



Gov. Deval Patrick smiles as he addresses his constituents on Beacon Hill at the inauguration ceremony on Jan. 4. It has been a year of firsts for the Commonwealth, as the first black governor was sworn in at the first alfresco inauguration in state history. An optimistic Patrick likened Massachusetts to the biblical "city upon a hill." (Don West photo)

Patrick remains optimistic despite budget realities

After a week of historic inaugural festivities, Gov. Deval Patrick has hit the State House with a flurry of energy, promising to streamline state bureaucracy and create a community organization called the Commonwealth Corps.

"Every single one of us has a stake in each others dreams and struggles, and in stronger communities," Patrick said. "To that end, this administration will play a role in encouraging civic engagement. The mission of Commonwealth Corps is to draw together people of all ages and backgrounds to help meet human need and rebuild communities across Massachusetts. By mentoring, staffing after school programs or shelters, helping to clean up parks and neighborhoods, members can help transform communities and inspire others to take action to promote the common good."

The common good — or at least

the one that Patrick envisions — will be sorely tested. Already fiscal realities have caused Patrick to pause from campaign promises of adding more state police and reversing budget cuts approved by his predecessor, Mitt Romney. Patrick must submit a fiscal 2008 state budget to the Legislature by Feb. 28.

But Patrick appears ready, as exemplified by the words in his inaugural speech.

"This commonwealth, and the nation modeled on it, is at its best when we show that we understand a faith in what's possible and willingness to work for it," Patrick said in his inaugural speech. "So as an American, I am an optimist, but not a foolish one. I see clearly the challenges before us."

Earlier this week, Patrick announced the creation of a development cabinet, a collaborative partnership between Cabinet secretaries

geared toward identifying and promoting business development, job growth and infrastructure projects.

In springlike weather, thousands of people gathered around the State House and giant television screens on Boston Common to witness the swearing-in of the state's first African American governor, and only the second in the history of the United States since Reconstruction.

That history was not lost on Patrick. He was sworn in with his hand on a historic Bible held by his wife, Diane, a Boston lawyer. Slaves gave the Mendi Bible to John Quincy Adams — the nation's sixth president — after he helped free them for commandeering the ship "Amistad."

"I am descended from people once forbidden their most basic and fundamental freedoms, a people desperate for hope and willing to fight for it — and so are you," Patrick said.

Mayor Menino lauds 'spirit of community'

Painting a rosy picture of Boston's economy, Mayor Thomas M. Menino delivered his 10th State of the City address Tuesday night and rattled off a list of past accomplishments and new initiatives, including the addition of 190 new police officers to help combat a troubling surge in violent crime.

"I will not allow violent offenders to terrorize neighborhoods and paralyze people with fear," Menino said, pointing out that the city has taken about 1,800 guns off city's streets in the last year, more than double the number in 2005.

As a symbol of Menino's commitment to what he described as the city's "spirit of community," his address was held at the aging Strand Theatre in Uphams Corner. In need of major renovations, the Strand, Menino explained, is about to receive a \$6 million investment from city and private funds. "We are going to save the Strand," Menino said.

"When we have captured that common commitment, we have done great things," Menino said. "We have created thousands of units of



Mayor Thomas M. Menino promised Tuesday in his State of the City address to save Dorchester's Strand Theatre and put 190 new cops on Boston's streets. (File photo)

housing. We have achieved great progress in our schools. We have improved public health. And we are leading the effort to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities."

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