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Machine Politics and Urban Renewal in Providence, Rhode Island: The Era of Mayor Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., 1965-74

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**Machine Politics and Urban Renewal in Providence, Rhode Island: The Era of Mayor
Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., 1965-74**

by
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Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the
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Dedicated to my wife, Luisa, and my children, Natalie and Antonio

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INTRODUCTION

Joseph A. Doorley, Jr. was inaugurated as the mayor of the city of Providence on January 4, 1965. Doorley's career in Providence politics began in 1960 when he served as a member of the Providence Democratic City Committee. In 1962, he was elected as a Democrat to the Providence City Council. In 1964, at age thirty-four, he ran as the Democratic candidate for mayor of Providence and won. At that time, Doorley was both the youngest mayor in the history of the city of Providence as well as the youngest mayor of any major city in the United States.

When he ran again, in 1966, Doorley was re-elected to the mayor's office by the largest plurality in the history of Providence up to that date. The victory marked the first time a mayoral candidate in Providence won all thirteen of the city's wards. During Doorley's first term as mayor, the Rhode Island General Assembly voted to increase the mayoral term in Providence from two to four years. This change came into effect after the 1966 election. Doorley was re-elected to another four year term in 1970 and served as mayor until the end of 1974.

During the Doorley era, the Providence Democratic 'machine' led by Mayor Doorley and his Public Works Director, Lawrence P. "Larry" McGarry, was in firm control of city government. In addition to his city job, McGarry was also the chairman of the Providence Democratic City Committee and was in charge of dispensing jobs and political favors in exchange for votes for Democratic candidates for mayor and city council. One historian of the Rhode Island political scene described the politics of the Doorley era as "old style politics – the

politics of wakes and pushcarts” and as “a system conceived and born of power to the neglect of issues”.¹ The Doorley and McGarry partnership was one of the strongest political machines in the history of Providence politics. The famous split between these two political allies enabled the Republican candidate, Vincent A. “Buddy” Cianci, Jr., to win the 1974 election by the slim margin of 709 votes.

This dissertation will examine the Doorley era in Providence politics. The successes as well as the failures of his ten years as the city’s chief executive will be evaluated. The issues of city finances, urban renewal, fair housing, racial problems and school desegregation during his administration will also be analyzed. Doorley attempted to breathe new life into an old industrial city by using a combination of machine politics, President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “Great Society” legislation and the power he enjoyed as the head of the Democratic ‘machine’ in Providence. The Doorley machine assisted groups within the city that had high numbers of loyal Democrats by providing jobs and political favors. The African Americans of the Doorley era did not have much political power and at many times did not benefit from the machine because their group could not deliver many votes during an election.

My family lived in Providence during the Doorley era and benefited from the machine. My maternal grandfather, Nicholas Meola was a patrolman on the Providence Police Department during most of the Doorley era. He became a good friend of Larry McGarry and as a result my father, mother, other relatives and family friends benefited from the security of a city job. My mother was a secretary in city hall during the Doorley era and my father was a laborer for the

¹Richard Alan Gabriel, “Ethnic Attitudes and Political Behavior in City and Suburb: The Irish and Italians of Rhode Island” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1962), 58-59.

water supply board. As a child, I remember visiting Larry McGarry with my grandmother each St. Patrick's Day to bring him a gift and his friendship with our family lasted many years after the Doorley era. The reason that I choose to research the Doorley era is because I always remember hearing about Larry McGarry from my grandparents and was always told that city jobs were very valuable and that the way you received a city position in Providence was that you had to know someone with political connections. My grandparents never called the political system in Providence a machine but they knew how to use the machine to benefit themselves and our family.

CHAPTER 1

THE RISE OF THE DEMOCRATIC MACHINE IN PROVIDENCE

To fully understand why the Providence Democratic ‘machine’ maintained its power from 1936 until Joseph A. Doorley Jr.’s defeat in the Providence mayoral election of 1974, it is necessary to look first at the Republican Party’s domination of Rhode Island state politics from 1856 to 1935. Because Rhode Island cities were the creatures of the Republican controlled legislature, the Republican domination of state politics extended to city government.

The Rhode Island Republican Party was established in the spring of 1856. In that year, William Hoppin was elected as Rhode Island’s first Republican governor. Hoppin had already served as governor in 1855 as a member of the American or Know-Nothing Party. In addition to members of the Know-Nothing Party, the newly formed Republican Party consisted of anti-slavery Whigs, Free Soilers, and rural Democrats, many of whom were very conservative and believed in suffrage restrictions. These landed conservatives believed that limited suffrage was a key means of keeping order in a society that was experiencing a large influx of immigrants attracted by the industrial growth of the state. The newly formed Republican Party was able to dominate state politics for a very long period largely due to the political system put into place by Rhode Island’s 1843 state constitution.¹

¹Mary Nelson Tanner, “The Middle Years of the Anthony-Brayton Alliance,” *Rhode Island History*, vol. 22, no. 3 (July, 1963): 65- 66; Patrick T.Conley, *Rhode Island in Rhetoric and Reflection: Public Addresses and*

The state constitution kept the franchise limited by preventing naturalized citizens from voting if they did not own property worth one hundred and thirty four dollars. As a result many naturalized citizens could not vote because most tended to rent rather than own property. At this time, native-born citizens had the option to pay a poll tax of one dollar to vote if they did not own property worth one hundred and thirty four dollars. In addition, no citizen, either native-born or naturalized, could vote in town meetings that considered taxes unless they owned one hundred and thirty four dollars worth of property. In the cities, the above mentioned property requirement was needed to vote for both houses of the city council since the council was charged with setting the tax rates. At this time, the Providence city council was made up of two houses, a board of alderman and a common council. The Republican Party also had control of the state senate because of the “rotten-borough” system that was in place for the election of senators. Each of Rhode Island’s thirty-eight cities and towns was allowed to elect a senator regardless of the population of the city or town. The Republican power was concentrated in the towns with small populations, while the Democratic power was concentrated in the cities that had larger populations. This arrangement allowed Republican-dominated small towns to have more representation in the Rhode Island State Senate than Democratic-dominated cities with larger populations. The nativist Republicans used this political system to keep the rising immigrant population from achieving any significant political power.²

Essays (Providence: Rhode Island Publication Society, 2002), 452-454; for a detailed treatment of the Rhode Island Know-Nothing Party, see Michael A. Simoncelli, “Battling the Enemies of Liberty: The Rise and Fall of the Rhode Island Know-Nothing Party,” *Rhode Island History*, vol. 54, no. 1 (February, 1996), 3-19.

²Richard P. Ironfield, “The Constitutional Reform Movement in Rhode Island from 1895-1905,” (Ph.D dissertation, Providence College, 2002), 43-44; William G. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island A History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1986), 161; Chilton Williamson, “Rhode Island Suffrage Since the Dorr War,” *The New*

One of the early leaders in the Republican Party was Henry B. Anthony, the editor of the *Providence Journal* from 1838 to 1859 and governor from 1849 to 1851. A strong force in Rhode Island politics, Anthony was elected to the United States Senate in 1858. He served in the Senate from 1859 until his death in 1884. Anthony held that immigrants had no loyalty to the state and no knowledge of how politics worked in Rhode Island. He also believed that immigrants needed “an education under republican institutions before they can be qualified to participate in them”.³ In 1883, Anthony stated that the immigrants in Rhode Island,

. . . are useful citizens, indeed, indispensable to the development of industries and the production and to the prosecution of the enterprises of the State; they may be well entrusted with a portion of the political power, but they cannot safely be made the ruling class, as they would practically be or would soon become in Rhode Island, if admitted to an equality of suffrage.⁴

Democratic reformers held a different position on immigrant voting rights. In an 1879 pamphlet, *An Historical Statement of the Elective Franchise in Rhode Island*, lawyer Charles E. Gorman, the son of an Irish immigrant father and native-born mother, presented to the United States Senate the entire history of suffrage in Rhode Island. Gorman argued that naturalized citizens should have full voting rights because they contributed much to the Rhode Island economy. He asserted:

England Quarterly, vol. 28, no.1 (March, 1955): 36, 42-44; Tanner, “The Middle Years of the Anthony-Brayton Alliance,” 65- 66; Conley, *Rhode Island in Rhetoric and Reflection*, 452-454. For a detailed discussion of the city government of Providence at this time, see William Kirk, editor, *A Modern City Providence, Rhode Island and Its Activities* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1909), 139-177.

³Tanner, “The Middle Years,” 65; Ironfield, “The Constitutional Reform Movement in Rhode Island , 25-27, 30; Henry Anthony, “Limited Suffrage In Rhode Island,” *North American Review*, no. CCCXXIV (November, 1883): 417; Conley, *Rhode Island in Rhetoric*, 405.

⁴Anthony, “Limited Suffrage in Rhode Island,” 417.

A stranger visiting our little state, of which all her citizens are justly proud, for the first time, viewing her streams bordered with gigantic and princely edifices dedicated to manufacturing, and her hills ornamented by comfortable, peaceful and happy homes of the capitalist and laborer; being told that from 1840 to 1879, the period in which all this had been accomplished and the immense wealth of her citizens accumulated, that more than one-half of her population, during that period, has been of foreign birth or parentage, would not pass the judgment that such a population, or any part of it, should be compelled to occupy a different position in civil rights or privileges than any other citizen of this Republic.⁵

In the early 1880's, there was a call for a constitutional convention in order to give voting rights to naturalized citizens. Gorman was one of the leaders of the movement for suffrage reform. He was the first Irish Catholic admitted to the Rhode Island bar. A Democratic activist, he was also at various times a member of the state legislature, the city council in Providence and a U.S. Attorney. In response to a petition submitted by Gorman on behalf of thousands of disenfranchised voters, the United States Senate, in 1880, established the Wallace Commission to investigate voting rights in Rhode Island. The commission found that Rhode Island's government functioned more like an oligarchy than a democracy, but failed to recommend that the Senate take action against the state in regards to voting rights.⁶

During this period, the franchise was denied to a naturalized citizen, who was a former Rhode Island Congressman. Thomas Davis, a Protestant born in Dublin, Ireland, served as a Democrat in Congress from 1853-1855. Before serving in Congress, Davis was a member of the Rhode Island House of Representatives from 1845-1847 and 1848-1853, where he also was elected Speaker. Davis was a resident of Rhode Island since 1817 and was a partner in Sackett,

⁵Charles E. Gorman, *An Historical Statement of the Elective Franchise in Rhode Island* (Providence, RI: publisher unknown, 1879), 26.

⁶Conley, *Rhode Island in Rhetoric*, 176, 262-263; Ironfield, "The Constitutional Reform Movement in Rhode Island," 34, 42.

Davis and Company, a Providence based jewelry manufacturer. As a result of financial problems, the firm was forced to close down in 1880. The closing of his firm caused Davis to lose all his property and under the Rhode Island Constitution this meant that he also lost his right to vote. The fact that such a prominent citizen was denied the right to vote brought much attention to the injustices of the property qualification law and Davis worked hard in his fight to have this law repealed.⁷

From 1870 until his death in 1910, the Republican political boss in Rhode Island was General Charles Brayton. A former Civil War brigadier general, Brayton was appointed by Senator Anthony as a United States Pension Agent for Rhode Island from 1870-74 and as United States Postmaster for Providence from 1874-1880. A 1905 article by Lincoln Steffens stated that: "Brayton has great personal power; he organized the Republican Party; he systemized the corruption of voters; he chose legislators; he organized the general assembly and ran it; he has gradually altered the government of the state."⁸ At Brayton's urging, the Rhode Island State Legislature passed the Brayton Law in 1901. The Brayton Law made it possible for the Senate, which was controlled by Brayton, to substitute its own candidate if it did not approve of a governor's candidate for any state post and to appoint the heads of municipal departments in Providence. During this era, the governor did not have veto power. Brayton's law placed the control of the state's political patronage with the Republican dominated Senate.⁹

⁷Evelyn Savidge Sterne, *Ballots and Bibles: Ethnic Politics and the Catholic Church in Providence* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), 63-64,68; "Hon. Thos. Davis Dead," *Providence Journal*, July 27, 1895.

⁸Lincoln Steffens, "Rhode Island: A State for Sale," *McClure's Magazine*, vol. 24, no. 4 (February, 1905): 346; Conley, *Rhode Island in Rhetoric*, 407.

Brayton also helped the Rhode Island Republican Party keep enough money in its party treasury by acting as “counsel” to the New Haven and Hartford Railroad, the Rhode Island Company, the Providence Telephone Company, and other large Rhode Island corporations. These corporations sought favors from the Republican Party and paid money to the Republican leaders in order to secure these favors.¹⁰ The Republican Party also raised money by collecting sheriffs’ fees. Sheriffs’ fees were supposed to be kept by individual sheriffs. However, many sheriffs gave these fees to the Republican Party in order to secure political favors. Funds were also given to the Republican Party from fees paid to deputies for patrolling mills in times of unrest. Each High Sheriff would employ deputies and hire them out to mill owners. The sheriff would collect half of each deputy’s pay and would give most of the money to the Republican Party.¹¹

During Brayton’s tenure as Republican boss, the Democrats had limited success in securing political office. The Irish were the first immigrant group to have influence in the Rhode Island Democratic Party. By 1850, the Irish made up seventy percent of the foreign-born population in the state. Thomas Doyle, American born son of Irish Protestant parents, was first elected as mayor of Providence on the Democratic ticket in 1864. Doyle was in office from 1864-1869, 1870-1881 and 1884-1886. Irish Catholics, who had been mostly excluded from voting and holding office, began to become influential in the Democratic Party in the 1880’s.

⁹Duane Lockard, *New England State Politics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959), 175; William Joseph Jennings, Jr., “The Prince of Pawtucket: A Study of the Politics of Thomas P. McCoy” (Ph.D. dissertation, Providence College, 1985), 9-10.

¹⁰Lockard, *New England State Politics*, 176.

¹¹Jennings, “The Prince of Pawtucket,” 11.

Irish-Catholic Attorney, Edwin Daniel McGuinness was elected Secretary of State in 1887. McGuinness, a Democrat, was the first Irish-Catholic statewide office holder and the first Irish-Catholic to run for mayor of the City of Providence in 1893. A nativist group, the United Order of Deputies, campaigned for his Republican opponent, Richard Olney, and McGuinness was defeated by 846 votes. He ran for mayor again in 1894 and lost again to Olney by only 382 votes. McGuinness was eventually elected mayor in the 1895 election. He was supported by a group of reformers, from both the Democratic and Republican parties, that advocated what they called good government. McGuinness was an honest public servant and an advocate for the good government movement. Many nativist groups feared that his election was evidence that the Catholic Church wanted to take over the city government. Matthew Harkins, the Catholic Bishop of Providence, even went so far as to decline an invitation to say a prayer at the inauguration of McGuinness because he did not want to contribute to nativist fears. When McGuinness decided to run for re-election in 1896, Boss Brayton had the General Assembly change the date of the election so that it would be the same date as the state and federal elections. As a result of the elections being held on the same day, Brayton hoped that most voters would vote straight Republican and that McGuinness would be defeated. Brayton's strategy did not work and McGuinness was re-elected by over 9,000 votes. McGuinness retired from politics in 1898 because he suffered a nervous breakdown.¹² Richard Ironfield states that the election of

¹²Maureen Moakley and Elmer Cornwell, *Rhode Island Politics and Government* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 28; Sterne, 76, 83; Conley, *Rhode Island in Rhetoric*, 263, 462; Ironfield, "The Constitutional Reform Movement in Rhode Island," 77-89; Stefano Luconi, *The Italian-American Vote in Providence, Rhode Island, 1916-1948* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson, Press, 2004), 34; *Proceedings of the Louisville Conference for Good City Government and of the Third Annual National Municipal League Held May 5, 6, and 7 1897* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League), 162.

McGuinness is important to the constitutional history of Rhode Island because “it marks the start of a new spirit of contemporary political reform in Rhode Island” and because it “meant that the political machine could be defeated.”¹³

Continued Democratic calls for expanding the franchise helped elect Democrat John Davis governor in 1887 and gave the Democrats a majority in the House of Representatives. The Republicans realized that the results of the election indicated that the people desired suffrage reform. In response to the calls for suffrage reform, the Bourn Amendment was adopted on April 4, 1888. Augustus O. Bourn, a Republican state senator, wealthy rubber manufacturer and former governor of Rhode Island, was the principal architect of this constitutional amendment. The Bourn amendment eliminated the property qualification rule for naturalized citizens to vote at the state level, but kept the property qualification in place for citizens who wanted to vote in town meetings which considered taxes and in city council elections. This amendment was ratified by a vote of 19,462 to 12,590.¹⁴

The passage of the Bourn Amendment made the Republicans appear as reformers. The party supported reform because they realized that, in order to keep those who had called for political change satisfied, the time had come for compromise. The Republican leaders also realized that suffrage restrictions alone would not keep the growing native-born Irish population

¹³Ironfield, “The Constitutional Reform Movement in Rhode Island,” 83.

¹⁴Ibid., 43-44; William G. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island A History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1986), 161; Chilton Williamson, “Rhode Island Suffrage Since the Dorr War,” *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 28, no.1 (March, 1955), 36, 42-44.

out of political power much longer.¹⁵ Patrick Conley explains what he calls the Republican “change of heart”,

They simply looked at the results of the most recent Rhode Island state decennial census of 1885. It revealed that Rhode Island then had a population of 304,000, of which 125,000, or 41 percent, were of Irish stock. The real estate requirement for naturalized citizens was then much less effective as a weapon against the rising political influence of the state’s Irish citizens. But it was effective as a weapon against newly arriving French Canadians, Germans, Swedes and English from both Canada and the British Isles. The Republicans felt quite correctly, that these ethnocultural groups could become political allies if they were given the vote immediately upon naturalization, without the necessity of owning real estate. Herein lies the reason for Republican acquiescence in the Bourn Amendment of 1888.¹⁶

The Bourn Amendment was significant during this era because state statutes provided for strong city councils and weak mayors. The passage of this amendment caused many Rhode Island cities to elect Democratic mayors and Republican city councils. In the years 1896 to 1906, the average vote for Providence mayor was 20,435, but the average vote for alderman (the upper house of the city council) was 8,163. The above statistic illustrates that almost sixty percent of Providence voters, who could vote for mayor, could not vote in elections for members of the city council. Until 1930, the bicameral city council dominated by the Republicans was the governing force in the city and controlled all the patronage. The Republican-dominated council made all the decisions about taxes and city expenditures, and it appointed all the heads of city departments. Due to the Bourn Amendment, Providence was kept under Republican control until 1930.¹⁷

¹⁵Ironfield, 44; Conley, *Rhode Island in Rhetoric*, 177.

¹⁶Ibid., 177.

At the start of the twentieth century, the Republican Party was largely made up of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants of all social classes, who were a minority in the Rhode Island population. Some white Anglo-Saxon Protestants were also members of the Democratic Party, but the party members were mostly Irish Catholic immigrants or their offspring who were factory workers, small businessmen and professionals. From the beginning of Republican rule, party leaders worked hard to maintain their control and to keep the new immigrants from obtaining any political power. The native-born Protestant Republicans were afraid that political power might fall in the hands of the Catholic immigrants who were already organizing themselves into labor unions and creating urban political machines in other cities. The “native” Republicans did not want the rising Catholic immigrant population to gain political power. They felt that citizens should be property owners with an interest in their communities in order to have full voting rights. The Republicans also feared that if the Catholic immigrant population had full voting rights that they would use them to vote on issues that would benefit Catholic churches and schools. These local fears mirrored fears that were evident throughout the United States. By what one historian calls “manipulation of the electoral process”, the Republican leaders were able to hold on to their power and keep political power in Rhode Island in the hands of a small number of native business men and residents from the rural parts of the state.¹⁸ To weaken the power of the rising Irish Democrats, the Republicans used political patronage to lure the more recent Italian and French-Canadian immigrants into the Republican Party. The Republicans

¹⁷Jennings, “The Prince of Pawtucket,” 8; Murray S., Jr., and Susan W. Stedman, “The Rise of the Democratic Party in Rhode Island,” *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 24, no.3 (September 1951): 339.

¹⁸Moakley and Cornwell, *Rhode Island Politics and Government*, 26, 71; McLoughlin, *Rhode Island a History*, 149; Sterne, *Ballots and Bibles*, 68.

promised a “full dinner pail,” jobs, and political offices to French Canadians and Italians in exchange for votes.¹⁹

The beginning of the twentieth century also saw the naturalized children of immigrants starting to experience the above-mentioned voting restrictions for the first time. Many felt that the restrictions were infringements on their rights as citizens. Members of immigrant groups from different cultures banded together to protest these voting restrictions. Evelyn Sterne has discovered that about sixty repeal bills, designed to abolish the property qualification, were introduced in the General Assembly between 1888 and 1928. Democrats sponsored most of these repeal bills, but the Republicans in power did not act upon them. Many immigrants joined the Democratic Party because it offered them a chance to fight for equal voting rights.²⁰

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Democrats enjoyed one statewide political triumph in the election of Irish-Catholic, James H. Higgins, as governor in 1906. Higgins, called the “Boy Governor” because he was thirty years old at the time of his election, campaigned on the issue of political bossism and targeted the political machine run by Boss Brayton. At this time, many Republicans as well as Democrats were critical of the control that Brayton exerted over the workings of state government in Rhode Island and the corruption that went with it. During his tenure as governor, Higgins followed through on a campaign promise to drive “the blind boss,” Brayton, from his unofficial office in the State House. Higgins was also very vocal

¹⁹Debra Mulligan, “J. Howard McGrath as Democratic State Chairman, 1930-1934: The Irish/Italian Question” (unpublished manuscript, 2005), 10.

