



KENNETH J. RONK, JR.
MINORITY LEADER
ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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Carl Belfiglio

Mary Beth Maio, Minority Whip

Dean Fabiano

James F. Maloney

Richard A. Gerentine

Kevin A. Roberts

Herbert Litts, III

Mary Wawro

Craig V. Lopez

2015 Minority Address

Ulster County Legislature – Minority Leader Ken Ronk

Mr. Chairman, colleagues, and guests,

It is a great privilege to stand in front of you as the representative of such a diverse, well-meaning and hardworking caucus - men and women of distinction, and public servants of purpose. Normally I have begun these speeches with a recap of things that we have accomplished together, and then transition to a recitation of goals for the New Year. This year I chose to go in a different direction. As the public face of the caucus, much focus is put on who I am, and what I stand for, but there are nine other exceptional individuals that make up the Republican Caucus and I believe that they should be highlighted. This caucus is the best I have served in, both in knowledge and hard work. Their expertise and experience, and rich, diverse backgrounds enable us to make immeasurable contributions to this esteemed body on which we serve. I truly believe this great County we have the privilege of living in is better off due to their service.

Richard Gerentine – I don't think there is a single member of the Legislature that has the budget expertise, and ability to serve as Ways and Means Committee Chairman, as my friend Richard Gerentine. Richard has served for more than 23 Years on the Legislature, and is the longest serving, and there-again, the most experienced member of the caucus. Richard brings a unique historical perspective along with his, entrepreneur's experience to the Legislature and has been a staunch defender of small business and fiscal responsibility.

Dean Fabiano – Dean has been a longtime Public Works employee in Saugerties, bringing his first-hand knowledge and experience in that field to the Republican Caucus. Dean has been the Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the Legislature's Public Works and Capital Projects committee for 8 Years. When I have a question about roads or bridges, and I dare say when my learned colleagues on the other side have a question about the same, Dean is who we call on for sound advice and counsel.

Jim Maloney – Jim has been our caucus’s hardest working member on Economic Development. Jim has served on or Chaired most if not all of the Economic Development committees and boards. He is currently serving on the UCEDA and represents Ulster County as a member of the New York State Association of Counties Economic Development, Environmental & Rural Affairs Committee.

Kevin Roberts – Kevin has been one of my best friends, and most frequent cohorts on the Legislature. Kevin brings to the table his experience as a successful businessman in the roofing and construction field, as well as his RRA experience as a former chairman of the RRA Board of Directors, and has served with distinction as chairman and a member of the Laws and Rules Committee. Kevin’s Background in roofing and general construction has given him the tools to be a leader in the Building and Grounds arena as well.

Carl Belfiglio – Carl comes to the Legislature with a background in Information Technology. He currently works for the Ulster County BOCES Regional Information Center, doubling down on his public service. In addition to his IT experience, Carl has also been one of the most fervent members of our caucus on critical environmental issues.

Mary-Beth Maio – My partner in crime, and my second in command. Mary-Beth comes to the Legislature with a background in finance Banking. She always looks at the taxpayer dollars that are spent as if they were her own. She brings her knowledge of banking policy, and fiscal responsibility to everything she does here, and the Legislature is certainly better for it.

Mary Wawro – Mary, a successful small business owner herself, comes to the Legislature with the compassion, and hard work of someone who takes care of children for a living. Mary has respect and relationships on both sides of the aisle, and is the epitome of what a citizen legislator should strive for. Even when I don’t agree with her, her quiet and kind professionalism has earned my respect and the respect of many others in both caucuses.

Craig Lopez – My friend Craig Lopez brings with him both the insight and advocacy of those who struggle with disabilities to the Legislature. As a peer counselor at Helen Hays Center for Rehabilitation, Craig has seen firsthand the needs of the disabled community. As chairman of the Legislature's Health Committee, Craig has been trying to put a focus on the Americans with Disabilities Act, and I think we can all agree there is no one more suited to lead those discussions than Craig. In addition to the skills Craig brings, he has been a tireless advocate for our fire departments and first responders. Craig has served with me for 3 years on the Ulster County Fire Advisory Board, bringing the concerns and opinions of the Firematic community to the Legislature.

Herb Litts – Herb, is the newest member of the Republican Caucus, but has already made a name for himself as a knowledgeable, thoughtful, and energetic Legislator. Herb comes to the legislature with a strong background in engineering, and leadership from both his current position overseeing the construction of the Tappan-Zee Bridge, and his former position with the New York State DOT. Herb is willing to listen, but not afraid to speak his mind and offer reasonable solutions. His yearly involvement with polar plunge is further proof of his unwavering dedication to helping others. He has truly been an asset to the Caucus, and the Legislature as a whole.

As a caucus, we have formed a bond that I had only read about before working this this group of distinguished individuals. We don't fight with one another or bicker either in private or in public. We have disagreements, and we resolve them respectfully. I just want to say to the members of the Republican Caucus...Thank you for your service to your districts, for your service to Ulster County, for your confidence in me, and most importantly, the friendship for which I am eternally grateful.

The next thing I would like to focus on is what we stand for as a caucus. We have a diverse group of legislators, and with that comes a diverse group of viewpoints. Some might find this to be negative and daunting, as it would be best for the caucus to speak with one voice. I believe however, that having a diverse set of viewpoints helps us best represent the whole county. My mother always taught

me that the world would be a pretty boring place if everyone was alike. That holds true for the Republican Caucus as well. We all believe in fiscal conservatism and fiscal responsibility. Some of us are more concerned with environmental stewardship, and others are focused on the fiscal and business impacts. All of these priorities are taken in to consideration on every issue that comes before us. Respectful and thought provoking discussions like those enable us to build legislation that addresses priorities and handles contingencies. All in all though, my caucus members and I stand together trying to help protect Ulster County's unique beauty, environmentally, fiscally, and entrepreneurially.

In addition to a diversity of background, and a diversity of focus, we also have diversity of Geography. Looking at a map of our county, which is the geographic size of Rhode Island, the Republican Caucus represents the southern middle and northern areas. We have Mary, Dean, and Jim from the north; Mary Beth, Herb and Carl in the middle; and of course, the solid south with myself, Kevin, Craig, and Richard. On regional issues, the Republican Caucus is as representative of the entire County as is possible.

Finally, as a caucus we are committed to governing responsibly. We vow to band together with other like-minded legislators from the other side of the aisle and form a coalition of the reasonable in order to do good work for the people that we represent. We will vow never to push legislation through rashly or quickly, but when push comes to shove, we vow to stand our ground when good legislation is being held up by pettiness or petulance. But let me be clear, we will also stand as a 10 member wall against Legislation that is being offered would harm the county, our Legislative Body, or again, pettiness. We commit to bipartisanship through compromise, and commit to doing so without compromising our beliefs or our integrity. We believe in the Power of the legislature, we believe in the great people of Ulster County and we will stand united to defeat anyone who intends to harm either of them.

Thank you, and may God bless Ulster County, and our service here.