachusetts House. Lida has had to work incredibly hard through the tenure of three speakers to achieve her senior leadership position. Lida drove two hours this morning to be here just as she has supported all the women in the House so many times before. The next Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives should be a woman and it should be Lida Harkins.

Western New England College has been a beacon of hope for many students seeking to make a better life for themselves and their families. Over 25 years ago, I was a young person seeking that opportunity. As a nontraditional student with a 3 year old child, I knocked at the door of the College's Law School. When that door opened, it changed my life in ways I could never have imagined. Because of that opportunity, I am an attorney today and here to announce officially my candidacy for the First Hampden and Hampshire Senatorial District.

Senator Brian Lees has served this district for 18 years. He is leaving office after compiling an extensive record of dedicated public service to the people of the First Hampden and Hampshire Senatorial District. Senator Lees has served with

energy, dedication, and integrity. We thank Brian for his many accomplishments and we also thank his wonderful wife, Nancy, for all those years of personal sacrifice. We wish them both well in their future endeavors.

For many years, Western New England College served largely local residents. Under the strong leadership of President Caprio, it now attracts a national population, drawing students and revenues from all parts of the country to our local economy. For example, last year's entering class drew students from over 30 states and foreign countries. This infusion of students and resources benefits the entire region enormously. This College is the tenth largest employer in the area but it does not stand alone in its importance to the region.

Western New England College, A.I.C., Bay Path College, Springfield College, STCC, Westfield State, Holyoke Community College, The Elms, and the five college consortium of U. Mass, Smith, Mount Holyoke, Amherst, and Hampshire offer a wealth of educational opportunities not found outside the Northeastern part of the United States. These schools provide thousands and thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of revenue to the western Massachusetts economy. Aggregating their collective impact, Western Massachusetts colleges and universities contribute substantially to the region's economy but we could do more. Let us nourish these schools, and, together with the expertise and resources to be found in both government and the private sector, work together to develop "The Knowledge Corridor" that will bring people from all over the world here to western Massachusetts to study. It is time for bold solutions. It takes cooperation between the public and private sectors, marketing know how and talent, which we have in our business community in abundance and the collective will to make it happen. If we can dream it, we can have it. I want to be part of this dream and if elected your state senator, I will make its realization a priority.

Just as our colleges are engines of our economy and symbols of hope, our colleges are also dependent on a strong, viable, and prosperous central city. Like the colleges, the City of Springfield must be a magnet for revenue, investors, businesses, and population from outside the region. Private persons and public officials, in the city and suburbs, must work together to achieve economic vitality. The survival of the cities and towns surrounding Springfield, indeed the greater region, depends on the restoration of the City's fiscal soundness. As Springfield goes, so goes Hampden County and Western Massachusetts.

Thousands of workers commute each day from suburban areas to Springfield. Their livelihood depends on the economy of the City, and the City depends on them. Thousands of people come to the City to enjoy the symphony, the Basketball Hall of Fame, the museums, the art galleries, the events at the Mass Mutual Center, and many other cultural and entertainment venues. For years, Springfield has rightfully been acclaimed, "The City of Homes." But viable residential neighborhoods depend on good education and employment opportunities. Too many have forgotten Springfield's great history. At one time, more than 14,000 people worked at the Springfield Armory alone. Like many cities in the Northeast, Springfield has, for the past 40 years, lost thousands and thousands of jobs.

The residents of the City and the residents of the suburbs are in this enterprise together. Our lives and futures are intertwined and no one should think the suburbs will continue to thrive if our City fails. As the representative for the 12th Hampden District, I have had the privilege of serving both for the past ten years. I have the largest House district in the State, which covers a large part of the First Hampden and Hampshire Senatorial District. I am already serving a substantial portion of this Senatorial District.

When I was first elected to the House, I promised to be accessible and visible, and to work for the common good. I have kept those promises. My record demonstrates a commitment to the city and the suburbs, to private citizens and corporate citizens and to people in need of help wherever they live. I have worked hard to help develop the Boston Road business corridor, which runs through the entire Senatorial District and to bring abandoned properties, like Art Cement, back on line and on the tax rolls.