²⁰Lockard, *New England State Politics*, 190; Sterne, *Ballots and Bibles*, 97-100; John D. Bunker, “The Politics of Resistance: The Rural-Based Yankee Republican Machines of Connecticut and Rhode Island,” *New York Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 2 (June 1974), 223.

in his dissatisfaction with the property qualification law and was reelected in 1907. The Republicans took back the governorship when Higgins decided not to run for a third term in 1908. To regain the office of governor, the Republicans ran a French-Canadian Catholic, Aram Pothier. Pothier served six terms as governor between 1909 and 1928 although they were not all consecutive.²¹

During the early 1920's, Democrats realized that the present system of state government was firmly controlled by the Republican Party. They had offered them little hope of having a share in the political power in the state. Many Democrats desired reform but some party members were stronger in their convictions than others. This group of reform minded Democrats, which Chilton Williamson has called "insurgents", was mostly composed of second-generation immigrants. The leaders of this group were an Irish American, William S. Flynn, a Providence lawyer and graduate of Georgetown University, and a French Canadian, Felix Toupin. One of the major goals of the reform group was to abolish the property qualification for voting in city council elections. Many poorer city residents were not being served well by city governments, which were not providing adequate public improvements, recreational facilities and police protection. These residents could not do anything about these conditions because they could not vote in city council elections. They were allowed to vote in mayoral elections, as mentioned above, but city charters of the period gave little power to mayors. At this time, the two houses of the city council had all of the political power. Professor J. Q. Dealey, of Brown

²¹Charles Carroll, "Six Decades in These Plantations," *Rhode Island History*, vol. 59, no. 2 (May 2001), 48; Erwin L. Levine, *Theodore Francis Green: The Rhode Island Years, 1906-1936* (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1963), 6, 11; Charles Carroll, *Rhode Island Three Centuries of Democracy* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1932), 676-679.

University, was very much against the property qualification and an outspoken advocate for reform. He stated, “from fifty to sixty percent of our urban population have no voice in the election of their city councils a situation almost unique in the civilized world.” Reform moved slowly at this time because many members of the Republican Party were in no hurry to give greater voting to the poor immigrants that resided in the cities of Rhode Island.²² In May of 1921, Democratic Senator Lucius F.L. Garvin of Cumberland asked the Senate to consider including the question of holding a constitutional convention on the ballot. The primary reason that Democrats desired a constitutional convention was to redistrict the state in order to eliminate the rotten boroughs that kept the Republicans in power. Republicans, who made up the majority in the Senate, never acted on this request.²³

During the 1922 campaign, the Democrats included in their state platform a provision to drop the property qualification. The Republican platform did not mention this issue and as long as they were in power the property qualification seemed destined to continue for many years to come. The Democrats were in an uphill battle because the Republicans, controlled both the Senate and also controlled the legislature. The process of amending the constitution in Rhode Island, required that an amendment be passed by two sessions of the legislature and ratified by three-fifths of the electorate.²⁴

²²James Q. Dealey, *Political Situations in Rhode Island and Suggested Constitutional Changes* (Providence: Oxford Press, 1928), 8; Levine, *Theodore Francis Green: The Rhode Island Years, 1906-1936*, 93; Chilton Williamson, “Rhode Island Suffrage Since the Dorr War,” *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 28 no. 1 (March, 1955): 45-46; Matthew J. Smith, “The Real McCoy in the Bloodless Revolution of 1935,” *Rhode Island History*, vol. 32, no.3 (August 1973): 70.

²³Levine, *Theodore Francis Green: The Rhode Island Years, 1906-1936*, 93.

²⁴Williamson, “Rhode Island Suffrage Since the Dorr War,” 46; Smith, “The Real McCoy,” 71.

In the 1922 election, in a reversal of fortunes, Democrat William Flynn was elected governor and Democrat Felix Toupin was elected lieutenant governor. Many French Canadians voted Democratic because the previous governor, Emery San Souci, had used the state militia to break up strikes at textile mills where many of them were employed. After the elections, the Republicans still held the majority in the state Senate but the Senate was now presided over by Lieutenant Governor Toupin, which began an interesting chapter in Rhode Island politics.²⁵

Early in 1923, the Democrats used the filibuster to get proposals such as the calling of a constitutional convention, abolishing the property qualification and the redistricting of the state to the floor of the Senate. The filibusters held up the business of the Senate and forced the Democratic reform proposals to be formally rejected by the Republicans, instead of never being acted upon. The Democrats took the idea of the filibuster to an extreme. What has been called the “famous filibuster session of 1924,” lasted from January 1924 until June 19, 1924. The session finally ended when a bromine gas bomb forced the Senate chamber to be evacuated on June 19, 1924. The Republican Senators left the state, so that, without a quorum, the Senate could not conduct business. During the filibuster and absence of the Republican Senators, state business could not be conducted and the state was almost forced to shut down. Many Rhode Islanders felt that the Democrats went too far with the filibuster and Republicans campaigned on this issue. As a result, Republican Aram Pothier, who had been brought out of retirement to run against Flynn, was elected as governor in November 1924.²⁶

²⁵Ibid.; Levine, *Theodore Francis Green: The Rhode Island Years, 1906-1939*, 93-94.

²⁶Levine, *Theodore Francis Green: The Rhode Island Years, 1906-1936*, 94-97; Smith, “The Real McCoy,” 71; For a more detailed treatment of the “famous filibuster session of 1924,” see David Patten, *Rhode Island Story*, (Providence, Rhode Island: The Providence Journal Company, 1954), 83-119.

Both the Republicans and Democrats included the abolition of the property qualification in their platforms during the 1924 campaign. The Republicans, fearing the loss of power, were more willing to listen to the concerns of the reformers. In his January 1925 inaugural address, Governor Pothier mentioned a need for reform and for an amendment that would abolish the property qualification. The Senate voted to pass this amendment for the first time in 1925. The second passage was voted on in 1927. The amendment to abolish the property qualification was placed on the ballot in November 1928.²⁷

The twentieth amendment to the Rhode Island State Constitution was adopted on November 6, 1928 by a vote of 62,263 to 20,107.²⁸ Democratic Representative Thomas P. McCoy of Pawtucket fought for the passage of this amendment. McCoy knew that the key to the Democrats gaining statewide power was to give the urban electorate the right to vote in city council elections in their cities. As minority floor leader, McCoy fought hard to have this amendment passed in the legislature and campaigned throughout the state for its passage once it was put on the ballot.²⁹ The twentieth amendment dropped property ownership as a requirement for Rhode Island citizens to be able to vote in city council elections. This legislation finally enabled urban-based Democrats to share political power and to build powerful organizations.³⁰

²⁷Williamson, "Rhode Island Suffrage Since the Dorr War," 49; Jeff Shinn, "The Rhode Island Suffrage Conflict: The Property Qualification 1920-1928" (unpublished paper, Brown University, 1972), 10; Smith, "The Real McCoy," 71-72.

²⁸Shinn, "The Rhode Island Suffrage Conflict," 11.

²⁹Smith, "The Real McCoy," 71-72.

³⁰Gabriel, "Ethnic Attitudes and Political Behavior in City and Suburb: The Irish and Italians of Rhode Island," 42.

An editorial that appeared in the *Providence Journal* the day after the twentieth amendment was adopted noted:

At the beginning of American government voting was restricted to those who possessed property of some sort or were taxpayers. The rule stood for some time in the thirteen original States. As new states were admitted to the Union a different conception of franchise rights prevailed and the ballot was granted to all white males twenty-one years of age. Gradually the original States began to remove the property qualification. In 1828 there were twenty-four States in the Union and in only one did the old system still prevail. It was not until 1888 that Rhode Island fell into line with the other states in extending to all male citizens the right to vote for civil officers, and now, forty years later, and one hundred years after the election of Andrew Jackson, there has come before the people in this State for approval a constitutional amendment providing for further lightening of the property qualification restrictions. There could be no better way for this State to mark the beginning of the second century of the existing system of popular government than by its adoption.³¹

Political Scientist Duane Lockard calls the year 1932 the “dividing line between the old and new regimes in Rhode Island politics”.³² In that year, Democrat Theodore Francis Green was elected governor. At the same time, Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected President of the United States. Governor Green, a close friend of Roosevelt, supported Roosevelt’s nomination at the 1932 Democratic Party Convention when most of the Rhode Island delegation backed Alfred Smith. Because of their friendship and similar political views, Roosevelt picked Green to distribute New Deal federal relief funds and patronage to Rhode Island citizens. Roosevelt also chose to channel these funds through Green because there were no Democratic senators from Rhode Island at this time.³³

³¹ “A People’s Centenary,” *Providence Journal*, November 7, 1928.

³² Lockard, *New England State Politics*, 173.

Green was able to control the political patronage in Rhode Island because he had control of these federal funds. He used this patronage to build an urban-based Democratic state “machine”. The Federal funds and programs were used to help many poor residents of Rhode Island. Many of the poor were members of the Irish, French-Canadian and Italian urban-based ethnic groups. Because of the aid they received from a Democratic administration, particularly in the form of mortgage relief, many of them became life-long supporters of the Democratic Party. The federal relief and service programs which were part of Roosevelt’s New Deal drew more citizens to the Rhode Island Democratic Party and contributed to the growth of the urban-based Democratic state machine in Rhode Island.³⁴ Green’s next step was to win control of the Rhode Island State Legislature and he did this by starting the famous “bloodless revolution” of 1935.³⁵

Green’s “bloodless revolution” occurred during his second term as governor. During his first term as governor, the Republicans had controlled both houses of the legislature. In 1934, when Green was re-elected, the Democrats gained a majority in the House of Representatives, but the Senate was still in the hands of the Republicans. On January 1, 1935, the Democratic lieutenant governor, Robert E. Quinn, swore in all but two of the new members of the Senate. He refused to swear in newly elected Republican senators, B. Earl Anthony from Portsmouth and Wallace Campbell from South Kingston because their elections were close contests and there

³³McLoughlin, *Rhode Island A History*, 201; Levine, *Theodore Francis Green: The Rhode Island Years 1906-1936*, 171.

³⁴Gabriel, “Ethnic Attitudes and Political Behavior in City and Suburb,” 43-45. For a more detailed account see Levine, *Theodore Francis Green: The Rhode Island Years, 1906-1936*, 145-172.

³⁵McLoughlin, *Rhode Island A History*, 201.

had been protests regarding their elections. Without these two Republicans, the Senate consisted of twenty Democrats and twenty Republicans. Lieutenant governor Quinn held the tie-breaking vote and he formed a committee to review the ballots cast for these two Republican senators. The committee had a Democratic majority and found that the Democratic candidates, Joseph P. Dunn of Portsmouth and Charles A. White, Sr. of South Kingston, had actually won the elections. The new Democratic senators were sworn in and this gave Green and the Democrats the majority needed to reorganize the structure of Rhode Island state government in a way that would benefit the Democrats.³⁶

Matthew Smith argues that the “bloodless revolution” began “a new era in Rhode Island Politics”. Smith writes that, for the first time in the twentieth century the “urban ethnic electorate”, which consisted of over eighty percent of the population of Rhode Island, had “a voice in governmental affairs”. The Democrats replaced the rural based Republican “machine” with an urban-based “machine” that enabled a small group of Democrats to control politics in the state of Rhode Island. In order to wrestle control of Providence politics from the Republicans, the Democratic politicians in the city built a political machine beginning in 1936. It is important to note that the start of the machine in Providence occurred in an era marked by the decline of political machines in many other American cities.³⁷

³⁶Gabriel, “Ethnic Attitudes and Political Behavior in City and Suburb,” 43; Lockard, *New England State Politics*, 192; Levine, *Theodore Francis Green: The Rhode Island Years, 1906-1936*, 179-183.

³⁷ Matthew J. Smith, “Rhode Island Politics 1956-1964: Party Realignment,” *Rhode Island History*, vol. 35, no. 2 (May 1976): 49-50; For a detailed discussion on political machines in the United States, see Thomas P. Clifford, *The Political Machine an American Institution* (New York: Vantage Press, 1975) and Lee S. Greene, ed., *City Bosses and Political Machines* (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1964).

In 1940, Providence Democrats were able to receive from the now friendly state legislature a revised Home Rule Charter. Under this revised charter they were able to elect a mayor who was able to govern with substantial authority. The revised charter was drafted as a result of the work of the Charter Revision Commission, made up of eleven members and formed in 1939. Six members were chosen by the Republican and Democratic city committees. It is interesting to note that one of the members chosen by the Democrats, Dennis J. Roberts, would be the first Providence mayor to serve under the new charter. The revised charter expanded the mayor's power to appoint city officials, the power of the item veto, made the two chamber form of the city council into a single chamber and changed the structure of city government into what is called a strong mayor – weak council form. Under the new charter, the mayor was given the power to name the heads of most of the city departments, more supervisory and fiscal powers which enabled him to govern the city as a strong-mayor.³⁸

In 1940, Dennis J. Roberts, the then Democrat State Party chairman, was nominated for mayor. Roberts, an Irish Catholic, had been elected a state senator from Providence in 1934 and was a natural leader. He was the leader of what Matthew Smith calls the “New Deal Democratic ethnic coalition”.³⁹ Roberts ran against the Republican incumbent, John Collins, another Irish Catholic and was victorious. Smith has described Roberts as an “able and progressive administrator and an adept political leader”.⁴⁰

³⁸Edward Francis Cooke, “Survey of the Providence City Government” (unpublished M.A. thesis, Brown University, 1978), 81, 89-90, 95; The Providence Charter Revision Commission, *Proposed Charter for The City of Providence* (Providence, Rhode Island: The Oxford Press, 1939), 5.

³⁹Smith, “Rhode Island Politics 1956-1964,” 52.

⁴⁰Ibid.

During his ten year tenure as mayor Roberts was a strong leader for the city of Providence and also became Providence's first Democratic Party "boss". He used the strong mayor charter to revamp the entire government of the city of Providence and gave key positions in his administration to his most loyal Democratic friends. Patronage, political rewards, and favors were used to attract loyal Democrats to his political machine. This political organization was called at the time "the most tightly disciplined political organization in the state."⁴¹

When Roberts was elected governor in 1950, he handpicked Walter Reynolds to be the next mayor of Providence. Reynolds had worked in the Roberts' administration as an administrator in the finance department and rose to the position of finance director. Roberts and Reynolds had a mutual personal and professional regard for one another. When Roberts was looking for a successor, he bypassed many veteran Democratic politicians and chose Reynolds, even though Reynolds had no political experience and had never run for or held elective office.⁴²

During Reynolds' tenure as mayor, Roberts continued to control the city machine.⁴³ Reynolds was not a very effective politician nor was he a strong political "boss". He tried to run Providence in the same way as Roberts had, but he did not have the same control over the city's Democratic organization. Reynolds had a reputation for managing the city in a cautious and efficient way. He also rarely made decisions without listening to advice from those who worked with him in his administration. Joseph A. Doorley, Jr. remembers Reynolds as more of a

⁴¹Edward J. Milne, "Mayor Roberts' Record," *Providence Journal*, September 29, 1946.

⁴²James J. Doyle, "The Word From Reynolds Ends a Political Era," *Providence Sunday Journal*, February 23, 1964; Gabriel, "Ethnic Attitudes and Political Behavior in City and Suburb," 54.

⁴³Gabriel, "Ethnic Attitudes and Political Behavior in City and Suburb," 54

“caretaker” than a strong politician. An article in the *Evening Bulletin* that appeared on February 21, 1964 described Reynolds as “a man more interested in professional competence in municipal affairs than political aptitude.”⁴⁴

During the Reynolds years, many improvements were made to city government and many urban development projects were initiated. The urban development movement in Providence was begun by Mayor Roberts in 1947 and continued during the Reynolds’ administration. During the Reynolds years the Fox Point Hurricane Barrier, the Westminster Mall, the Majestic Parking Garage and the Dexter Manor were all completed. Other projects started during his term in office were the Willard Center, the West River development and the Huntington Industrial Park. The redevelopment projects during the Reynolds years gained Providence nation-wide attention. Reynolds was also responsible for replacing the three-man bureau of police and fire with one public safety commissioner, establishment of the position of personnel director and the introduction of a cost accounting system in the department of public works. In addition, his administration reorganized the police and fire departments; established a reclassification plan for city workers; and adopted the minimum standards housing code and an air pollution control ordinance in Providence. Another improvement initiated by the Reynolds administration was a multi-million dollar program of street and highway improvements.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Jack Thompson, “New Man Takes on an Old City,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, January 3, 1965; Stuart O. Hale, “Reynolds Looks Back; Cites 13-Yr. Progress,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 21, 1964; Mr. Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., interview by author, Wakefield, Rhode Island, July 16, 2001; Doyle, “The Word From Reynolds Ends a Political Era.”

⁴⁵“Not to ask 8th Term Because of his Health,” *Providence Journal*, February 21, 1964; “Reynolds Disputes Doorley’s Claims,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 27, 1967.

In the early 1960's, several anti-Reynolds groups began to appear within the Providence Democratic Party. Many younger Democrats wished to run for mayor and realized that Reynolds did not have aspirations for higher office and would be in city hall for many years.⁴⁶ At that time, many Democrats felt that it was time for a change and that Reynolds had lost touch with the workingman. Reynolds also angered members of his party by focusing on downtown businessmen rather than helping longtime Democratic supporters to obtain political favors. Democratic job seekers wanted to see some new blood in city hall because Dennis Roberts had hired most of the employees who were working in the Reynolds' administration. In addition, some voters were unhappy because Reynolds had the city's property assessments revaluated.⁴⁷

The anti-Reynolds group headed by Joseph A. Doorley, Jr. and Larry McGarry, gained control of the Providence Democratic party in 1964. Doorley believed that Reynolds' organization failed to recognize the political strength of the younger members of the Democratic Party and that many younger members of the party were denied the opportunity to run for office. At the time, he encouraged all young Democrats of Rhode Island to "cooperate with the local party committees", but, if they were "unjustifiably rebuffed, to go forward with the fight for stature."⁴⁸ Doorley followed his own advice and started to build up his own organization to fight for control of the Democratic organization in Providence.

⁴⁶Doyle, "The Word from Reynolds Ends a Political Era."

⁴⁷James T. Kaull and James F. Laffan, "City Hall Power Struggle – No.2," *Evening Bulletin*, August 29, 1962; Mike Stanton, *The Prince of Providence* (New York: Random House, 2003), 37.

⁴⁸Press Release, Councilman Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., March 20, 1963, Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., Collection, Providence College Archives, Providence Rhode Island, hereafter cited as PC Archives.

The argument can be made that the Roberts-Reynolds machine was toppled from within and that the rise of Joseph A. Doorley, Jr. hardly signaled the beginning of an era of reform. Doorley was a machine politician who had learned how to run a tight organization from his work as an aide to Governor Roberts. The organization created by Doorley was a more tightly controlled version of the machine created by Roberts and maintained by Reynolds. With McGarry at his side, Doorley controlled Providence politics from 1965 until 1974, when each chose to follow a different political path.

CHAPTER 2

THE EDUCATION OF A MAYOR

Joseph Aloysius Doorley, Jr., was born in Providence, Rhode Island, on October 12, 1930.¹ The son of Joseph A. Doorley, Sr., and Nora Cannon Doorley, he grew up in the Mount Pleasant section of Providence. In 1935, citizens of Irish ancestry made up 38.1 percent of the neighborhood, those of English ancestry 31 percent, and those of Italian ancestry 23.8 percent. The Mount Pleasant neighborhood, considered one of the city's better sections, was working class. The Doorleys lived on a block of three-story tenements.² Doorley later commented that he "wasn't born on the wrong side of the tracks" but that he "wasn't born with a silver spoon in his mouth, either."³ Although the Depression was financially challenging for many families, Doorley's father was fortunate to have constant employment as a Providence city fireman during these years.⁴ The Roman Catholic religion was an important part of the Doorley family life. The Doorley family attended the Blessed Sacrament Church. In addition to being a member of the boys' choir, young Joseph attended the parish school, participated in many parish activities

¹Biographical Fact Sheet of Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., PC Archives.

²L. A. Lehan, "The Mayor and the Establishment," *Providence Journal*, March 31, 1968.

³Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Meg Zwiers, January 29, 1969, PC Archives.

⁴Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001.

and became part of a strong close-knit parish community. His participation in the life of the parish instilled in him the importance of strong Catholic values.⁵

In March of 1936, Doorley's mother passed away and left her husband with six-year-old Joseph and three younger children. Because of the Depression and the loss of his wife, the 1930's were difficult times for Joseph A. Doorley, Sr. and his children. During this time, the Doorley children received help and guidance from their paternal grandmother, Bridget, and her unmarried daughters, Louise and Ann. Doorley's paternal grandparents, Patrick and Bridget Doorley, had immigrated to Providence at the beginning of the twentieth century from near Strokestown, County Roscommon, Ireland.⁶ Bridget Doorley developed a close relationship with her grandson, Joseph. A strong advocate of education, she used her influence with her son, to make sure that young Joseph was sent to Blessed Sacrament School. She taught her grandson the alphabet before he entered the first grade and kept track of the boy's educational path. Bridget Doorley's daughter, Louise, acted like a surrogate mother to the Doorley children. Doorley, Sr. had a rigorous work schedule as a fireman and had little time to spend with his children.⁷ In 1940, Joseph A. Doorley, Sr. re-married. His new wife was Clare Risk of Central Falls, Rhode Island, the sister of the former Rhode Island Republican Congressman, Charles Risk.⁸ This marriage resulted in the births of two more Doorley children, Jeannine and James.⁹

⁵Ibid.

⁶Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Mary Rita Doorley, September 30, 1974, PC Archives.

⁷Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001.

⁸Ibid., Congressman Charles Risk died on December 26, 1943. Risk passed away years before Doorley ran for elected office, and the Risk family offered no help to Doorley in his political career.

After Blessed Sacrament School, young Joseph attended LaSalle Academy in Providence from which he graduated in 1949.¹⁰ In a later interview, Doorley commented that he was a better student in grammar school than he was in high school. During his high school career, Doorley took several part-time jobs to earn spending money, and therefore he was not involved with many extra-curricular activities.¹¹ An ambitious teenager, Doorley at sixteen years old was running errands for Purity Market, working for the Thom McAn's shoe store in downtown Providence, and for his uncle, James H. Doorley, in the Fanning and Doorley Construction Company.¹²

The Doorley family, in the person of two of Joseph's uncles, was active in the political life of the city of Providence.¹³ His uncle, James H. Doorley, was involved on the state level in the Democratic Party. He was vice president and general manager of the Narragansett Racing Association, which ran Narragansett Race Track, and was an officer of the Fanning and Doorley Construction Company, which at the time was one of Rhode Island's largest contractors. "Big Jim", as James H. Doorley was known, was a large contributor to the Rhode Island Democratic Party and friend of former Rhode Island Governor Robert Quinn.¹⁴

⁹L. A. Lehan, "The Mayor and the Establishment"; Mrs. Jeannine Doorley Vignali, e-mail interview by author, February 13, 2008.

¹⁰Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Meg Zwiers, January 29, 1969, PC Archives.

¹¹Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001.

¹²L. A. Lehan, "The Mayor and the Establishment."

¹³Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001.

¹⁴"James H. Doorley Dead; RI Sportsman and Builder," *Woonsocket Call*, April 11, 1966, 12; Doorley, Interview. For information concerning James H. Doorley's connections with the Narragansett Race Track, see Zechariah Chafee, *State House Versus Pent House - Dorr Pamphlet No. 1* (Providence, Rhode Island: The Booke Shop, 1937), 27-31.

Doorley's uncle, John F. Doorley, was the owner of Doorley's Tap, which was located at the corner of Fountain and Union streets in Downtown Providence. John Doorley operated the bar for thirty-three years. The bar was called the "longest bar in town" and crowds of up to three hundred people were said to have been served there during the World War II era.¹⁵

The Doorley family made many political connections through John F. Doorley's popular downtown establishment and because of the successful business career of James H. Doorley.¹⁶ Doorley, later stated, "My family was always very much involved in the life of Providence, not in any official capacity, but active on the fringes of political life and politically oriented in outlook. Looking back, the city was the center of the stage for me and represented where the action was. I guess even as a youngster my ambition was to be mayor of the city."¹⁷ Doorley's future wife, Claire Walsh, recalled that when he was "15 or 16" Doorley told her "casually that he had decided to be mayor some day."¹⁸

After graduating from LaSalle Academy, Doorley attended Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana. James H. Doorley encouraged his nephew to go to Notre Dame University and he paid Doorley's entire tuition. After his freshman year, Doorley arranged his schedule so that he was able to attend all of his classes in the morning. He told the administration at Notre Dame that he needed to work in order to pay for his tuition, which was not the case. Doorley admits that, since his uncle paid for his tuition, the only reason that he worked was to have

¹⁵John Hanlon, "Doorley's - In Memoriam," *Evening Bulletin*, March 28, 1966, 1.

¹⁶Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001.

¹⁷Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Meg Zwiers, January 29, 1969, PC Archives.

¹⁸James Rhea, "Victory No Surprise to City's First Lady," *Evening Bulletin*, January 4, 1965.

spending money. While he was a student at Notre Dame, Doorley worked forty hours a week at Drewey's Limited Brewery in South Bend, Indiana. In his senior year, he worked full time on the assembly line of the Studebaker Corporation. During each summer vacation, Doorley worked for his uncle's construction company, Fanning and Doorley Construction Company.¹⁹

Doorley majored in political science. While at Notre Dame, Doorley was involved in a student organization called the Political Science Academy. He also served as a student manager, and was on the dean's list.²⁰ As a member of the Student Manager's Association, Doorley helped take care of athletic equipment for the football team and assisted the football players on trips.²¹

He lived in Fisher Hall on the Notre Dame Campus for his first three years and moved off campus for his senior year. It was at college that Doorley was first elected to office, becoming the first president of the Off Campus Club in 1953.²² Doorley remembers that he moved off campus because he was working until midnight at the Studebaker Corporation and all dorm residents had a midnight curfew.²³ Doorley graduated Cum Laude from Notre Dame in 1953 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science.²⁴

¹⁹Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001.

²⁰*The Dome* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1953).

²¹ Email correspondence with Notre Dame University, April 15, 2013.

²² Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Meg Zwiers, January 29, 1969, PC Archives.

²³Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001.

²⁴Biographical Fact Sheet of Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., PC Archives; "Notre Dame Class of 1953 Commencement Program," *Notre Dame University*, June 7, 1953.

Shortly after graduation, on June 13, 1953, Doorley married Claire Walsh, who was also from Providence.²⁵ His sister, Dorothy, was responsible for arranging a date between Joseph and Claire during a summer when Doorley was home from Notre Dame. Doorley dated Claire during the summers when he returned to Providence from Notre Dame. She was his first serious relationship. They were married on June 13, 1953, the Saturday after Doorley graduated. Doorley remembers that when they first married, they had savings that amounted to less than three hundred dollars.²⁶ Doorley and his wife had six children: Joseph, Michael, Brian, Dennis, Carleen, and Patricia.²⁷

From 1953 to 1955, Doorley taught civics, algebra, and English full time at his alma mater, LaSalle Academy.²⁸ He gave up a full time job at his uncle's construction company to take this teaching job that paid less because his family felt that teaching was a profession that was better suited for a college graduate. While at LaSalle, Doorley started an after school-tutoring program. During his years as a teacher, Doorley also worked part-time tending bar at the Smith Hill Tap and selling heating oil for Domestic Oil. During the summers, he went back to work at his uncle's construction company.²⁹

²⁵Paul A. Theis and Edmund Lee Henshaw, eds., *Who's Who in American Politics* (New York: Bowker, 1968).

²⁶“The Family in the Fifties: Hope Fear & Rock ‘n Roll,” Mr. Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., Interview by Tammie Curtis, South Kingston, Rhode Island, April 27, 1993, Manuscript Group Number 116, Box 3, Folder 4, State Oral History Archives, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island.

²⁷Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001.

²⁸Biographical Fact Sheet of Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., PC Archives.

²⁹Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001.

Doorley desired a larger income and he knew that a public school teaching position could offer him the pay increase that he desired. However, in order to become a certified public school teacher, Doorley would need thirty-six more college credit hours. He decided that he would be wiser to invest his time in obtaining a law degree rather than returning to school to obtain a teaching certificate. In 1955, he enrolled in Boston College Law School. While working days at LaSalle, he attended classes in the evenings. He commuted to Boston with a friend, Seth Gifford, who worked as an administrative assistant in Governor Roberts' office. In 1955, Gifford helped Doorley secure his first state job as a Research Technician in the Rhode Island Development Council. Later, from 1956 to 1958, Doorley worked as a Research Aide to Rhode Island Governor Dennis J. Roberts.³⁰

Doorley remembers being introduced to Governor Roberts by Gifford while they were in a State House elevator. The position required Doorley to set up a filing system for the governor's papers as well as cutting politically significant newspaper clippings out of seven different newspapers. Due to Doorley's familiarity with the governor's files, Roberts would call Doorley at home on weekends in order to find files that he needed. This made Doorley a very valuable member of the Roberts' administration. Doorley was later promoted to the position of Executive Assistant to Governor Roberts. Doorley and Seth Gifford would accompany the governor on weekends and Doorley recalls that he met many people and learned much about politics while working for Governor Roberts.³¹ It was during his time in this position that

³⁰Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001; "Doorley Names Campaign Chief," *Providence Journal*, May 8, 1964; Biographical Fact Sheet of Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., PC Archives; L. A. Lehan, "The Mayor and the Establishment."

³¹Biographical Fact Sheet of Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., PC Archives; Doorley Interview, July 16, 2001.

Doorley “developed a talent for quickly summarizing the essentials of a new topic so he could tick them off on his fingertips.”³² Doorley graduated from Boston College Law School with an LL.B in 1958.³³ Upon passing the bar exam, Doorley practiced law with Providence attorney, Frank McGee.³⁴

In 1960, Doorley was appointed by the Democratic State Chairman, John McWeeney, as the Rhode Island Chairman of the Kennedy for President Committee.³⁵ McWeeney chose Doorley for this position because Doorley had made many political connections as an aide to Governor Roberts. Thirty-eight thousand voters were registered as a result of Doorley’s efforts.³⁶ From 1961 to 1962, Doorley served as an Administrative Assistant for Legislative Affairs under the newly elected governor, John A. Notte, Jr. While in this position, Doorley served as the governor’s liaison to the Rhode Island State Legislature. This position enabled Doorley to form a close relationship with the Democratic leadership in the State Legislature. He also developed a strong association with the legislators from Providence.³⁷

While working for Governor Notte, Doorley began to think seriously about running for mayor of Providence.³⁸ As a step toward that goal, Doorley decided to run for councilman in

³²James Laffan, “A Year of Doorley Assessing the Record So Far,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, December 2, 1966.

³³Biographical Fact Sheet of Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., PC Archives.

³⁴Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001.

³⁵Biographical Fact Sheet of Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., PC Archives.

³⁶Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001.

³⁷James Laffan, “A Year of Doorley Assessing the Record So Far.”

³⁸*Ibid.*

1962.³⁹ Unrest within the Providence Democratic Party had started to appear during the 1962 election season. The 1962 Providence Mayoral Primary was called by the *Evening Bulletin* “the liveliest insurgent attack in city history.” During the campaign, the relatively smooth working Democratic machine controlled by Mayor Reynolds was attacked by younger Democrats who were not happy with the status quo. Most of the Reynolds’ administration was hired under his predecessor, Mayor Dennis J. Roberts. Some Providence residents felt that Reynolds did not identify well with working class people and were also upset with the seventy-eight million dollar tax revaluation that largely affected residential property owners. Mayor Reynolds waged a bruising campaign in order to win the primary against challengers Francis Rao, son of the past State Democratic Chairman, Frank Rao, and Vincent Storti, a retired police sergeant. The ethnic rivalry between those of Irish ancestry and those of Italian ancestry also came into play during this primary. Many Italian-American voters supported Rao or Storti. Reynolds was the eventual victor and received 19,642 votes to Rao’s 12,730 votes and Storti’s 2,195. In the general election, Reynolds went on to beat Republican challenger, Frank Lazarus, by only 9,700 votes. This small margin of victory was the smallest margin in the entire political career of Mayor Reynolds.⁴⁰

Doorley ran in the 1962 primary as the endorsed Democratic candidate for one of the two council seats from Providence’s Fifth Ward.⁴¹ Doorley’s running mate in this council race was

³⁹Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Meg Zwiers, January 29, 1969, PC Archives.

⁴⁰James T. Kaull and James F. Laffan, “Reynolds Faces Hottest Fight but Many Believe that Taxes will Loom Largest,” *Evening Bulletin*, August 28, 1962; “‘Smooth Working Cadre’ or ‘Time for a Change,’” *Evening Bulletin*, August 28, 1962; “Endorsed Candidates Win Assembly Races,” *Evening Bulletin*, September 12, 1962; “Reynolds Wins by Smallest Edge Even After Expensive Campaign,” *Evening Bulletin*, November 7, 1962.

⁴¹“Questions Rivals’ Interest in Ward,” *Providence Journal*, August 12, 1962.

the endorsed incumbent, veteran Councilman Ralph Matera. Doorley's campaign was supported by the group of young Democrats who were dissatisfied with the Reynolds' administration. Doorley and his supporters agreed with many Providence residents that the time had come for a change in city government.⁴² Doorley and Matera won their primaries. Doorley received 3209 votes, Matera 2899 votes, Rocco V. Fiore 1129 votes, Russell E. Dixon 879, Gerald T. Maloney 658 and Paul K. Shields 377.⁴³ Doorley and Matera won the general election against Republican challengers Acquilino C. Antonelli and Louis T. Campopiano. Doorley got 5578 votes, Matera 5241, Antonelli 3346 and Campopiano 3290.⁴⁴

During Doorley's term in the city council he was appointed to the Claims and Pending Suits Committee on January 17, 1963 and was elected on October 3, 1963 to a special city council committee that was formed to resurvey the employee classification plan. Doorley worked on this employee classification committee with fellow Councilmen Robert J. McOsker and Thomas W. Pearlman.⁴⁵

Doorley remembers that he first gained notoriety in the city council because he opposed Public Works Director, Philip J. Holton, Jr.'s choice for the position of construction chief in the

⁴²"Sciaretta Rejects Racial Pleas," *Evening Bulletin*, September 7, 1962; James F. Laffan and James T. Kaull, "City Hall Power Struggle – No. 4," *Evening Bulletin*, August 31, 1962. At this time, two councilmen were elected from each of Providence's thirteen wards.

⁴³"Endorsed Candidates Win Assembly Races," *Evening Bulletin*, September 12, 1962; "Mayor Defends Taxes; Rao Issues New Attack," *Evening Bulletin*, September 6, 1962; "2 Unendorsed Candidates Issue Confident Victory Predictions," *Evening Bulletin*, September 10, 1962; "Paul K. Shields Political Advertisements," *Evening Bulletin*, September 12, 1962.

⁴⁴"City Council," *Evening Bulletin*, November 7, 1962.

⁴⁵*Resolutions and Ordinances of the City Council of the City of Providence 1963* (Providence, Rhode Island: Providence Press Company, 1963), 327, 574.

public works department. Holton's choice for the position was Peter P. Granieri, Jr. Granieri did not possess a degree in civil engineering as the position required. The Reynolds' administration requested that the city council pass an ordinance that would change the job specifications of this position to match the qualifications of Granieri. Doorley's strong opposition stemmed from a previous conflict that Doorley had had with Mayor Reynolds. Doorley wanted Reynolds to promote one of his constituents who had worked for the city for twelve years. Reynolds would not give Doorley's constituent a promotion because the gentlemen did not have a college degree. Many city Democrats were also upset with Reynolds at this time because he started to enforce efficiency and economy in city government rather than focus on political favors. Doorley commented that his opposition to Holton started a "war" against the Reynolds' administration.⁴⁶

The vote on the proposed ordinance was eleven to ten in favor of the ordinance and, at the time, was the closest Providence City Council vote in twenty-two years. At one point during this meeting, council president, John F. Brock, threatened to clear the council chamber because a group of fifty public works department workers, who opposed the ordinance, had booed a speaker. This meeting lasted five hours and these workers remained until the ordinance was passed.⁴⁷

Doorley's opposition to the Reynolds administration continued during his term on the city council. Doorley also was a leader in the anti-Reynolds faction within the Providence Democratic City Committee where he started to build up a group of supporters to help him in his

⁴⁶Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001; "Job Specifications Proposal Scored," *Evening Bulletin*, July 5, 1963; "Good Government Costs the Mayor Some Support," *Evening Bulletin*, August 15, 1963;

⁴⁷"11 to 10 Vote Defeats Council Insurgents," *Providence Journal*, July 11, 1963.

campaign for mayor in the 1964. Doorley asked his former boss and political mentor, Dennis J. Roberts, for his support even though he knew that it was not possible for Roberts to back him. Roberts was a longtime supporter and friend of Mayor Reynolds, who was seeking re-election in 1964.⁴⁸

Reynolds realized that Doorley and other younger Democrats desired to run for mayor in 1964. The aspirations of the younger Democrats created a division among members of the Providence Democratic City Committee. Committee members were upset because Reynolds had Philip J. Holton, Jr., fire employees from the public works department in order to save tax dollars and create efficiency within that department. The anti-Reynolds faction within the city committee also passed a by-law that allowed for voting by secret ballot. This measure was passed in June of 1963 by a forty to fifteen vote during a committee meeting that was not attended by many Reynolds' supporters. Reynolds knew that the secret ballot would lessen the power that he held within the committee. Many members were obliged to vote with the mayor in an open vote because of their city jobs.⁴⁹

Reynolds wished to run for re-election in 1964 and wanted to have the endorsement of the Providence Democratic City Committee. Reynolds called upon his old mentor and friend, former mayor and governor, Dennis J. Roberts, for help in trying to unite the city's Democrats once again behind the machine that Roberts had created in 1940. In October of 1963, Roberts

⁴⁸Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001.

⁴⁹John P. Hackett and James F. Laffan, "Smart Move or Error? Roberts' Bid for Insignificant Post Seen Try to Heal Rift in Party," *Evening Bulletin*, October 2, 1963.

ran for the insignificant post of Treasurer of the Democratic City Committee in an attempt to unite the city's Democrats behind Reynolds.⁵⁰

Doorley and the members of the anti-Reynolds faction supported the candidacy of Mary E. Morgan, a member of the Eleventh Ward Committee, for the post of City Committee Treasurer.⁵¹ Reynolds knew that the election between Roberts and Morgan would be close because of the split in the party and enlisted the help of Democratic state chairman, John G. McWeeney. McWeeney was appointed by the Reynolds camp to fill a vacancy on the Eighth Ward Democratic Committee three days before the election was to take place between Roberts and Morgan in order to provide another vote for Roberts.⁵²

Dennis Roberts was elected treasurer of the Providence Democratic City Committee on October 10, 1963 at what was called an "uproarious" committee meeting that took place at the Sheraton-Biltmore Hotel in Providence. The committee meeting that elected him was marked by infighting between the Reynolds and anti-Reynolds supporters. 112 of the committee's 118 members were in attendance at this meeting. Before the vote on the treasurer's position, third ward chairman, Francis P. Brown, made a motion for a secret ballot. Second ward committeeman, Martin M. Temkin, then moved to amend the Brown motion by omitting the word secret from the motion. A roll call vote was then ordered on the Temkin amendment. The vote was fifty-seven to fifty five in favor of the open ballot amendment. The anti-Reynolds

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹"Anti-Reynolds Faction Convenes," *Evening Bulletin*, October 3, 1963.

⁵²James F. Laffan and John P. Hackett, "McWeeney Moves Into the Front Lines," *Evening Bulletin*, October 8, 1963.

forces demanded a recount and stated their view that Charles F. McElroy, the city chairman, was only allowed to vote in the event of a tie. They were refused a recount and the meeting continued. The next business before the committee was to vote on the amended motion calling for an open ballot. A fifty-six to fifty-six tie resulted on this amendment and McElroy then cast the tie-breaking vote in favor of the open ballot. After McElroy cast the tie breaking vote, the meeting turned chaotic. The anti-Reynolds forces then claimed a motion was made by the chairman to adjourn the meeting and was adopted by an overwhelming voice vote. As a result of the motion fifty-one members of the anti-Reynolds faction stormed out of the meeting and reassembled in a room on the mezzanine floor. McElroy stated that the motion to adjourn was not put forth by him and he continued the meeting in order to have the election for treasurer. The remaining members elected Roberts treasurer by a sixty to one vote.⁵³

Doorley and the members of the anti-Reynolds faction were called “the fighting fifty-six” because fifty-six members of the city committee opposed the open ballot for the election of city committee treasurer. It was held at the time that, if the secret ballot motion had been passed, some members of the committee that had to vote with the administration during an open ballot would have opposed Roberts for treasurer, if they could have voted by secret ballot.⁵⁴

Immediately after the above mentioned committee meeting, Reynolds announced that he would run for an eighth term as mayor. Reynolds knew that, even though he had enough support to persuade committee members to have Roberts elected to the post of city committee treasurer,

⁵³John P. Hackett, “Reynolds in Trouble?” *Evening Bulletin*, October 11, 1963; “Roberts Declared Elected,” *Evening Bulletin*, October 1, 1963; “Vote Tabulation Shows Threat to the Mayor,” *Evening Bulletin*, October 11, 1963.