I have brought millions of dollars for the rehabilitation of the Springfield Juvenile Court, for infrastructure, and for additional lighting at Forest Park, the site of our nationally renowned Bright Nights exhibit. When the Spirit of Springfield, the sponsor of Bright Nights, the annual pancake breakfast, and many other civic events, had serious difficulties, I helped to restore its financial and corporate stability. I did not want Springfield to lose its best cheerleader during the toughest game of its life.

While others may talk about fighting crime, I chaired the House Committee on the Adequacy and Allocation of Court Resources and was able to secure desperately needed funding for the Springfield District and Juvenile Courts, two of the busiest criminal courts in the state. We are fortunate here in Hampden County to have a sheriff, Michael Ashe, who has one of the lowest repeat offender rates in the nation, and a District Attorney, William Bennett, who strives to enforce our criminal laws with an even and effective hand. I've worked hard to make sure Sheriff Ashe has the funding he needs to do an increasingly difficult job. I've supported Bill Bennett's efforts to put dangerous felons behind bars. Among his many accomplishments, DA Bennett has been instrumental in creating a criminal law clinic, a joint program with our Law School. And, together, we have all created the Legislative Institute here at Western New England College and brought

important state house committee hearings to Springfield so people could participate in their government.

Open space and recreational areas are important for the quality of life. I have worked to create public parks and conservation land for the enjoyment of all area residents. I have helped put hundreds of acres of land in conservation and for that have consistently received one of the highest Audubon ratings in the State. I listened when people did not want a pipeline or a thruway through their backyards. I listened when they wanted sidewalks and when they didn't want sidewalks as well. I listened when people demanded that we have two viable hospitals. I work for you and I have never forgotten that. I am your voice in Boston and I hope you are proud of me.

Year after year, shoulder to shoulder, with my western Massachusetts legislative colleagues, I have fought to bring additional funding to our cities, towns, schools, hospitals, and courts. Much has been made of how much money is sent to Springfield and, no doubt, we have brought home a great deal of funding but we need and deserve more. It is time to reinvest in our urban centers and Springfield must be the first City turned around. If elected, I will continue to make our case and fight to make sure Springfield and our western Mass cities and towns are treated fairly. We will decide when our funding levels are fair.

As a candidate for the Senate, I offer my education, experience, industry, integrity and commitment to excellence in government. Based on promises made and promises kept and a promise of continued service to the people of Western Massachusetts and this Senatorial District, I offer this Six Point Program. If elected to the Senate, I will dedicate myself : (1) to improving our criminal justice system, reduce crime and protect the quality of life for all our citizens; (2) to advancing our educational system and to open doors for all; (3) to working with business and

government for the expansion of economic opportunities; (4) to encouraging full and complete cooperation between city and suburban residents for their mutual benefit; (5) to advancing the interests of our vital institutions: our governments, colleges and universities, hospitals and healthcare delivery system and; (6) to continuing to fight for a brighter future for Springfield and our area towns.

In closing, I want to thank all of you for being with me here today. I especially want to thank the people of Wilbraham for taking a chance on the “new kid on the block” almost twenty years ago and giving me my start in public service. I want to thank all of the people of Springfield, Wilbraham and East Longmeadow for giving me a chance as their state representative ten years ago and supporting me in each and every ward and precinct for five consecutive elections. I am now going to venture well beyond my own backyard and embrace a greater challenge.

We have a long, hard road ahead of us. We have big problems and we need bold solutions. We need professional level representation. This is what I’m trained to do. This is what I want to do. But as the ancient Chinese proverb would have it: “The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.” Let us together, here in this place, take that first step. One person can make a difference and I would like to be that person. I am asking for your help yet again. With your support, I will become your next state senator on November 7, 2006, and I will tell you now what I will tell you then—that I would be nowhere without you. I’m officially announced and I’m ready to go!