⁵⁴Laffan, “A Year of Doorley Assessing the Record So Far”; “Reynolds in Trouble?”

he had lost the support of many Democrats. An editorial that appeared in the *Providence Journal* on October 14, 1963 called the victory in the city treasurer election “unimpressive”. The editorial went on to note some of the troubles that the mayor would have in his quest for re-election as mayor:

. . . Dissension exists in the committee. It will hurt him if he lets it fester. The score against him as some see it, is that he has been in office for too long and the young bucks are impatient. The score against him as others see it is that he has lopped faithful party workers off the city payroll in order to trim the ship of state to sail in shallower fiscal water. City committee members have several scores against the mayor. . . .⁵⁵

Doorley believed that the people of Providence were ready for a change after fourteen years of the Reynolds administration. He also contended that there was unrest among the city’s Democrats because of the divisions caused by the “fighting fifty-six” and because many city employees felt that they had no job protection due to layoffs that had befallen anti-Reynolds Democrats.⁵⁶ Doorley and two other members of the “fighting fifty-six” had expressed interest in running for mayor in the 1964 Providence Mayoral Election. Robert McOsker, a councilman from the ninth ward, and Francis Brown, the third ward party chairman, were the other members of the “fighting fifty-six” who wanted to run for mayor.⁵⁷

The vice-chairman of the Democratic city committee, Lawrence McGarry, was also part of the “fighting fifty six”. McGarry struck a deal with Doorley, McOsker, and Brown regarding

⁵⁵“The Mayor Wins an Unimpressive Victory,” *Providence Journal*, October 14, 1963.

⁵⁶Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001; McGarry was also fired from his job on the city highway department as a result of his being part of the “fighting 56.” See John P. Hackett, “Mayor’s Foe Ousted From His City Job,” *Providence Journal*, October 12, 1963, 1.

⁵⁷John Hackett, “There’s a Familiar Face,” *Providence Journal*, November 1, 1991.

who should run for mayor. McGarry and the anti-Reynolds faction would support whichever candidate could raise the most money to finance the race for mayor. If this person were to win the election, he would agree to serve as mayor for a few terms and to then let the other two have the opportunity to run for mayor. As a result of the financial assistance of his uncle James and his associates, Doorley was the candidate who was able to raise the most money and he received the support of the anti-Reynolds faction in his quest to be elected mayor.⁵⁸

While James H. Doorley was supportive of his nephew, he allowed him to make his own political decisions. Doorley later recalled that his uncle, James, helped pay for his first political fundraiser that took place at Wright's Farm in Harrisville, Rhode Island. Doorley also had the advantages of having what author Mike Stanton calls "a fresh, appealing face" and of residing in Providence's fifth ward which, in 1964, was the largest in the city in terms of population.⁵⁹

Joseph A. Doorley, Jr. formally announced his intention to run for mayor on January 21, 1964. In a press release Doorley explained his decision:

After serious consideration I have decided to announce that I will seek the endorsement of the Democratic City Committee for the office of Mayor of the City of Providence. I am convinced that the majority of the City Committee feel that there is a need for a change. There can be no denying that improvements have been made in the last quarter century; but, neither can it be denied that these improvements have failed to keep pace with the needs of the city. The challenges of today overshadow anything that has ever confronted Providence. The unmet human needs are particularly acute. . . .⁶⁰

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Mike Stanton, *The Prince of Providence* (New York: Random House, 2003), 37.

⁶⁰Press Release Councilman Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., January 21, 1964, PC Archives.

A month after Doorley made his announcement; Mayor Walter Reynolds announced that he would not seek re-election for an eighth two-year term. Reynolds' change of mind was prompted by and large by his physician's caution that the stress of a campaign for re-election would affect the peptic ulcer he had developed.⁶¹ Doorley contends that while poor health was a major factor that caused Reynolds to pull out of the race Reynolds could also "see the writing on the wall". Reynolds, having survived the tough primary and general election in 1962, realized that many Providence voters desired a change in city hall and that he would most likely lose in a primary battle against Doorley. Doorley and his supporters wanted to take control of the Providence Democratic machine from what they called the "three R's". They contended that the "three R's", Dennis J. Roberts, Walter Reynolds and Frank Rao, controlled the Democratic Party in Providence for too long and that it was indeed time for a change. With the departure of Reynolds, Doorley had a major obstacle on his quest to be elected Mayor of Providence eliminated, but he still had to face a hotly contested Democratic primary battle to achieve his ultimate goal.⁶²

The 1964 Providence Mayoral Primary and General Election

The 1964 political season would bring another exciting primary battle to the voters of Providence. Doorley was opposed in the 1964 mayoral primary by Francis J. Rao and Edward F. Burke. Burke was the administrative assistant to Mayor Reynolds and also had his endorsement. Doorley had the support of the insurgents who opposed Reynolds' choice of Dennis J. Roberts as

⁶¹"City Hall Got Big News Via Taped Message," *Evening Bulletin*, February 21, 1964.

⁶²"Providence Mayoral Scramble – Direct Effect is Seen on Governor's Race," *Providence Sunday Journal*, March 8, 1964; Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001; "Doorley Woos Committee in Bid Against Reynolds," *Evening Bulletin*, January 21, 1964; "J.A. Doorley Ready to Run for Mayor's Job," *Providence Journal*, January 22, 1964.

city committee treasurer in 1963. Lawrence P. McGarry, the vice-chairman of the Democratic City Committee, was a member of the insurgent group and he threw his support to Doorley. On October 11, 1963, McGarry lost his job as a clerk in the city's highway department because of his opposition to Reynolds. The Reynolds administration stated that he was fired because he was devoting work time to political activities. At this time, McGarry was given a job at the Narragansett Race Track by Doorley's uncle, James Doorley. It was then agreed that, if Doorley were elected, McGarry would be given the position of personnel director. Doorley and McGarry worked to gain the support of the anti-Reynolds forces in order to secure the endorsement of the city committee. The fact that Reynolds dropped out of the race caused Doorley to feel very confident that he would be the endorsed Democrat in the 1964 primary.⁶³

Doorley named Everett A. Trivisono as the secretary of the Doorley for Mayor Committee on February 11, 1964. Trivisono was the founder and president of the Mount Pleasant Credit Union and was associated with the insurance firm of Trivisono, Izzo, Babin and Garrahy. He had been active in the Democratic Party since 1956. Trivisono supervised Doorley's committee headquarters, which were located at 958 Chalkstone Avenue in Providence. The Doorley team also included Maureen M. Kilmartin as his personal secretary; campaign coordinators McGarry; Robert J. McOsker, Ninth Ward Democratic Chairman; Frank A. DelSesto, Thirteenth Ward Democratic committee member; and Seth Gifford. Gifford was hired to manage the campaign for the primary and the general election. At this time, Gifford was

⁶³Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001; "Gallogly, Luongo Drop in at Doorley Headquarters," *Providence Sunday Journal*, February 23, 1964; "More Doorley Support is Claimed by McGarry," *Evening Bulletin*, February 25, 1964; "Doorley Picks 3 Coordinators," *Evening Bulletin*, March 24, 1964; C. Fraser Smith, "Mr. Democrat," *The Rhode Islander, The Providence Sunday Journal Magazine*, April 25, 1971.

administrative assistant to Harry F. Curvin, Speaker of the House of Representatives. Doorley recalls that Gifford was the “stabilizing influence” in this campaign and that he and John Cicilline were in charge of writing the press releases.⁶⁴

The first phase of Doorley’s campaign was to work to obtain the endorsement of the Democratic city committee. Doorley and Rao disagreed about the importance of an endorsement by the city committee. On the evening of May 4, 1964, Doorley and Rao met with nine members of the Fifth Ward Democratic Committee in Doorley’s basement bar and had a friendly debate. Doorley and Rao were both from the Fifth Ward. Rao was opposed to the city committee endorsing a candidate because it would allow a candidate to be “handpicked by a small number of fellow Democrats who happen to be members of a committee.” Rao called for no endorsements by the city committee for this election. Doorley stated that “the men on the committee have an obligation to the people who elected them to endorse a candidate before the primary election.” The Doorley campaign worked hard to secure the endorsement from the city committee. The Doorley forces worked on this aspect of the campaign from January 21, 1964, when Doorley wrote to all 117 members of the city committee to ask for their support, until he secured their endorsement on June 24, 1964. In the end, Doorley obtained the support of 108 of the 117 members of the city committee.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001; “Doorley Picks 3 Coordinators,” *Evening Bulletin*, March 24, 1964; “Doorley Names 2 Secretaries for Campaign,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 12, 1964; “Doorley Names Campaign Chief,” *Providence Journal*, May 8, 1964.

⁶⁵“Doorley Names Campaign Chief,” *Providence Journal*, May 8, 1964; “Doorley vows to fight ‘clique.’” *Evening Bulletin*, July 7, 1964; “Mayoral Candidates Differ on Value of Endorsements,” *Providence Journal*, May 5, 1964; “Doorley Cites Role of Political Parties,” *Evening Bulletin*, May 7, 1964; “Endorsed Democratic Mayoral Candidate Joseph A. Doorley, Jr. is Greeted after his Victory,” *Providence Journal*, June 25, 1964.

The 1964 primary campaign also saw episodes of mudslinging by each of the candidates. The first incidence occurred when Edward F. Burke and Dr. Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr., chairman of the political science department of Brown University, made statements questioning Doorley's character. Cornwell accused Doorley of "poor judgment" because he allowed former councilman, Thomas S. Luongo, Sr., to be a member of his campaign policy committee. Luongo had received payments for a fictitious city employee named Joseph Melino. The non-existent Melino was on the city payroll from 1949 to 1963 under the watch of the Reynolds' Administration. Luongo was found guilty of conspiring to defraud the city. Doorley claimed that the campaign committee Luongo served on "was never intended to prepare a platform or to map administrative procedure for city government." As a result of the comments made by Burke and Cornwell, Doorley dissolved his policy committee. Doorley struck back at Burke and commented that the Melino case was "a blot on the present administration's record" and that the Reynolds Administration was "seeking to perpetuate itself through Mr. Burke's candidacy."⁶⁶

Doorley waged a vigorous primary campaign and went door to door through every ward in the city. He was quoted as saying: "I will out walk, out talk and out fight them and see that they are outvoted on primary day." Doorley's three major campaign themes were improvement of education, housing and employment opportunities for city residents. He realized that Providence was facing challenging economic conditions and vowed to work with city leaders to attract business and industry to the city. On August 16, 1964, at a Fourth Ward Committee meeting at Guliano's Restaurant, Doorley stated:

⁶⁶"Doorley Backs His Luongo Tie," *Evening Bulletin*, July 7, 1964; "Doorley Contends that Burke Must Explain 'Melino,'" *Providence Journal*, July 9, 1964; "Doorley: No Tie to Trio Now," *Evening Bulletin*, July 11, 1964.

Now the time has come to put aside idle promises, abandon the philosophy of despair and decline and embark on a new road to re-establish the prominence of our capital city. There is no place in our political leadership for candidates who pledge themselves to a continuation of outworn and outmoded patterns of operation. Nor is there any place for unrealistic pie-in-the-sky schemes which will cost millions of tax dollars and which will bring no appreciable returns.⁶⁷

Doorley used his power as the endorsed Democratic candidate to his advantage during the primary. His opponents accused him of trying to organize a new Democratic machine as well as trying to exclude their supporters from the Democratic Party. Rao stated that “from the attitude of Mr. Doorley and company there are no other Democrats but Doorley-Democrats” and that the Burke and Rao supporters were “being written off the rolls of the Democratic Party of Providence” by the Doorley machine. On his part, Edward F. Burke held that Doorley desired “one-man political rule.” In regards to his views of political power, Doorley was candid. If elected, he pledged to vigorously use the power of the office of mayor to solve the problems of the city:

The Providence City Charter calls for a strong mayor. The entire administrative power of the city is in the hands of the mayor. Acting as a steward; simply managing old programs is not enough. We cannot sit idly by and watch our young people move away ... watching the tax base shrink ... and watching industrial jobs decline.⁶⁸

The primary campaign heated up once again in September, 1964. Doorley maintained that Rao and Burke were “in cahoots” and that they had joined forces against him. In Doorley’s mind the evidence for this was the fact that Rao and Burke had agreed to have one list of polling

⁶⁷“Doorley, Rao Seek End of Economic Decline,” *Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1964; “Doorley Vows to Fight Clique,” *Evening Bulletin*, July 21, 1964; “Berle Entertains 350 at Dinner for Doorley,” *Providence Journal*, August 29, 1964; “Doorley Confident but Fighting,” *Providence Journal*, September 2, 1964.

⁶⁸ “Doorley Says He’s a ‘Brand New Baby,’” *Evening Bulletin*, August 21, 1964; News Release, Doorley for Mayor Committee, August 10, 1964, PC Archives.

supervisors for all of the unendorsed Democratic candidates. Doorley called this the Burke-Rao “conspiracy”:

Mr. Burke is the unwitting tool of a conspiracy to elect Francis Rao to the office of Mayor of Providence. In a last minute desperate attempt to retain power, he is using the ‘low road approach’ to confuse the Democrats of the city of Providence. I do not believe the people of Providence will fall for his scurrilous method of campaigning. He cannot win and has chosen instead, to serve as the hatchet man for Mr. Rao. I hope the good people who may be supporting Mr. Burke will now see his true role in this campaign and join with me in the building of a new and vigorous Democratic party un-pledged to the dynasties of the past.⁶⁹

The Doorley campaign became caught up in the final controversy of the primary when they managed to take control of the poll supervision in the Fourth Ward. Rao had carried this ward by a two to one margin in the 1962 primary. Larry McGarry and Doorley’s Fourth Ward campaign director, Anthony J. Bucci, were involved in this controversy. McGarry, who at the time was the acting chairman of the city committee, did not approve the list of poll workers submitted by John F. DeLuca, the Fourth Ward chairman. Bucci had his list of supervisors for unendorsed candidates signed off on by more unendorsed candidates than those on the list that Rao had submitted. DeLuca stated that this action was “another example of the Doorley-McGarry policy of divide and rule.” McGarry maintained that he submitted a substitute list of names because DeLuca had not followed the correct procedure required by election law and submitted his list directly to the Board of Canvassers. The procedure that McGarry followed was also followed by former city chairman, Charles F. McElroy. McGarry felt DeLuca’s accusation of his and Doorley’s involvement in machine politics had “a hollow ring” because DeLuca was a

⁶⁹“Doorley Says his Opponents Have Teamed Up,” *Providence Journal*, September 7, 1964; News Release, Doorley for Mayor Committee, September 11, 1964, PC Archives.

“beneficiary of the party organization” and had worked for the city and state for more than 30 years at that time.⁷⁰

Doorley claimed that he had nothing to do with the Fourth Ward episode and established a lawyers committee to protect every candidate from what he called “irregularities” at the polls.

In a telegram sent to Burke regarding this controversy, Doorley asserted that:

We are all Democrats and I want fair play for all candidates. I will work for this end in spite of your headline seeking telegram and statements before the Board of Elections. I hope that you will provide similar protection to unendorsed candidates in the polling places where you control the majority of the unendorsed candidates.⁷¹

Rao and Burke sent the seventy-five election officials whom they chose to a seminar given by a group of lawyers. The lawyers warned this group to watch for supervisors who offered to go into the voting machines to help others. The unendorsed candidates also placed lawyers in each ward headquarters to advise unendorsed poll workers on any suspicious activities at the polls.

Doorley emerged as the eventual winner of the 1964 primary, a battle that the *Providence Journal* called “the most intense primary ever waged here.” Doorley received 18,943 votes and earned the right to run as the Democratic candidate in the November 1964 mayoral election. Rao came up short for the second election in a row when he received only 14,888 votes. Burke finished last with 7,157 votes. At a midnight victory party at the Sheraton-Biltmore Hotel, Doorley said:

⁷⁰James F. Laffan, “Doorley Forces Gain Control of Primary Polls in 4th Ward,” *Providence Journal*, September 12, 1964; Press Release, John F. Deluca, Chairman, 4th Ward Democratic Committee, 1964, PC Archives.

⁷¹“Candidates Warned of Vote Tampering,” *Providence Journal*, September 16, 1964; “Watchdogs at Polls Lawyers’ Committee to Check Complaints,” *Providence Journal*, September 16, 1964; News Release, Doorley for Mayor Committee, September 16, 1964, PC Archives.

I am delighted with the results of the Democratic primary. The number of voters who have elected to declare themselves as Democrats indicates that the Democratic Party in the city and in the state can expect a resounding victory in November. I intend immediately to make every effort to rebuild this party. It is my intention to offer everyone a voice and place in the party. I do not intend to dominate, and I think the matter of controlled domination of this party by a select few has once and for all been settled. This party belongs to the people.⁷²

After winning the hard fought 1964 mayoral primary battle, Doorley's road to city hall had only one more challenge. That challenge was the 1964 general election in which Doorley ran against the Republican candidate, Charles A. Kilvert, and Independent, Emmanuel Torti. Doorley desired to unite all Providence Democrats behind his candidacy after the bitter primary was finally over. True to his promise, Doorley spent two weeks traveling around the city in an attempt to unify Providence Democrats. Because the majority of Providence voters were registered Democrats, Doorley could afford to take time from campaigning for the general election to heal the wounds of the divided Democrats rather than focusing on his opponents in the general election. Doorley was confident, despite the divisions caused by the primary, that Providence Democrats would support him in the general election rather than vote for the Republican or Independent candidate.⁷³

The Republican candidate, Charles A. Kilvert, was a councilman from the city's Second Ward. Kilvert was a descendant of Rhode Island's famous Brown family and was part of the city's East Side upper class establishment. He graduated from Yale University in 1942 and was the chairman of the board and treasurer of the Rhode Island Engineering and Manufacturing

⁷²"Tops Rao by 4,000; Burke a Distant Third," *Providence Journal*, September 18, 1964.

⁷³"Kilvert Asserts Doorley Not One to Solve Problems," *Evening Bulletin*, October 5, 1964; Jack Thompson, "Doorley Would End Old Enmities Seeks to Heal Party Wounds," *Evening Bulletin*, October 26, 1964.

Corporation. Kilvert and his brother-in-law established this company in 1946. From 1959-1960 Kilvert had served as the state director of administration under Republican Governor Christopher DelSesto. In 1958, he had run against Walter Reynolds in an unsuccessful bid for mayor and made another unsuccessful run for lieutenant governor in 1960.⁷⁴

Emmanuel Torti was Doorley's Independent challenger. Torti also ran for mayor as an Independent in 1962 and received only 633 votes. He was a former head of a construction firm and had invented a life-saving device for construction workers working in sewers. A resident of the city of Johnston, Rhode Island, Torti had maintained a voting address in Providence's Seventh Ward. Once a member of the Democratic Party, Torti was referred to as the candidate of the poor man and was against what he called the 'system' in Providence city government. He spent only two thousand dollars on his campaign and he declared that, if he was elected, he would donate the fifteen thousand dollar mayoral salary to help Providence home owners who lived on pensions. The true underdog in this race, Torti was not even mentioned in the majority of the newspaper articles or television and radio broadcasts that covered the major issues debated in this election.⁷⁵

On September 30, 1964, anticipating victory, Doorley took a trip to Washington, D.C. to get firsthand information regarding federal programs that he thought would benefit Providence. Doorley specifically wanted to get more information on the Economic Opportunities Act, the

⁷⁴"Kilvert Announces Candidacy for GOP Mayoral Nomination," *Evening Bulletin*, May 26, 1964; Jack Thompson, "Minority Doesn't Scare Kilvert," *Evening Bulletin*, October 27, 1964.

⁷⁵Jack Thompson, "Torti Again Tackles 'System,'" *Evening Bulletin*, October 28, 1964; "Emmanuel Torti Again Enters Mayoral Race," *Evening Bulletin*, May 2, 1964; Wilbur L. Doctor, "Cheerful Candidate Rueful Over Press," *Evening Bulletin*, September 20, 1964.

Federal Housing Act and the Area Redevelopment Act. He believed that Providence could benefit under President Johnson's War on Poverty program. Accompanied on this trip by his campaign manager, Seth K. Gifford, he had meetings with federal officials which were arranged by the staffs of Democratic Senator Claiborne Pell and Democratic Congressman John Fogarty. In commenting on his trip, Doorley expected criticism and, to forestall his critics, justified the trip by saying:

Providence cannot do the job alone. The most realistic approach to these problems is through federal aid. The initiative and the planning should be local; but, in my opinion, liaison with Washington will be the key to progress in Providence in the days and the years just ahead. Providence is fortunate in having a start on planning on youth activities, by the Youth Progress Board in areas that may be eligible for assistance under President Johnson's War on Poverty program. However, we can waste no time in developing specific programs in an attack on poverty on a wide front.⁷⁶

Kilvert referred to Doorley's Washington trip as a "purposeless jaunt". He stated that Doorley could have found out information on federal programs through federal offices in Providence, Boston, New York or through the local offices of Rhode Island's congressional delegation and strongly believed that the answers to the problems in Providence could be found locally rather than by depending only on state and federal aid. Doorley was characterized by Kilvert as someone who was not interested in investigating local solutions that might solve the problems that faced Providence during this time. Kilvert also believed that Doorley made this trip in order to make voters associate him with members of Rhode Island's congressional delegation.⁷⁷

⁷⁶"Doorley Plans to Explore Federal Aid," *Providence Journal*, September 30, 1964; Councilman Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., Press Release, September 29, 1964, PC Archives.

Throughout the campaign, Kilvert was very vocal in his attacks on Doorley and what he referred to as the ‘Democratic Machine’ in Providence. He told Providence voters and the press that the election of Doorley would only be a continuation of “controlled decay, destruction, downgrading and despair” in the city. Kilvert speeches stressed that, if Doorley were elected, the same old ‘Democratic Machine’ would continue to run Providence. Providence had been under Democratic rule for twenty-four years and it was time for a change. Press releases and speeches by the Kilvert campaign also blamed the population and industry losses in the city on the Democratic machine.⁷⁸

Doorley fought back against the attacks from his Republican opponent. He charged that Kilvert had the same philosophy as the 1964 Republican candidate for President, Senator Barry M. Goldwater who, like Kilvert, opposed federal aid. During this campaign, Doorley stressed that if elected he would take advantage of any type of federal aid that would benefit the citizens of Providence. Doorley’s campaign speeches stressed that citizens in Providence were in need of federal help because one-third of all Providence families lived on incomes of less than three thousand dollars per year. Doorley called Kilvert a “puppet” of the Republican governor, John Chafee, and said that he was “hand-picked” by Chafee to run for mayor. Chafee also believed that Providence should handle its own problems without federal or state assistance. Doorley’s

⁷⁷ “Kilvert Calls Doorley Trip ‘Purposeless,’” *Evening Bulletin*, September 30, 1964; “Says Gov’t Aid is Overstressed,” *Providence Journal*, October 14, 1964; “City’s Loss Seen in Food Project,” *Providence Journal*, October 4, 1964.

⁷⁸ “Kilvert Says Democrats’ Record is ‘Murder of City,’” *Providence Journal*, 13 September 1964; “Kilvert Predicts Victory for GOP,” *Providence Journal*, September 25, 1964; “‘Machine Tactics’ Assailed by Kilvert,” *Evening Bulletin*, September 28, 1964.

philosophy was that Providence was unable to solve its own problems and needed both federal and state help to assist the economy and to help the over 8,000 residents of Providence who were unemployed at the time.⁷⁹

During the campaign for the general election, primary opponents, Edward Burke and Francis J. Rao, made speeches in support of Doorley. To follow through on his promise of party unity, Doorley also consulted with Burke and Rao on what to include in the party platform for this campaign. The platform called for the development of the Port of Providence, the creation of more low income housing, the attack on poverty through a community action program, the establishment of civil service and the improvement of Providence schools. In addition, the platform called for tax concessions for new industries and a promise to get more federal aid for Providence. This platform incorporated campaign ideas from Rao and Burke and also restated promises that Doorley made throughout the primary campaign. Doorley claimed that Providence's united Democratic Party, which included over forty thousand registered voters, was a large cause of concern for Kilvert who hoped to gain some anti-Doorley votes from Burke and Rao supporters.⁸⁰

Throughout the campaign, in both speeches and appearances on WJAR-TV, Kilvert continued to attack Doorley and the "Democratic machine". An episode that generated considerable press was the charge that Doorley campaign signs were placed on property owned

⁷⁹"Goldwater Attitude Blasted by Doorley," *Providence Journal*, October 5, 1964; "Doorley Sees 'Low' Oratory," *Providence Journal*, October 30, 1964; "Doorley Sees US Funds as Aid to City," *Providence Journal*, October 31, 1964; "Doorley Labels Kilvert 'Puppet' Asserts Republican 'Hand Picked' by Governor's Office," *Providence Journal*, October 31, 1964.

⁸⁰"Doorley Releases Platform," *Evening Bulletin*, October 27, 1964; News Release Doorley for Mayor, October 27, 1964, PC Archives; "Doorley Cites Unity of Party After Primary," *Evening Bulletin*, October 27, 1964.

by the Providence Redevelopment Agency. Kilvert said that Doorley had an “utter disregard for law and order and morality” and “an absolute dedication to personal ambition”. Kilvert also stated that Doorley had “no concern for his violation of city, state and federal law as long as it may serve his personal ambition of winning.” Democratic councilman Frank Caprio explained to the press that the Doorley signs were placed on public property because the property was privately owned during the primary and had Caprio signs posted there. The Doorley campaign did not realize the property had been sold to the city and Caprio told a campaign worker to place Doorley signs on the property in the same places where Caprio signs were posted. Doorley dismissed the sign issue by stating that Kilvert made an issue of signs because he had run out of issues to talk about and that he had the time to ride through Providence to look at the location of campaign signs.⁸¹

As Election Day drew closer, Kilvert continued his attacks on Doorley. He continued to label Doorley as head of a “Democratic machine”. The Doorley campaign also kept up its attack on Kilvert and continued to compare him to Barry Goldwater and to call him a “puppet” of Governor Chafee. The continued labeling of Doorley as a machine candidate caused Doorley to characterize his supporters as “the best organization the city of Providence has seen in twenty five years”. In the last weeks before election, Doorley continued to claim that his campaign focused on providing programs that would address the needs of the residents of Providence while Kilvert’s solution to the problems was to get the help of private industry.⁸²

⁸¹“Kilvert Raises Morality Issue Also Accuses Rival of ‘Dedication to Personal Ambition,’” *Providence Journal*, October 30, 1964; “Doorley Given Help on Signs – Councilman Caprio Helps to Answer Kilvert’s Criticism,” *Providence Journal*, October 29, 1964.

Doorley was the eventual winner on Election Day. He received 48,038 votes to Kilvert's 25,507 votes and Torti's 553 votes. Doorley had the majority of votes in eleven of Providence's thirteen wards. The only wards in which Doorley did not have a majority were wards One and Two where voters traditionally supported Republican candidates.⁸³ In commenting on his victory, Doorley said that:

During the months of campaigning many new reasonable ideas and programs have been proposed by Republican and Democrats alike. Each of these proposals must now be reviewed to determine their net worth to the people and to the city of Providence.⁸⁴

Joseph A. Doorley, Jr. was inaugurated for his first term as mayor of Providence on January 4, 1965. During an interview on this day, Doorley stated that he was "anxious to get moving" and that he could not wait to start his term. He and twenty-six city council members were sworn into office by Probate Judge Justin P. McCarthy. Doorley took the oath of office by placing his hand on a family bible which the Doorleys received as a wedding present in 1953. Doorley's wife, Claire, his father, Joseph A. Doorley, Sr., mother-in-law, Mrs. David Walsh and his five children were present at the ceremony. The Very Reverend Kenneth C. Sullivan, O.P., pastor of Doorley's parish of Saint Pius, began the ceremony with a prayer. After the swearing in ceremony, the city council was called to order to choose a council president and president pro-tem. Russell J. Boyle, a Democrat from the Twelfth Ward, was elected city council president and

⁸²"Kilvert Scores Foe's 'Machine,'" *Providence Journal*, November 1, 1964; "Needs of the People are Stressed Doorley Says that Construction not to be his Objective," *Providence Journal*, November 2, 1964.

⁸³*Journal-Bulletin Almanac* (Providence, Rhode Island: The Providence Journal Company, 1965), 257-258.

⁸⁴"Doorley's Next Step 'to Reappraise all of City Government,'" *Evening Bulletin*, November 4, 1964.

Jerry Lorenzo, a Democrat from the Thirteenth Ward, was then elected president pro-tem of the city council. Doorley next submitted, for council approval, his list of appointments for city department heads. On his list of appointments, was the name of Lawrence P. McGarry, the chairman of the city's Democratic Party and Doorley supporter. Doorley appointed McGarry to the post of public works director.⁸⁵

In his inaugural address, Doorley stated the improvements he would make in order to give more opportunities to city residents which would enable them to live better lives. The address focused on Doorley's ideas on education, city finances, and his plan to seek tax incentives that would enable new industries to move to the city. Doorley offered the guidelines that his administration would follow:

. . . We promise that if a present policy has been sound it will be continued. We will not alter existing programs for alteration's sake; but we will not hesitate to alter them for the city's sake. We will not be bound by any policy which fails to give priority to people and their problems. Nor will we be bound by any policy that does not look with understanding to the needs of individuals to achieve their fullest potential. We seek a renewal not just of structures and buildings but of the hope and strength of our people. The renewal of human resources is the cause to which we are dedicated. The cooperative effort of government and its citizens under a community action program, dedicated to these ideals, can re-establish Providence as a truly great city.⁸⁶

⁸⁵George Popkin, "Doorley Anxious to 'Get Moving,'" *Evening Bulletin*, January 5, 1965; James F. Laffan, "Tradition to be Followed Inaugural Tomorrow for Mayor Doorley," *Providence Sunday Journal*, January 4, 1965; James F. Laffan and Jack Thompson, "Doorley's Choices Go Through Caucus OK," *Providence Journal*, January 4, 1965.

⁸⁶Joseph A. Doorley, *Inaugural Address of Joseph A. Doorley, Jr. Mayor of the City of Providence, Rhode Island Delivered January 4, 1965* (Providence, Rhode Island: The Oxford Press, 1965).

CHAPTER 3

DOORLEY'S FIRST TWO TERMS AS MAYOR

Doorley as “Strong Mayor”

A *Providence Journal* editorial, dated January 2, 1965, wished Doorley well as he became the city's first new chief executive in fourteen years. The editor gave this advice to Doorley:

. . . Providence cannot afford less than good government as it faces a difficult time. No one mayor and no single municipal administration ever can hope to solve once and forever the multitudinous problems that press an old city like Providence. Mr. Doorley, we hope, will take the best of the last two administrations in building what we are sure he hopes will be an equally fine record.¹

Doorley tried to solve the many problems that the city had by establishing himself as a “strong mayor”. He brought his youthful energy and enthusiasm into city hall and to his job as mayor. This was evident by the fact that he and his team of advisors worked long hours during his first year in office, conducted a regular daily press conference, were very accessible and made it a point to reply quickly to all requests that were made of them. He himself was very hands-on and supplemented the advice of his advisors by conducting his own research in order to find additional information on issues. He tried hard during his first year in office to make changes that would benefit all citizens of the city and to offer city services that would benefit

¹ “Best Wishes for the City's New Mayor,” *Providence Journal*, January 2, 1965.

those living in poverty. The basic political philosophy of the new mayor was that, once elected, that he should build up a strong political base and then take control. It is important to remember that the Democratic fraction that was responsible for Doorley's victory was not really a fraction that desired true reform. They wished only to continue Democratic control over the city under a new regime. Doorley realized that his election was a result of the support of the strong Democratic organization that he took over and that he had to use all the power at his disposal to satisfy the needs of the organization in order to be reelected in the future. At the start of his tenure as mayor, Doorley was able to deliver jobs and patronage to his Democratic supporters because no Republican opposition or organized advocates for reform existed that would threaten the control that the machine had over the future council and mayoral elections of the city of Providence.²

Among the poorest residents of the city were African Americans who made up nine percent of the population of Providence. The African Americans traditionally had little political power because they made up such a small percentage of the city's population and only a small number participated in political or civic organizations. During Doorley's first two terms in office, they were becoming a stronger political force because they made up a higher percentage of the city's population since many white middle class residents moved out of Providence. In

²John Hanlon, "Mayor Watchers Report New Feeling of Youth and Enthusiasm at City Hall," *Evening Bulletin*, February 22, 1965; Craig Oettinger, "Joseph A. Doorley, Jr. 'Hizzoner The Mayor,'" *Brown Daily Herald*, February 19, 1965; John Perrotta, "Representation of the Poor in the Community Action Program in Providence, Rhode Island: 1965-1969" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1971), 49-51.

addition, many African Americans at this time in American history had started to protest for their civil rights.³

When Doorley was first elected mayor he was very interested in the plight of the poor in Providence. One of his first campaign promises was to obtain more federal funds that would assist the people of the city. As mayor-elect Doorley started the process of fulfilling this promise by appointing his administrative assistant, John Cicilline, as the liaison between his administration and the Providence Youth Progress Board. Cicilline's role in the administration was to work on all programs related to poverty. During the December 2, 1964 Providence Youth Progress Board meeting, Seth Gifford, Doorley's campaign manager and secretary of the Democratic city committee, was elected to the board and executive committee of this agency. By the time he started his first term in office, Doorley used his power as a strong mayor to change the Providence Youth Progress Board into Progress for Providence, Inc. and put this newly named community action agency firmly under his control. During the Doorley era, Progress for Providence, Inc. became the city agency responsible for establishing programs for those citizens living in poverty and met for the first time on January 4, 1965. The new agency was established as a result of the federal Economic Opportunity Act that made available 1.7 billion federal dollars to fight poverty throughout the United States. The executive board consisted of Gifford, Providence public school superintendent, Charles O'Connor and Doorley's personal friend, John J. Cummings. Doorley also was an ex officio member of the board and

³Perrotta, "Representation of the Poor in the Community Action Program in Providence, Rhode Island: 1965-1969," 1, 53-54, 59.

Gifford became its first chairman. Doorley eventually had the payroll for the staff of this agency prepared out of city hall.⁴

In late 1967, the Green Amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act placed the nation's anti-poverty agencies more directly under the supervision of town or city governments. As a result of the city having more control over this agency, Doorley appointed councilmen Sanford Gorodetsky and Donald McKiernan to the board. At a September 1968 meeting of the Providence city council, a vote was taken to designate Progress for Providence as the city's official anti-poverty agency. This vote was mandated by the provisions of the Green Amendment. The council passed this measure by a single vote. The amendment also called for the city to make Progress for Providence its official anti-poverty agency or forfeit the federal funds it received from the Office of Economic Opportunity. Mayor Doorley's influence saved the agency from receiving a vote of no confidence. Many councilmen were unhappy because they felt that they did not have enough influence on or knew enough about the agency and its activities. Since the Green Amendment put the agency under closer control by the city, the city council decided to investigate its hiring and administrative practices. Doorley shared the council's concern regarding the hiring practices of the agency. Doorley was concerned because professionals on the Progress for Providence staff were paid higher salaries than professionals in his administration. Seth Gifford stated that the salary schedule was not in violation of federal guidelines set by the Office of Economic Opportunity. The agency had a 5.5 million dollar

⁴Ibid., pp. 66-68, 72. The Providence Youth Progress Board was created under the administration of Mayor Walter Reynolds in 1961. The agency was a private non-profit corporation designated to create programs under the Juvenile Delinquency and Crime Control Act. This agency worked closely with the Providence Recreation Department.

budget for the 1969 fiscal year and, to comply with federal guidelines, one-third of the board was made up of representatives from the poor neighborhoods of Providence.⁵

During the November 7, 1968 meeting of the Providence City Council, it was decided that a formal investigation would be conducted on the inner workings of Progress for Providence, Inc. Most councilmen knew little about the workings of the agency and some had been receiving complaints about its operations from constituents. As stated above, many councilmen also felt threatened by the agency that, since its foundation in 1965, had not reported to the city council. Councilmen were also upset because it was felt that the agency was spending too much money on programs that benefited only African Americans. The investigation was conducted by the council's Committee on Urban Redevelopment, Renewal and Planning, which was chaired by Councilman Frank Caprio, a Democrat from the city's Thirteenth Ward. Other members of this committee were Councilman Thomas W. Pearlman, a Republican from the Second Ward, and Democratic Councilmen Raymond J. Devitt, Jr. from the Ninth Ward, Donald E. McKiernan from the Tenth Ward and Robert F. Lynch from the Fifth Ward. The investigation was originally to be conducted by the Ordinance Committee, but Anthony B. Sciarretta, Democratic Councilman from Ward Six argued that, at the time, this committee was too busy with an overhaul of the city's zoning code and could not devote the proper amount of time to the investigation of Progress for Providence.⁶

⁵“Third of the City's Poverty Board Represents the Poor, OEO Finds,” *Evening Bulletin*, March 1, 1967; C. Fraser Smith, “Poverty Unit, Council Square Off,” *Evening Bulletin*, November 13, 1968; “Council Unit to Open Antipoverty Hearings Tonight,” *Evening Bulletin*, December 3, 1968; “Council Calls Poverty Aides,” *Evening Bulletin*, December 10, 1968; “War on Two Fronts: Poverty and Budgets,” *Evening Bulletin*, November 13, 1968; Perrotta, “Representation of the Poor in the Community Action Program in Providence, Rhode Island: 1965 – 1969,” 341.

Councilman Caprio's committee would devote much of its time to the investigation of the Progress for Providence's Concentrated Employment Program. This program was allocated two million dollars to provide job training for the unemployed. The committee also investigated the agency's hiring of J. Webb Mangum, a forty year old African-American neighborhood leader, from South Providence, who had a police record. His hiring was called into question by Joseph Tomasso. Tomasso was the chairman of the Federal Hill Neighborhood Advisory Committee, which was one of nine neighborhood organizations under Progress for Providence. Tomasso took issue with the hiring of Mangum because, in 1967, a Federal Hill resident with a police record was denied employment by the agency. The council also investigated charges that Progress for Providence refused to open its financial records and failed to advertise for open positions. There were also charges that the agency practiced patronage by hiring friends and relatives of officials that worked for the agency. The press held Doorley accountable for this agency because he appointed one-third of the board and indirectly controlled another one-third of the board. As mentioned above, his former campaign manager and associate, Seth Gifford, was the board chair and he influenced the board in the hiring of Cleo F. Lachappelle as Progress for Providence's executive director. Lachappelle complained that Doorley did not pay much attention to Progress for Providence. One reason that both the mayor and the city council did not have a good relationship with Progress for Providence was because they were not able to provide their supporters with jobs in this agency. The council was eager to learn more about the agency

⁶C. Fraser Smith, "Poverty Unit, Council Square Off," *Evening Bulletin*, November 13, 1968; "Antipoverty Hearing Set for Dec. 3," *Evening Bulletin*, November 14, 1968; "Caprio Says Poverty Workers Threatened," *Evening Bulletin*, November 22, 1968; Brian Dickinson, "Council Unit to Open Antipoverty Hearings Tonight," *Evening Bulletin*, December 3, 1968; Perrotta, "Representation of the Poor in the Community Action Program in Providence, Rhode Island: 1965-1969," 344.

through this investigation because it had until February 1969 to rescind its September 1968 vote that established it as the official anti-poverty agency of the city. The first hearing on Progress for Providence took place on December 3, 1968.⁷

After the agency was first established in 1965, Doorley began to lose interest in Progress for Providence and only got involved when a crisis occurred. Doorley continued as a board member until November, 1968 but it is important to note that he never attended a board meeting after January, 1966 and he lost all personal contact with the agency. Councilman Robert Haxton took Doorley's seat on the board. Doorley liked the idea of receiving federal money for the less fortunate, but he never went into the inner-city neighborhoods to meet with residents and for the openings of service centers that were created by this agency. He was frustrated when African Americans protested to demand justice for the poor citizens of the city because the power he had as a strong mayor was not able to keep the "renegades", the word he used to describe the more militant African Americans, from being involved with the grassroots programs associated with this agency. Doorley's relationship with Gifford became more distant because Gifford often sided with the "renegades". Cicilline also worked to get jobs for some of the more militant African Americans and this frustrated Democratic stalwarts who wanted jobs for supporters of the machine. On their part, African Americans were not happy with the agency because they felt it was dominated by whites. The agency never had an African American in a key policy making position.⁸

⁷"War on Two Fronts: Poverty and Budgets," *Evening Bulletin*, November 13, 1968; C. Fraser Smith, "Poverty Unit, Council Square Off," *Evening Bulletin*, November 13, 1968.

Lachapelle was questioned at length at the first hearing on Progress for Providence and provided Caprio, his committee, and the forty people in the audience, with a history of the organization. The tougher questions of the evening came when Lachapelle was asked why his agency hired J. Webb Mangum. The committee found out that Magnum's hiring as deputy director of the concentrated employment program was recommended by Lachapelle and that, despite his criminal record, he was a very dedicated employee who understood the problems of the poor. During a second hearing on December 10, 1968, Seth Gifford testified that the agency was hard to run and dealt on a daily basis with very complex issues and pressure on the agency that came from political officials in Providence, the federal bureaucracy, the African-American community and the poor. Gifford announced on December 18, 1968 that he would not run for reelection to the post of chairman of the board of the agency.⁹

The Caprio hearings continued in the spring of 1969 and they yielded more criticism for Progress for Providence, Lachapelle and Magnum. On March 25, 1969, Magnum testified in front of the committee and criticized the way Lachapelle managed the Concentrated Employment Program. Magnum also spoke about his past criminal record for assault and battery and stated that he had changed and these problems were no longer an issue. At the same time as his testimony, an article appeared in the *Providence Journal* that reported that he was found guilty of assaulting a female employee of Progress for Providence. As the hearings continued, the

⁸Perrotta, "Representation of the Poor in the Community Action Program in Providence, Rhode Island: 1965-1969," 297-305, 341.

⁹C. Fraser Smith, "City Antipoverty Agency, Council Off to Quiet Start," *Providence Journal*, December 4, 1968; C. Fraser Smith, "Criminal Records, Antipoverty," *Evening Bulletin*, December 4, 1968; C. Fraser Smith, "Gifford Cites Pressures of Poverty War," *Evening Bulletin*, December 11, 1968; C. Fraser Smith, "S.K. Gifford to Step Down as Chairman," *Evening Bulletin*, December 18, 1968.

councilmen on the Progress for Providence board were working to gain more influence over the board because they were not happy with the direction of agency. Frank Tabela, an African American, was nominated as the Progress for Providence chairman on January 8, 1969. His nomination was opposed by councilman McKiernan, but he was overruled. The councilmen on the board questioned the way staff worked and the entire management of the agency. The pressure from the councilmen that were members of the board and the hearings caused Lachapelle and sixteen key staff members to resign on April 14, 1969.¹⁰

The staff of Progress for Providence did not want to be dictated to by Doorley's political organization and wanted to keep politics outside of the management of the agency. The reason for the resignations was because the board did not agree to six demands made by the staff. Among the most important demands were that the board chair should inform the city council that the agency staff was only responsible to its own board of directors and to have the agency's payroll account removed from the finance department at city hall. The board did agree to all of the demands except the one that would take the payroll account from city hall but the staff wanted all their demands addressed and proceeded to resign. The board said that it wanted more time to study the payroll issue before making a decision to have it removed from city hall. Doorley was not happy about the resignations and denied the implications that there was too much political control of the agency. However, he did admit that he gave his support for the hiring of some staff members. He also stated that the payroll resided at city hall so that would be accurate accounting of the agency's accounts.¹¹

¹⁰Perrotta, "Representation of the Poor in the Community Action Program in Providence, Rhode Island: 1965-1969," 346-348, 350, 352.

During this tense time, federal officials stated that funding to the agency might be stopped unless the situation with the staff was resolved. The board met on April 21, 1969 in order to resolve the issue but it voted 17 to 16 not to agree to the payroll issue. The board also acted on a motion to appoint an acting executive director and Joseph McGann, an agency appointee of Larry McGarry, was nominated to serve in this position. The board met again on April 30, 1969 and voted to rescind the motion that accepted staff resignations. The day after the meeting the staff agreed to return to work even though the payroll transfer issue was not addressed. After this episode, the agency was never the same and six months after the initial resignations 12 of the 16 staff members resigned and the agency was decentralized and each neighborhood had a separate budget and programs.¹²

In other aspects of the administration of the city, Doorley and the machine had absolute power to distribute over 3,000 city jobs to loyal Democratic supporters. As a result of the power of the Doorley organization, he was accused of trying “to establish a baby Tammany Hall” by Republican city councilman, Thomas W. Pearlman, the minority leader in the city council and one of the leading critics of Doorley and his administration. Pearlman believed that the way the administration handed out city jobs to those who were members of the Democratic ward committees showed “that the new administration’s profile for Providence” was “actually a new and more tightly-knit political machine, rather than a staff of devoted and qualified city employees who are judged on their abilities rather than their political affiliation.” The minority leader also asserted that “the voters of the city of Providence are getting sick and tired of this

¹¹Ibid., 352-354.

¹²Ibid., 355-359, 363, 368.

game of musical chairs, political vendettas and the use of the taxpayers' money for political rewards and penalties in the worst Tammany Hall tradition."¹³

Pearlman continued his criticism of the administration by stating that the number of ward committeemen on the city payroll had increased since Doorley had taken office and that ward committeemen would be less efficient in city jobs because of the time they spent in political activities. Doorley made no secret of the fact that very few city jobs were filled without his knowledge. He also felt a deep loyalty to the Democratic committeemen who supported him when he first ran for mayor. In response to Pearlman's criticism, Doorley explained that court rulings had stated that there was no conflict of interest if a ward committee member also held a city job.¹⁴ The Democratic majority on the city council also responded to Pearlman's criticism and cited the fact that Democratic City Chairman and Public Works Director, Lawrence P. McGarry's department had made improvements in snow removal, street cleaning and garbage collection since he started in the position.¹⁵

At this time, the city council consisted of a Democratic majority that supported Doorley's political wishes. The Republican minority in the city council consisted of four councilmen: Pearlman and Frank Lazarus from the Second Ward and Joseph Souza and Richard D. Worrell from the First Ward. Democratic supporters of Doorley's 1964 primary opponents, Frank Rao and Edward Burke, criticized the Republican minority because they noticed that these

¹³"GOP Leader Scores Doorley," *Evening Bulletin*, March 2, 1965; Perrotta, "Representation of the Poor in the Community Action Program in Providence, Rhode Island: 1965-1969, 52.

¹⁴"GOP Leader Scores Doorley."

¹⁵"City Budget Given Final Council OK," *Providence Journal*, September 17, 1965.

Republican councilmen did not subject Doorley to the same level of scrutiny as Reynolds was subjected to during his years as mayor. It was reported at the time that the attacks became less aggressive when the minority leadership changed from Lazarus to Pearlman. The Doorley administration also was under less scrutiny because Souza was absent for many 1965 council meetings due to illness and Worrell sided with the Democrats on most issues.¹⁶

In January 1966, the Republican minority in the city council issued what was called a “four-point indictment.” The “indictment” cited what the Republicans believed were the “outstanding failures” of Doorley’s first year in office. The statement was drafted by Pearlman and Worrell with help from Rosemarie Pitochelli, executive secretary of the Providence Republican city committee. The four failures mentioned were: “cynicism” toward upper South Providence that would make the neighborhood last to receive any urban renewal funding; the appointment of non-qualified department heads; Doorley’s refusal to accept ideas for improvements to the city; and failure to provide an “imaginative” program for developing the Port of Providence. The statement went on to characterize Doorley as “an ambitious political machine boss who shows signs of seeking to impose his authority on a statewide basis.”¹⁷ Doorley dismissed the Republican attacks and called the criticism “weak, politically oriented and completely unconstructive.”¹⁸

During his first two years as mayor and head of the city’s Democratic machine, he was able to establish himself as the most powerful Democrat in Providence. At this time, through the

¹⁶George F. McDonald, “Doorley Unifies City Committee,” *Evening Bulletin*, December 31, 1965.

¹⁷“Doorley’s Failures Cited,” *Evening Bulletin*, January 27, 1966.

¹⁸“Doorley Answers GOP Complaints,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 7, 1966.

granting of city jobs and political patronage, Doorley unified the Democratic city committee and created what political observers at the time called “the most powerful political body in the state today.” Doorley’s political strength and style was compared to that of his old mentor, former governor Dennis J. Roberts. Political observers of the time predicted that the Democratic organization in Providence would control politics in the city until the next generation.¹⁹

Doorely’s Second Term

Doorley formally opened his re-election campaign, for a second term as mayor, on August 23, 1966 with a speech at the Providence Democratic City Committee annual outing. In this speech, Doorley reviewed what he saw as the accomplishments of his term. First of all he took credit for holding the tax rate to thirty-nine dollars per one thousand dollars of valuation for two years. Doorley wanted to use state aid to supplement the city budget rather than raising taxes that he held was a penalty on the families that chose to remain in Providence. Higher property taxes would not have helped Doorley’s plan to have new industries locate in Providence. The speech also mentioned that the Doorley administration was responsible for obtaining \$20,000,000 in federal funds that were used for the anti-poverty program, the food stamp program and water resource development. He also took credit for providing extra money for education, recreation programs, city pensioners, the privately owned Providence Public Library and for city employee pay raises.²⁰

¹⁹ George F. McDonald, “Doorley Unifies City Committee,” *Evening Bulletin*, December 31, 1965.

Doorley had one opponent in the September 13, 1966 Democratic mayoral primary, Paul J. McCrink, a former Neighborhood Youth Corps counselor. The previous April when McCrink was still a city of Providence employee, he was asked to resign from his post amid allegations by William J. Renzulli, director of the program, because he participated in political activities on the job. Upon his resignation, it was reported that McCrink accused Renzulli of asking him to resign in order to cover up what he called “shameful administration” of the Neighborhood Youth Corps. McCrink was not a strong candidate, but Doorley warned his supporters not to be over confident of victory and to vote in the primary election.²¹

The 1966 primary was not a very interesting race. The McCrink campaign lacked the strong political organization that was needed to really battle Doorley. The winner of the primary had a chance for the first time to run for a four year term in the general election in November. Doorley was not concerned about his opponent and only wanted to win the primary by a large margin in order to maintain his image as a strong and dynamic politician. Doorley won the primary election by more than a four to one margin and won all but one of the one hundred and six Providence polling places. The final results had Doorley winning the election by 18,707 votes to 4,310 votes for McCrink.²² The general election for mayor in 1966 was also an uneventful race and Doorley won the election by winning all of the city’s thirteen wards.

²⁰“Doorley Claims Credit for Holding Tax Line,” *Evening Bulletin*, August 24, 1966; “Property Tax Rate to Remain at \$39,” *Evening Bulletin*, May 3, 1966; “Doorley Firm on Holding Line on Taxes,” *Providence Journal*, March 24, 1966.

²¹“Doorley Vows to Hold Line on Taxes,” *Evening Bulletin*, August 29, 1966.

²²“1st Race for Four-Year Terms Fails to Spark City Voter Interest,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, September 11, 1966; “Doorley Leads Democratic Endorsed Slate to Victory,” *Providence Journal*, September 14, 1966.

Doorley beat his Republican challenger, John Quattrocchi, by a margin of over 20,000 votes. The final results had Doorley with 39,979 votes and Quattrocchi with 19, 639 votes.²³

On January 2, 1967, Doorley was inaugurated for the second time as the Mayor of Providence. At this point in his political career, Doorley was not afraid to use the power of his office and his connections in Washington D.C. to achieve his goals. In a 1967 interview, he admitted that he rarely delegated power and that he made final decisions himself. On April 24, 1967, Doorley addressed top federal executives at a seminar sponsored by the United States Civil Service Commission. He was asked to speak on political articulation in the metropolitan area. During this speech, Doorley outlined, in a very candid fashion, how a political organization helped him to run a large city. The speech defined Doorley's political philosophy and how he used his political power to direct the city of Providence. In the speech, Doorley stated that politics was "a very real part of modern municipal government" and that politics "gave a chief executive the leverage and ability to get many of the things done which he might ordinarily not." Doorley commented that politics was the "weapon" which aided him to "cut across the maze of federal red tape."²⁴

Within what came to be called the "Strong Mayor" speech, Doorley also criticized former Providence Mayor Walter H. Reynolds. Doorley stated that during the Reynolds' years Providence was a city that was "falling out of the mainstream of American life" and that Reynolds failed to "avail himself of Congressional assistance" that would have benefited the

²³"Doorley, DiPrete Easy Victors in Their Races," *Providence Journal*, November 9, 1966.

²⁴ "Mayor to Visit Miami, Houston, Washington," *Providence Journal*, February 4, 1967; Hamilton Davis, "The Mayor, the Speech and the Use of Power," *Providence Journal*, May 2, 1967; Joseph A. Doorley, Jr. "Political Articulation in the Metropolitan Area," undated, PC Archives.

city. Reynolds issued a statement to respond to Doorley's criticisms in which he said that many of the urban renewal projects that Doorley had taken credit for were initiated by the Reynolds' administration. Reynolds was very upset about Doorley's comments and sought to set the record straight.²⁵

The next day the Doorley camp issued a news release in response to the Reynolds statement. In the release, Doorley apologized to Reynolds and called him "an honest and dedicated custodian of the public interest." However, Doorley also pointed out that he did not agree with portions of the Reynolds' statement and that during the first two years of the Doorley administration Providence received more than twenty-two million dollars from the federal government. The news release listed Doorley accomplishments in the areas of anti-poverty, neighborhood urban renewal programs, demolition of old properties, code enforcement programs and a food stamp program.²⁶

Doorley was also criticized by the local press for making the "Strong Mayor" speech. An editorial in the April 30, 1967 edition of the *Providence Sunday Journal* concluded that Doorley "may know all the tricks about acquiring and using political power but has yet to demonstrate that he is using it in the city's and state's best interests."²⁷ Doorley defended his remarks and stated that he would use all the "political muscle" necessary to acquire federal money in order to make Providence "the most attractive city on the eastern seaboard." Doorley's philosophy was

²⁵"Reynolds Disputes Doorley's Claims," *Evening Bulletin*, April 27, 1967.

²⁶News Release from the Mayor's Office City Hall, Providence, Rhode Island, April 28, 1967, PC Archives.

²⁷"Doorley Explains Politics," *Providence Sunday Journal*, April 30, 1967.

that being elected mayor was not a “custodial function,” but was an opportunity to develop his ideas and programs to better serve the city of Providence.²⁸

Fiscal Problems of the City During Doorley’s First Two Terms as Mayor

When Joseph Doorley was first sworn in as mayor, the city of Providence had serious fiscal problems. In the January 3, 1965 *Providence Sunday Journal*, reporter Jack Thompson pointed out that Doorley was taking over the administration of a city with three major problems. The first problem was population decline. From 1955 through 1965, Providence suffered a 16.6 percent population loss. Many of the most successful people living in Providence at the time had started to move from the city to settle in the suburbs. The largest groups that were going to be left in the city were the elderly, minorities, and people with low incomes. The second major problem involved finances. The city of Providence needed to increase its budget and its major source of income was the property tax. In 1965, nearly half the families in Providence had yearly incomes of five thousand dollars or less and it was feared that, if taxes were raised, more people would be driven out of the city. The third major problem was attitude. Many of Providence’s wealthier residents were indifferent to the problems in their city. The middle class distrusted change and the poor were frustrated and unhappy. Civic leaders were not able to get most of the citizens of Providence involved in making the city a better place to live.²⁹

To understand the reasons that Providence was a declining city during the beginning of the Doorley era, a brief summary of the background of the economic problems of the city is

²⁸Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., “Political Articulation in the Metropolitan Area,” undated, PC Archives.

²⁹Jack Thompson, “New Man Takes on an Old City,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, January 3, 1965.

needed. At the start of the twentieth century, textiles were the major industry in Providence. Many European immigrants had settled in the city to work in the textile sweat shops. The immigrant population had settled in the neighborhoods of Federal Hill, Smith Hill, Fox Point, Olneyville, Silver Lake, Elmwood, Wanskuck and South Providence in order to be in close proximity to mills and factories. By 1900, 57% of the labor force of Rhode Island worked in mills that manufactured and finished textiles. The Providence of this era experienced a population increase, the building of a strong manufacturing base and the transformation of Providence into a modern city.³⁰

As a result of World War I, the cloth, metal, rubber and machine industries of Rhode Island expanded and new industries appeared. For example, Providence-based rubber companies increased production as a result of having contracts to produce tires for army trucks and the Lord Steamship Company was granted a contract to produce twenty ships. During the World War I era, ten thousand new workers increased the population of the city. The war boom was only temporary and the economy of the city started to decline as a result of the depression of 1919-1920. The 1920 census showed that for the first time Providence had started to lose population, while the suburbs around Providence increased in population. In 1915, the population of Providence was 248,000, but by 1920 it had dropped to 237,595. Starting in the 1920s, more people began to purchase automobiles and no longer had to live in areas close to their place of

³⁰Patricia Leigh Brown, "Providence, This New England City is Thriving Again," *American Preservation*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1981), 18, 20; Francis J. Leazes and Mark T. Motte, *Providence, the Renaissance City* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 35; Sidney Goldstein and Kurt B. Mayer, *Metropolitanization and Population Change in Rhode Island* (Providence, Rhode Island: Rhode Island Development Council, Planning Division, 1961), 33; William G. McLoughlin, "Providence the Confident Years, 1890-1920," *Rhode Island History*, vol. 51, no. 1 (February, 1993), 39; "Best Wishes for the City's New Mayor," *Providence Journal*, January 2, 1965.

employment. As a result fewer workers had to rely on the trolley cars of Providence to get them to work and could settle in the suburbs. During the 1920s, Rhode Island lost its status as a center of the textile industry and Providence's machine tool and jewelry industries also suffered declines. The jewelry industry lost export revenue because of competition from German manufacturers and the products manufactured by the machine tool industry were sold for lower prices because of overproduction during World War I. The economy of Providence as well as that of the entire state of Rhode Island was affected by the decrease in these industries.³¹

The reasons for the waning of the textile industry in Rhode Island were the same as the reasons for the ebbing of the industry throughout New England in the 1920s. Many New England mill owners invested in mills in the south to cut labor costs, to save on energy costs, and to save on the extra costs of importing cotton from the south. The south also provided a more favorable business climate and southern mill workers received lower wages because they were not unionized as were the mill workers in Rhode Island. Significantly, metal and machine factories also sagged in Rhode Island because their production was dependent on the needs of the textile industry. During the decades of the 1920s and the 1930s, the number of Rhode Islanders employed in manufacturing fell by twenty percent.³²

World War II temporarily boosted the economy of Providence as it did other manufacturing centers and gave the remaining textile companies a reprieve. In 1944, 18,924

³¹McLoughlin, "Providence the Confident Years," 60, 63-64; George H. Kellner and Stanley Lemons, "Providence: A Century of Greatness, 1832-1932," *Rhode Island History*, vol. 41, no. 1 (February, 1982), 18; Leazes and Motte, *Providence the Renaissance City*, 36; Norma LaSalle Daoust, "The Perils of Providence: Rhode Island's Capital City During the Depression and New Deal" (Ph.D dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1982) 14-15.

³²McLoughlin, "Providence the Confident Years," 65; Kurt B. Mayer, *Economic Development and Population Growth in Rhode Island* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1953), 60-61.

men and women were employed by the Walsh-Kaiser Shipyard in Providence. After the war ended, the boom in manufacturing ended. In 1945, 105,079 residents of Providence were employed. The number of Providence residents who were employed dropped to 97,673 in April of 1946. At this time, Rhode Island was the most industrialized state in the United States with 172 residents out of 1,000 working in manufacturing jobs. Providence continued to undergo changes as the textile industry continued to diminish and many textile plants moved to the suburbs or the southern states. From 1939 to 1951, Rhode Island lost more than 10,000 jobs in the textile industries. Union victories, in their struggle with the remaining textile manufacturers, proved pyrrhic as the increased labor costs pushed more firms to close their doors.³³

The state of Rhode Island experienced a high unemployment rate during of recession of 1948-1950. At this time, the unemployment rate in Rhode Island was higher than any other state in the United States. Manufacturing employment continued to drop because the state failed to diversify the products it manufactured and was still committed to the obsolete textile industry. Between 1952 and 1960, Providence lost 15,185 manufacturing jobs. The postwar recession caused the last large textile companies left in the city to close or sell out to other companies which did not continue in the textile business. The Wanskuck Company, the A.D. Juliard Company and the American Silk Spinning Company were all impacted by the recession. During the postwar years, many commercial property owners in the city were unable to maintain their properties and eventually vacated them. As a result of the abandonment of many commercial

³³Earl C. Tanner, *An Introduction to the Economy of Rhode Island* (Providence: Rhode Island Development Council, 1953), xxx; Leazes and Motte, *Providence the Renaissance City*, 36; Liebmann, "Providence City Planning Since 1945," 19; Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, *Providence Industrial Sites Statewide Historical Preservation Report P-P-1* (Providence, Rhode Island: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1981), 31.

properties, their value dropped and this lessened the tax base in the city. At this time, many Providence residents continued to migrate out of the city to single family dwellings in the suburbs of Rhode Island because of the lack of employment opportunities.³⁴

While the manufacturing sector of the economy dwindled, there was a shift to retail trade, the service sector, entertainment and government work during the 1950's. By 1958, 50.3 percent of the Rhode Island economy was based on retail trade, government work and service industries. These new sectors provided more jobs for Rhode Islanders but this did not solve the larger problem of the state failing to make plans to update its industrial base. Many of the new jobs, other than government jobs, were located outside of Providence and they failed to help boost the city's economy.³⁵

By the decade of the 1960s, Providence was the most densely populated urban area in the United States. There were 11,464 residents per square mile in a city that contained 18.1 square miles. Under Mayor Reynolds, the city turned to urban renewal projects to attract new industries and to create new jobs and housing. By 1963, Providence had invested \$19,000,000 in urban renewal projects. The urban renewal projects brought on the demolition of older dwellings and forced 2,000 families to relocate. Despite a decline in population, public school enrollment remained high, the number of residents on public welfare increased and the cost of providing city services to the residents of Providence remained high. As a result of housing demolition caused

³⁴Leazes and Motte, *Providence the Renaissance City*, 36; Liebmann, "Providence City Planning Since 1945," 19; Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, *Providence Industrial Sites Statewide Historical Preservation Report P-P-1* (Providence, Rhode Island: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1981), 31; Goldstein and Mayer, *Metropolitanization and Population Change in Rhode Island*, 34; Sidney Goldstein and Kurt B. Mayer, *Migration and Economic Development in Rhode Island* (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1958), 14.

³⁵Goldstein and Mayer, *Migration and Economic Development in Rhode Island*, 14-15.

in large measure by the construction, in 1958, of Route 95, the tax base in Providence was lowered by \$20,000,000.³⁶

From 1950 to 1960, the population of Providence had dropped by 41,176 people. During the decade of the 1960s, the number of Providence residents living in poverty continued to rise. Eleven percent of families in Providence were receiving welfare and the number of those on welfare increased from 14,229 in 1956 to 19,238 by the end of the 1960's. The median income of families in Providence was \$5069 per year in 1960 and over twenty percent of Providence families were living on incomes of less than \$3,000 per year.³⁷ Employment was tough to secure and many middle class families depended on city hall for a city job or for help in securing employment. During the 1960s there were 3,000 city jobs, many of which were used as political patronage for supporters of the administration in power. Many Providence voters of the 1960s would base their support of a candidate on the amount of patronage they could expect to receive.³⁸

At the time Doorley became mayor, the city of Providence needed a renewal of both the spirits of its residents and of the physical structures both in the downtown area and in the

³⁶United States Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing Census Tracts Final Report PHC (1)-122 Providence-Pawtucket, R.I. – Mass. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), Table P-1, 15; Rhode Island Development Council, *Rhode Island Basic Economic Statistics 1972* (Providence, Rhode Island: Rhode Island Development Council, 1972), 35; James Laffan, "Prov. Faces Crisis Turns to State for Help," *Evening Bulletin*, December 16, 1963; Paul Campbell, *A Community Apart: A History of Public Housing in Providence* (Providence: Rhode Island Publications Society, 2007), 127-128.

³⁷United States Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing Census Tracts Final Report PHC (1)-122 Providence-Pawtucket, R.I. – Mass. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area*, 15; Jack Thompson, "New Man Takes on an Old City," *Providence Sunday Journal*, January 3, 1965.

³⁸Thompson, "New Man Takes on an Old City"; Richard Alan Gabriel, "Ethnic Attitudes and Political Behavior in City and Suburb: The Irish and Italians of Rhode Island" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1962), 54.

neighborhoods. As noted above, Doorley realized that outside funding was needed for any proposed renewal projects and he looked to the state as well as the federal government for assistance. In 1965, 64.5 percent of the city budget came from taxes on property. The tax rate in the city was very high and the burden was especially felt by the poorer and middle class residents. Doorley knew that he could not rely on an increase in taxes to fund the renewal efforts that were needed. In the 1964-65 budget year, the dollar amount raised by property taxes was \$29,285,000.³⁹

Doorley tried to assist Providence residents living in poverty by seeking federal dollars in order to establish a program that would provide summer jobs for young people who were in danger of dropping out of school. On March 30, 1965, Doorley was invited to dinner at the White House with 110 other mayors of cities who, like Providence, had a population over 100,000. As a result of Doorley's visit, federal funding for a neighborhood youth corps program was made available to Providence. The program was financed by \$157,400 of federal money and was matched by \$28,870 from the city budget. 123 young people were involved in the program that was administered in Providence by William Renzulli. The youth in the program were given jobs in city departments for seven and one-half hours a day, four days a week. The participants in the program were paid one dollar and twenty-five cents per hour. On Fridays, all the participants in the program took part in group and individual counseling sessions.⁴⁰

³⁹Thompson, "New Man Takes on an Old City."

⁴⁰"3 RI Mayors at Washington Conference," *Evening Bulletin*, March 31, 1965; "RI Mayors in Capital for Meetings and Briefings," *Providence Journal*, March 31, 1965; "Out of School Youth Corpsmen on Job," *Evening Bulletin*, April 5, 1965.

On April 27, 1965, Doorley again traveled to Washington to meet with Rhode Island Senator, Claiborne Pell, and United States Secretary of Agriculture, Orville Freeman. The purpose of the trip was to get an assurance from Freeman that there would be no cuts in the federal food stamp program for the needy of Providence. At this time, there were 20,000 people eligible for food stamps in the city. The food stamp program started in 1964 operated under the Agricultural Marketing Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. At the start of the food stamp program, 5,000 Rhode Island residents were designated as eligible to purchase food stamps. Doorley initially did not want to have Providence participate in this program because it was not structured so as to be able to benefit the entire group of 20,000 people who needed assistance at this time. As a result of other areas outside of Rhode Island not taking advantage of the food stamp program, the allocation formula was changed to assist all of the needy citizens in Rhode Island.⁴¹

Doorley met with Secretary Freeman to make sure that the allocation would not be changed once needy Providence residents started taking advantage of the program. During the meeting, the secretary assured Doorley that there would be no cuts in the number of Providence residents who were eligible for food stamps. Governor Chafee was also supportive of the food stamp plan for Providence and divided the local cost of the program with the city. Chafee allowed the entire allotment of stamps designated for Rhode Island to be used by Providence residents. The food stamp program allowed needy families to purchase ten dollars worth of food

⁴¹“No Restrictive Cutbacks Seen in Food Stamp Program Here,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 28, 1965; News Release From the Mayor’s Office, City Hall, Providence, RI, April 21, 1965, PC Archives.

for six dollars. A family's income, tax payments or welfare payments would not be affected if they participated in the food stamp program.⁴²

In addition to bringing in federal funds, the Doorley administration sought to hold the city real estate and tangible property tax to \$39 per \$1,000. This tax rate had gone unchanged from 1959 and made property owners happy. The administration made a promise at this time to keep the same tax rate throughout Doorley's entire two year term. In order to keep taxes at the same rate, the 1965-66 fiscal year budget allowed for no increases in city spending and no funds for wage increases for city employees. The total amount of all types of taxes collected in the city in 1965 was \$31,121,570, which was \$381,945 more than was collected in 1964. The extra taxes collected in 1965 were the result of the increased value of city real estate, the increased valuation on buildings and improvements and 2,400 new automobiles purchased by Providence residents.⁴³

In order to acquire state aid to help the financially troubled city, Doorley wanted Governor Chafee to sign a bill that would have authorized six million dollars in state aid to local development programs. Governor Chafee vetoed this bill and Doorley travelled the state accusing the governor of lacking understanding and sympathy for the problems that Providence faced in 1965. Governor Chafee defended himself by stating that redevelopment projects did not require state funding because federal funding was available for these projects. Doorley continued to criticize Chafee in the press and in speeches. He believed that the true reason for the bill being vetoed was that Chafee thought that only Providence would benefit from its

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³"Providence Tax Rate to be \$39.00," *Providence Journal*, May 1, 1965; "No City Tax Hike Pledged for 2 Yrs.," *Providence Journal*, May 7, 1965; Assessor Places City Tax Levy at \$31,121,570," *Providence Journal*, June 12, 1965.

passage. Doorley maintained that the taxpayers of Providence needed help from the state in order to bring about the physical renewal of the city in order to attract new businesses to locate there.⁴⁴

The operating budget for the city of Providence for the 1966 fiscal year was \$48,330,160. Doorley acknowledged that the budget was balanced as a result of \$1,400,000 from a federal school aid program, increased state grants for education and welfare and a one million dollars savings in debt service charges. In the annual budget message, Doorley announced that tax stabilization would stimulate the economic growth needed to expand the tax base in the city. The budget message also alerted Providence residents that the city was in “a critical period” because of the tax losses that it would experience as a result of federal and state road construction. Providence also experienced a loss in tax revenue at this time because of a continued exodus of industry to the suburbs. Doorley’s budget was approved by the city council on September 16, 1965.⁴⁵

The Democratic majority of the city council all voted in favor of Doorley’s budget. The three Republican councilmen present on the evening that the budget was approved declined to vote on the budget and only voted with the Democrats for passage of measures that would effect budget proposals for job changes and pay schedules. Republican minority leader, Pearlman, again led the attack on Doorley during the September 17, 1965 city council meeting. Pearlman held that the capital budget should have been submitted at the same time as the operating budget.

⁴⁴“Doorley Wants Governor to Sign Renewal Aid Bill,” *Evening Bulletin*, May 17, 1965; “Mayor Renews Feud With Chafee Over Aid,” *Evening Bulletin*, June 3, 1965.

⁴⁵James F. Laffan, “City’s Budget is \$48 Million Balance is Achieved Without Tax Hike or Depleting Reserve,” *Providence Journal*, August 17, 1965; “\$48.3 Million Budget Approved,” *Evening Bulletin*, September 17, 1965.

Pearlman said that, if Doorley submitted the budget in the way he prescribed, council members would have had the opportunity to see the entire list of budget commitments at the same time. Pearlman also asserted that the budget did not comply with the city charter because it failed to itemize work projects that had funds allocated to them and that the budget lacked an accounting of federal grants.⁴⁶

A large part of the financial problems in 1969 was due to the fact that the Providence School Department was in a 2.5 million dollar deficit situation. The accounting firm of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co. was hired to prepare a report on the department's financial picture. As a result of the financial crisis, Doorley's administrative assistant, Charles Wood, was hired by the school board as the school department's first business manager and the Providence city council voted to change the fiscal year to a one-time only nine month period. The Rhode Island General Assembly voted to allow this change in the fiscal year for the city of Providence. The fiscal year was changed to October 1, 1969 to June 30, 1970 and taxes would be collected in four equal quarterly payments during nine months. This enabled Doorley to hold the tax rate to forty-three dollars. Doorley was anxious to do this because on August 13, 1969, he announced that he would seek a third term as mayor of Providence in 1970 and realized that it would be unpopular with voters if he raised taxes.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ "City Budget Given Final Council OK," *Providence Journal*, September 17, 1965.

⁴⁷ "School Bd. Holds Talks on Deficit," *Evening Bulletin*, January 15, 1969; News Release from the Mayor's Office City Hall, Providence, RI, March 28, 1969; News Release from the Mayor's Office City Hall, Providence, RI, May 2, 1969; Brian Dickinson, "What's New at City Hall? Just the Annual Budget Crisis," *The Providence Sunday Journal*, July 6, 1969; "Mayor Presents \$52.6 Million '69-'70 Budget," *Providence Journal*, August 15, 1969; "Doorley to Seek 3rd Term Next Year," *Providence Journal*, August 14, 1969.

Doorley's final budget for the nine-month fiscal year was \$52,644,680. This budget also allowed the tax rate to be held at forty-three dollars per one-thousand dollars. The budget included 21.7 million dollars for the Providence School Department. Parents and the Providence School Committee had hoped for a 23.5 million dollar budget and over five-thousand signed petitions that were delivered to the Doorley's office. Doorley proposed a 2 million dollar bond issue for repairs to Providence schools, but would not give in to protests to add additional funds to the school departments operating budget. Related to financial problems were the city's labor problems and this budget also included \$350,000 for raises in the salaries of city police and firemen. However, he made no provisions for a raise for Providence teachers. Doorley made no apologies for his budget decisions and maintained that city employees had to forgo raises in order to keep the tax rate low for all city residents. He maintained that he had to make hard decisions in drafting the 1969-70 budget and that he could not always please everyone.⁴⁸

On November 24, 1969, classes were cancelled in Providence as a result of a teachers' strike. Because no raise for teachers was included in Doorley's budget, a labor dispute started between the Providence School Board and the Providence local of the American Federation of Teachers. 26,000 thousand students were effected by this strike that lasted for twelve days. The union wanted a pay scale of \$8,500 to \$17,300 in nine steps and an arbitration panel proposed a pay scale of \$6,850 to \$10,600 in 11 steps. The union's officers accepted the offer from the arbitration panel but the union's membership voted against the offer 1,170 to 30. In order to get the teachers back to work, Doorley made a formal complaint to the Rhode Island Superior Court.

⁴⁸“Mayor Presents \$52.6 Million 1969-70 Budget,” *Providence Journal*, August 15, 1969; “Petitions Supporting Budget Given Mayor,” *Evening Bulletin*, August 13, 1969; “School Funds Not Reduced, Mayor,” *Evening Bulletin*, August 12, 1969; “Mayor Plans Education Bond Issue,” *Evening Bulletin*, July 30, 1969.

On December 4, 1969, Judge Joseph R. Weisberger ruled that the strike violated the 1966 State Teacher Arbitration Act. The ruling by Weisberger ordered the teachers to end the strike. The union, led by Anthony Mancini, Jr., president, and A. Harvey Silverman, treasurer, defied the court order and were charged with contempt. At a December 10, 1969 court hearing, Mancini and Silverman asked Judge Weisberger if the charges of contempt could be dropped if they could convince their fellow teachers to return to work. On December 11, 1969, Mancini and Silverman were able to stop the strike and the teachers voted 576 to 291 to accept a two year contract. The first year of the contract had salary schedule of \$6,850 to \$10,600 in 11 steps and the second year of the contract had a scale of \$7,000 to \$11,200 in 11 steps. Judge Weisberger fined the union \$20,000 for continuing the strike after the court had ordered the teachers to return to work. Mancini and Silverman received \$500 suspended fines for civil contempt.⁴⁹

The city budget for the 1970-71 fiscal year brought no tax increase to property owners of the city of Providence. The tax rate remained at forty-three dollars per one thousand and was good news for Doorley in an election year. Doorley proposed a \$67,884,878 budget that avoided a tax hike because of a 7.2 million dollar surplus. 4.5 million of the surplus resulted from a gain in income from the nine month 1969-70 fiscal year in which the city collected a full year's taxes in nine months. The budget included twenty-six million dollars for the Providence School Department, a five dollar a week raise for police and firemen and an eight dollar a week raise for

⁴⁹“1,200 Teachers Out in Providence,” *New York Times*, November 25, 1969; “Judge Orders Halt in Teachers’ Strike,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1969; John H. Fenton, “Teachers Accept Providence Pact,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1969; “Teacher Union Gets Fine in Rhode Island,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1969; M. Charles Bakst, “Teachers Out; Schools Shut,” *Providence Journal*, November 24, 1969; M. Charles Bakst, “New Teacher Pay Proposal Turned Down,” *Providence Journal*, December 3, 1969, “Teachers Union Fined \$20,000 for Contempt,” *Providence Journal*, December 13, 1969.

the city's blue collar workers. The police, firemen and blue collar workers were still in negotiations for higher wages and Doorley stated that wages above what he budgeted for would cause serious problems for the city. On June 18, 1970, the city council passed Doorley's budget by a vote of 17 to 2. The two Republican councilmen protested the cuts in the school budget and voted against Doorley's budget.⁵⁰

Doorley and State and National Politics

Doorley's political organization also emerged as a strong force in Rhode Island politics and political observers thought that he was destined for higher office in state or federal government. Because of this political strength, many Democrats thought that Doorley would run for governor against John Chafee in November 1966. However, in August 1965, Doorley stated that he would not run for governor, but the speculation did not end.⁵¹ Doorley's political philosophy and actions demonstrated that he took very seriously the designation of being a "strong mayor". No one in the city and state at this time had any question about who was in charge at city hall. Woonsocket mayor, Kevin K. Coleman called Doorley the "titular head" of the Democratic Party in Rhode Island. Coleman believed that Doorley was the "man to cultivate for support" if a Democrat wanted to run for a political office. Doorley denied being "the titular head" of the Democratic Party. In February, 1966, Doorley announced once again that he would

⁵⁰James F. Laffan and Merrill Bailey, "No City Tax Increase in \$67-Million Budget," *Evening Bulletin*, May 15, 1970; "Hearing Set on City's \$67.8-Million Budget," *Providence Journal*, May 22, 1970; Merrill Bailey, "Council Passes \$67,884,878 Budget for City," *Providence Journal*, June 19, 1970.

⁵¹"Doorley Bars 1966 Race for Governor," *Providence Journal*, August 19, 1965.

not run for governor against John Chafee and emphasized that he felt it was “impossible to make a lasting impact on a community in a two-year span.”⁵²

At the start of his second term in 1966, speculation about Doorley’s political plans for the future started once again. After the January 10, 1967 death of Congressman John E. Fogarty, a member of the House of Representatives from Rhode Island’s Second Congressional District since 1941, many Democrats, including Larry McGarry, thought that Doorley would throw his hat in the ring and run for Congress.⁵³ Doorley realized that the death of Fogarty could have provided him with an opportunity to run for national office and he did give some thought to running for Congress. In the end, he decided not to run because leaving the office of mayor after recently being re-elected for a four year term would be what he called “entirely self-serving.”⁵⁴

Speculation about Doorley’s political future started once again in 1968. On May 2, 1968, Doorley made an announcement that he would not run for governor that November. He cited his main reason for not wanting the voters to think that his goal to solve the physical and social problems of Providence was driven only by his desire to become governor of Rhode Island. Doorley realized that there was much work to be done in Providence and completing the work was his main argument against running for governor against Republican incumbent John Chafee. He stated that his main priority at the time was making personal contact with the poor citizens of

⁵²“Won’t Seek Nomination for Governor: Doorley,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 10, 1966.

⁵³“Rep. John Fogarty Dies at 53; Championed U.S. Health Aid,” *New York Times*, January 11, 1967; Mike Stanton e-mail to Carl Antonucci – August 1, 2002 – Stanton found out during his research for the *Prince of Providence* that the Doorley McGarry rift initially started when Doorley decided against running for Congress when Fogarty died. McGarry thought that Doorley would run and started to line up city committee votes for himself for a run for mayor. Doorley was upset that people did not check with him regarding his decision on running for Congress.

⁵⁴News Release from the Mayor’s Office City Hall, Providence, Rhode Island, January 23, 1967, PC Archives.

Providence so that he could better understand their needs and help to fight the war on poverty. State Senator J. Joseph Garrahy, then chairman of the Rhode Island Democratic Party was among many Democrats disappointed at Doorley's decision not to run for the governor's seat.⁵⁵

During this time, Doorley was also involved with Democratic politics on the national level. On March 31, 1968, President Johnson decided not to run for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States. With Johnson out of the race, Doorley supported Robert F. Kennedy for the nomination. Kennedy was assassinated on June 6, 1968. On June 7, 1968, Doorley, State Democratic Chairman, Garrahy and Mr. William Matthews left Providence to attend the wake of Robert F. Kennedy at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. After the Kennedy assassination, Doorley became very active in Vice President Herbert Humphrey's campaign for the Democratic nomination for President. In a show of support for Humphrey, Doorley was one of eighty mayors that travelled to the Minneapolis home of the Vice President on July 1, 1968 to give him their endorsements. Doorley was part of Mayors for Humphrey and United Citizens for Humphrey, two national groups that supported Humphrey's candidacy. On July 23, 1968, Humphrey wrote a personal letter to Doorley to thank him for his support and to encourage his continued support at the Democratic Convention that was to take place in Chicago. Doorley stated that he was a Humphrey supporter because Humphrey had a desire to support federal programs that would help to solve urban problems in America's cities.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ "Doorley Won't Run for Governor," *Evening Bulletin*, May 2, 1968; "Garrahy Regrets Doorley Won't Challenge Chafee," *Providence Journal*, May 3, 1968.

⁵⁶ Tom Wickers, "Johnson Says He Won't Run," *New York Times*, April 1, 1968; "136 Mayors Back Humphrey Drive," *New York Times*, July 2, 1968; Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., News release from the Mayor's Office City Hall, Providence, RI, June 7, 1968, PC Archives; Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., News release from the Mayor's Office City Hall, Providence, RI, July 1, 1968, PC Archives; Fred R. Harris to Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., July 12, 1968, PC Archives; L.A. Nikolorick to Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., July 12, 1968, PC Archives; Robert E. Short to Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., July 16, 1968, PC Archives; Hubert H. Humphrey to Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., July 23, 1968, PC Archives.

CHAPTER 4

PROBLEMS IN THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE DURING THE DOORLEY ERA

Urban Renewal of the Neighborhoods in Providence

The social and urban renewal of Providence was a major issue that Doorley faced during his ten years as the mayor of Providence. A brief history of urban renewal in Providence under mayors Roberts and Reynolds is needed to explain the situation Doorley walked into when he was elected mayor. At the end of the Roberts administration, Providence began the planning stages for its first urban renewal projects. In 1950, the Slum Clearance and Redevelopment Act was passed by the Rhode Island General Assembly. This act replaced the Community Redevelopment Act of 1946 that allowed for the creation of a redevelopment agency in Providence. Roberts retired as mayor of Providence on January 2, 1951 to become the governor of Rhode Island and the task of completing urban renewal projects became the responsibility of the Reynolds administration. The same urban renewal team that worked in the Roberts' administration continued under the Reynolds' administration and this provided continuity. A 1951 report entitled *Redevelopment Proposals for Central Areas in Providence*, which described and prioritized renewal projects, was prepared by the Providence Redevelopment Agency, the City Plan Commission, the Providence Building Inspection Department and the Providence Health Department.¹ During that same year, a court action started as a result of the proposed

¹Charles R. Wood and Blair Associates, *Community Renewal Program* (Providence, Rhode Island: Blair Associates, 1964), 62-63, 80; Jack Liebmann, "Providence City Planning Since 1945: Attitudes Towards Master Planning and Citizen Participation" (unpublished honors thesis, Brown University, 1978), 21, 38-40, 47, 50;

Point Street industrial redevelopment project caused redevelopment projects to be temporarily halted. Under provisions in the Slum Clearance and Redevelopment Act, the Providence Redevelopment Agency had the right to acquire private homes and properties in blighted areas by eminent domain. George Ajootian owned a two family house and two lots of land on South Street which was located in the Point Street project area. Ajootian's property was scheduled to be taken by eminent domain and Ajootian took court action to stop the city from taking his property.²

As a result of this case, the Rhode Island Supreme Court had an opportunity for the first time to test if the Providence Redevelopment Agency had properly defined the Point Street area as a blighted area as defined by the Slum Clearance and Redevelopment Act. In *Ajootian v. Providence Redevelopment Agency*, the Rhode Island Supreme Court found that the Point Street area correctly fell under the definition of a blighted area.³ During the court proceedings, the area was described in the transcripts as follows:

. . . 46 percent of the land is used for industrial and commercial purposes; that the streets are narrow and congested; that of the 125 dwelling units which are contained in 49 structures and are occupied by about 400 people 110 have been surveyed; that 84 percent of these were built before 1900; that 71 percent have no central heating; that 63 percent have no inside hot water; that 62 percent have no private bath; that 97 are inadequate because of hazardous and unsanitary conditions; that 85 percent have serious deterioration; and that all dwellings are predominantly of wood construction, built close together and constitute fire hazards. It is further alleged that because of such conditions, the incidence of

"Housing Bias Fought," *New York Times*, July 4, 1961; John Hutchins Cady, *The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950* (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), 281-282.

²Christina M. Senno, "A Threat to the Security of Private Property Rights: *Kelo v. City of New London* and a Recommendation to the Supreme Court of Rhode Island," *Roger Williams University Law Review*, vol. 11, no. 721 (May 2006), 742-743; *Ajootian vs. Providence Redevelopment Agency*, 91 A.2d, 21,22, RI 1952.

³Senno, "A Threat to the Security of Private Property Rights," 742-743.

juvenile delinquency, aid to dependent children, tuberculosis and other diseases are disproportionately high.⁴

In order to firmly establish the constitutionality of redevelopment, Amendment XXXIII to the Rhode Island Constitution was proposed at the Limited Constitutional Convention of the State of Rhode Island that was held on June 20, 1955. John W. Moakler, a delegate from Providence on the convention's Committee on Municipal Development, was the primary author of this amendment. Even though the legality of redevelopment was upheld in several individual Rhode Island court cases, many were close decisions. For example, in *Re Advisory Opinion to the Governor*, the dissenting justices argued that a section on redevelopment powers be added to the state constitution. This amendment was ratified by the voters of the state on July 12, 1955 with 29,383 votes for and 14,698 votes against.⁵ The amendment states that:

The clearance, re-planning, redevelopment, rehabilitation and improvement of blighted and substandard areas shall be a public use and purpose for which the power of eminent domain may be exercised, tax moneys and other public funds expended and public credit pledged. The general assembly may authorize cities, towns or local redevelopment agencies to undertake and carry out projects approved by the local legislative body for such uses and purposes including the acquisition in such areas of such properties as the local legislative body may deem necessary or proper to effectuate any of the purposes of this article although temporarily not required for such purposes and the sale or other disposition of any such properties to private persons for private uses or to public bodies for public uses.⁶

⁴*Ajootian v. Providence Redevelopment Agency*.

⁵Patrick T. Conley and Robert G. Flanders, Jr., *The Rhode Island Constitution A Reference Guide* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2007), 199-200; Rhode Island Constitutional Convention, *Proceedings of the Limited Constitutional Convention of the State of Rhode Island 1955* (Providence, Rhode Island: Rhode Island Secretary of State, 1955), 31, 52-56; Senno, "A Threat to the Security of Private Property Rights," 741-744.

⁶Conley and Flanders, *The Rhode Island State Constitution*, 199.

New legislation was passed by the General Assembly in 1956 that created redevelopment agencies with authorization for conservation and rehabilitation in each city and town in Rhode Island.⁷

The Willard Center Redevelopment Project was the first urban renewal project to be started in Providence. The demolition of buildings in the Willard Avenue commercial area was started in 1954. This pilot project took place in Dogtown, the old commercial area of South Providence. During this time the businesses in this area were on the decline. The object of this project was to clear a decaying commercial area and old tenement houses in an eighteen acre area located on Prairie and Willard Avenues and to build in their place a new shopping center, a new elementary school and a park. By 1956, the Willard Avenue shopping center and parking area were built. The many acres of junkyards behind the new shopping center were cleared and the Flynn Elementary School was constructed. Many of the businesses that were demolished as a result of this project moved into the new shopping center and the two hundred families that were displaced moved into houses in nearby neighborhoods.⁸

In 1956, the city designated many historic houses on Benefit Street to be condemned because they were unfit structures for people to live in. The area on Benefit Street had become a very undesirable skid row type of area at this time and was slated by the city to be torn down. Benefit Street was located on the East Side, an affluent and historic neighborhood, and extended

⁷Wood and Blair Associates, *Community Renewal Program*, 63

⁸Cady, *The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950*, 281; Leslie J. Vollmert, *South Providence Statewide Historical Preservation Report, P-P-2* (Providence, Rhode Island: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1978), 44-47; John Fawcett, "Urban Renewal Our Investment in Tomorrow," *The American City*, vol. 78 (November, 1959).

into the Fox Point neighborhood. Some houses on the East Side in the area near Brown were also being torn down or moved as a result of the university's expansion. Brown needed additional space since the number of students at the university went from 2,224 in 1945 to 3,579 in 1955. Between 1940 and 1956, Brown spent 2.1 million dollars to purchase properties in order to build more dormitories, offices and to clear land for the Wriston Quadrangle. A group of affluent residents of the area were concerned about the fact that many of the areas historic houses were already being demolished by Brown University and others in the area were threatened by the city. In 1957, a group of concerned East Side residents led by John Nicholas Brown, a descendant of the family that first endowed the university, and Antoinette Downing, an architectural historian, formed the Providence Preservation Society. The society was formed to save historic East Side homes from demolition. In 1958, the society, in cooperation with the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, published *College Hill, A Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal*. The study documented the historical and architectural significance of houses in the East Side Area. The recommendations of this study were added to the plans for East Side renewal and more than 900 citizens, including many East Side homeowners, worked to restore historic houses in this area from 1956-1962. One member of the society, Beatrice Chase, purchased forty homes in this area that were renovated and sold.⁹

⁹Scott MacKay and Jody McPhillips, "Preservationists Begin to Halt Wrecking Ball of Urban Renewal," *Providence Journal*, July 25, 1999; Arthur Davenport, "Providence to Open Its Old Houses to Public," *New York Times*, May 6, 1962; William McKenzie Woodward and Edward F. Sanderson, *Providence A Citywide Survey of Historic Resources* (Providence, Rhode Island: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1986), 65; Francis J. Leazes, Jr., and Mark T. Motte, *Providence, The Renaissance City* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 53.

The urban renewal process in Providence was designed to clear up decaying neighborhoods but brought many problems to those forced to move when their houses were condemned. Urban renewal had the most adverse effects on the African-American community of Providence. In 1940, the African-American population in the city numbered 6,388. After 1950, many African Americans from the south migrated to Providence with the hopes of gaining employment that paid higher wages than the positions they left behind. The city's African-American population grew to 11,900 in 1960 and made up less than ten percent of the total population of Providence. At the start of the Doorley era, they were a small minority with large problems and they lacked any meaningful influence in the political life of Providence. Segregation and bias against African Americans was not as blatant in Providence as it was in the south but just as real. Prejudice existed in the city especially in the areas of employment and housing. At the conclusion of the 1960's, 31.5 percent of the city's African Americans were living below the national poverty level and more than 17 percent of those living in poverty survived with the aid of public assistance. By 1965, eighty percent of the city's African Americans were forced to move at least once due to urban renewal projects.¹⁰ Historian Richard Frusher states that during the urban renewal period in Providence, "It appeared as though the city was bent on implementing its renewal programs in those areas with the largest number of blacks".¹¹

¹⁰Richard Albert Frusher, "The Conscience of the City: Providence, Politics and The Providence Human Relations Commission 1963-1968" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1974), 33, 282; Andrew J. Bell, *An Assessment of Life in Rhode Island as an African American in the Era from 1918 to 1993* (New York: Vantage Press, 1997), 45.

¹¹Frusher, "The Conscience of the City," 34.

The Lippitt Hill renewal project, which began in 1959, displaced a large number of African Americans and was an example of the fact that when city officials decided to clear a neighborhood they did not think of the well-being of the people who were displaced. Lippitt Hill, one of the oldest African- American neighborhoods in the state, was a few blocks away from Benefit Street. It was the first urban renewal project in Rhode Island that included plans for the construction of new private housing. The residents in the area did not have the power of the affluent residents of the East Side to halt the demolition of their neighborhood. Many African-American residents, who were displaced from this neighborhood, experienced discrimination when they tried to rent new housing because many landlords would not rent to African Americans.¹²

A 1960 survey administered by the Rhode Island Commission Against Discrimination was taken by the 267 African-American families forced to relocate as a result of the urban renewal clearance in Lippitt Hill. The problems that these families listed in the survey were as follows:

. . . (1)Denial of housing by rental firms; and by property owners, through newspaper advertisements, on the basis of color. (2) Purchase prices and rental costs above market value of property. (3) Responsibility of the families, in the majority of cases, to locate on their own. (4) The sub-standard conditions of property that many families were required to accept for rental. (5) The lack of adequate assistance to families to re-locate in housing as good or better than they formally enjoyed.¹³

¹²Wood and Blair Associates, Community Renewal Plan, 15-16; Scott MacKay and Jody McPhillips, "Times a-Changing," *Providence Journal*, August 29, 1999; Scott MacKay and Jody McPhillips, *Preservationists Begin to Halt Wrecking Ball of Urban Renewal*, available from <http://www.projo.com/specials/century/month7/725urban.htm>, (accessed April 12, 2010).

¹³Rhode Island Commission Against Discrimination, *Relocation of Families from Lippitt Hill Area*, (Providence, Rhode Island: Rhode Island Commission Against Discrimination, 1960), 14.

When Doorley first took office, Providence was one of two cities in the United States to have completed four urban renewal projects. The Willard Center I and Willard Center II were completed. The Point Street project cleared an area for industrial use where ninety-seven percent of the properties were substandard housing. The West River project allowed industrial plant construction in the project area.¹⁴ During the 1960's, Providence was still in need of more renewal projects for its neighborhoods and the downtown area. Mayor Reynolds left office with four other major urban renewal projects in the execution stage. The four projects were Central-Classical, 61.3 acres that were being redeveloped for public commercial and residential use; Lippitt Hill, 57.7 acres that were being redeveloped for mostly private residences and commercial space on North Main Street; Huntington Expressway Industrial Park, 124.9 acres being redeveloped for industry and Weybosset Hill, 56.2 acres being redeveloped for public, cultural, commercial and industrial uses.¹⁵

Critics or skeptics of urban renewal held that for the process to be truly successful it had to be more than just clearing of neighborhoods and the building of new structures. Many groups advocated a social renewal as well as a physical renewal that only replaced demolished buildings. The effects of urban renewal on the citizens of Providence were a great concern to many people. A 1964 study of the urban renewal process in Providence entitled, *A Social Plan for Community Renewal of the City of Providence*, recognized the debate about the outcomes of urban renewal:

¹⁴Walter H. Reynolds to Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., November 25, 1964, PC Archives; John Fawcett, "Urban Renewal Our Investment in Tomorrow," 100-102.

¹⁵Walter H. Reynolds to Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., November 25, 1964, PC Archives.

Many cities throughout the United States are currently considering the adoption or rejection of urban renewal as the means for their revitalization. The effect of urban renewal upon people is one of the pivotal considerations which will determine the outcome of such deliberation and will be a criterion which the success of Providence's urban renewal program will be measured.¹⁶

The committee that produced the above study was concerned with the many problems that the poor in Providence were experiencing during this time. The writers of the study pointed out that urban renewal projects would not work if the projects were only concerned with the clearing of neighborhoods and had no provisions for helping the displaced residents with their social problems. The study made the following points:

In the process of attacking blight in neighborhoods with a high incidence of housing deterioration, urban renewal programs will encounter a heavy concentration of residents with handicapping conditions. Where such conditions contribute to the blighted condition of housing and neighborhoods urban renewal will be unable to achieve its objectives without adequate treatment of such personal and family problems as well.¹⁷

On August 26, 1965, to get the city moving in the right direction in its urban renewal projects, Doorley reactivated the Citizens' Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal. This committee's function was to allow citizens to understand and participate in urban renewal efforts. As part of this committee, Doorley established an executive committee and a subcommittee that would deal with the problems of minority housing, code review, industrial development, finance and a general plan. The chairman of the Citizens' Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal was Dr. William Gaige, President of Rhode Island College.¹⁸

¹⁶ Rhode Island Council of Community Services, Inc., *A Social Plan for Community Renewal of the City of Providence, Rhode Island* (Providence, Rhode Island: Rhode Island Council of Community Services, Inc., 1964) , i.

¹⁷Ibid., 8.

¹⁸News Release From the Mayor's Office, City Hall, Providence, RI, August 26, 1965, PC Archives.

At this time, urban renewal was on the minds of many people in Providence. Citizens and government officials desired to learn all they could about the urban renewal process and how it could best benefit the city of Providence. Edward J. Logue, Administrator of the Boston Redevelopment Agency, visited Providence on October 16, 1965. Logue addressed the New England Council's Rhode Island Division luncheon on urban renewal. He stated that Doorley had what he called "aggressive determination to get things done" and later went on to explain that in his opinion the mayor of a city was the key to a successful urban renewal program. The address also pointed out that Providence, Boston and New Haven all started the urban renewal programs at approximately the same time and that, as of the date of his remarks, Providence was behind the other two cities.¹⁹

Doorley's plan for urban renewal was to begin at the neighborhood level, emphasized by his proposal of the General Neighborhood Renewal Plan on December 1, 1965. This plan called for the physical rehabilitation of seventeen percent of the land that made up the entire city of Providence and was based on what was called a federal-city cost saving plan. In this plan, the federal government would pay seventy-five percent and the city would pay twenty-five percent of the costs associated with urban renewal projects. An important feature of the plan was the desire to minimize the number of people that would have to be displaced as a result of any demolition that would be part of a neighborhood urban renewal project.²⁰

The South Providence neighborhood was one of the most depressed and blighted in the city at the time. In order to improve the neighborhood so that an urban renewal project could take

¹⁹"It's Mayor Seen Key to a City's Renewal," *Providence Journal*, October 16, 1965.

²⁰News Release From the Mayor's Office, City Hall, Providence, RI, December 1, 1965, PC Archives.

place, Doorley proposed what he called a six-point program to address negative conditions in the neighborhood. The city would use its own funds to undertake these improvements and to start to eliminate the slum-like conditions that existed throughout the neighborhood. The six point plan included the hiring of housing and building inspectors to report housing and building code violations. Doorley made available \$25,000 from the city budget and used this money for the demolition of unsound structures. Other parts of the plan were improved garbage collections, the assignment of half of Providence's health inspectors to investigate health problems, increased prosecutions for violations of any health, housing or building codes and the prohibition of the city collector from selling any South Providence property at tax sale unless the purchaser agreed to bring the property up to minimum housing standards.²¹

Doorley understood that for urban renewal to be effective, as many Providence residents as possible had to be involved in the process. In an address to a training institute of the New York state housing and community renewal officials, the mayor argued that "politics and urban renewal can't be separated." Doorley explained to the training institute participants that he used the power of the mayor's office to keep urban renewal projects moving. During the speech Doorley referred to himself as "the expediter" and said that urban renewal efforts would have had different results if he was a "ceremonial mayor and city administration was handled by a city manager." Doorley made no secret of the fact that he used his political power to ask assistance for urban renewal projects from regional, state and federal officials.²²

²¹"Mayor Doorley's Six-Point South Prov. Program," *Evening Bulletin*, December 6, 1965.

²²"Doorley Says Politics Renewal Go Together," *Evening Bulletin*, December 9, 1965.

Throughout 1966, urban renewal plans in Providence continued to be a hot topic discussed widely in the press. Many advocates for urban renewal stated that the Doorley administration was not doing enough to address the slum conditions in the South Providence neighborhood. Doorley was sensitive to the fact that the demolition of areas associated with urban renewal projects displaced residents without really rehabilitating them and wanted to eliminate slum areas without having to displace people. The criticism voiced by Floyd B. McKissick, the national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), stated that urban renewal in Providence was what he called “negro removal.” At this time, McKissick stated that “direct action” would be taken if the administration did not work on improving the slum areas where many African Americans in Providence lived at this time.²³ The Very Reverend Ronald E. Stenning, dean of the Episcopal Cathedral of Saint John and the Reverend E. McKinnon White, pastor of the Washington Park Methodist Church, also criticized Doorley and stated their frustration to the press. Doorley defended his administration by alerting the press to the fact that his administration was trying to address the urban despair in South Providence by having Providence designated as one of the demonstration cities under President Lyndon Johnson’s new program. It was argued by Doorley and his administration that South Providence would qualify for federal funds under this program once it was approved by Congress.²⁴

The administration also stated that the reason that action was delayed in South Providence was because action in the area would have required seventy-five percent of the buildings in the area to be demolished and the displacement of residents. Doorley said that he

²³“Mayor Notes Conflict in Views on Renewal,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 17, 1966.

²⁴“Doorley Defends His Thinking On Arena, S. Prov.,” *Evening Bulletin*, March 7, 1966.

would have been willing to listen to any ideas that people had for improvements to South Providence but that no group came forward with any suggestions.²⁵ Doorley also issued a press release to respond to the criticism. Doorley made the following points in the March 12, 1966 press release:

A tremendously complex General Neighborhood Renewal Plan has been prepared. It proposes maximum utilization of federal dollars to accomplish the costly goal of neighborhood renewal. It demonstrates a humane concern to minimize family displacement. The entire plan is basically rehabilitation as opposed to demolition. No alternative plan has been offered. No critic has made any presentation which takes into account the financial problems of the city or the element of human concern.²⁶

Doorley was well aware of the problems that existed in the neighborhood of South Providence at this time. Doorley stated that he agreed with community leaders in their view that “vacant boarded-up abandoned structures” caused “the spread of neighborhood blight.” Doorley wanted to wait to start the demolition project in this area until he was assured of two dollars in federal funds for every dollar that the city put toward this project.²⁷ In April 1966, Providence was awarded a \$40,900 grant to pay part of the demolition costs in South Providence.²⁸ The first building to be demolished under this program was located on 326 Friendship Street. The demolition of this building took place on April 6, 1966 and Doorley was present for the occasion.

²⁵“Mayor Oks Hearing on S. Prov Renewal,” *Evening Bulletin*, March 15, 1966.

²⁶Press Release, March 12, 1966, PC Archives.

²⁷“Mayor Explains Delay in South Providence Demolition,” *Evening Bulletin*, March 2, 1966.

²⁸“The City Moves Just in Time,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 6, 1966.

Doorley stated that under this program about one-hundred boarded up buildings in South Providence were scheduled for demolition.²⁹

Despite much criticism relating to the Doorley administration and urban renewal plans, Doorley was invited to speak on urban renewal at the New England Regional Conference of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials. This conference was held during June 29 – July 1 in Groton, Connecticut. Doorley was chosen to speak because the committee planning the conference felt that he had a great interest in urban renewal and that he had been active in urban renewal projects since he was elected as mayor. Doorley was the first mayor to be given the honor of being the main speaker at this conference.³⁰ Doorley was also praised by Robert C. Wood, an undersecretary in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, because Providence had the “gumption” to participate in the President Johnson’s Demonstration Cities Program.³¹

The Battle for a Fair Housing Law in Rhode Island

One of the major problems in Providence was the lack of good housing for low income families. This was especially true for African-American families and the situation was only made worse because of the displacement of African Americans as a result of urban renewal projects. In addition to the renewal projects, African Americans were being displaced as a result of the construction of Interstate 95 that went through South Providence. The Willard Center urban renewal project had cleared out a block with a large African-American concentration and

²⁹“Doorley Sees S. Providence Building Raised,” *Providence Journal*, April 7, 1966.

³⁰“Doorley to Speak on Urban Renewal,” *Evening Bulletin*, March 9, 1966.

the Central-Classical project clearance was located in an African-American neighborhood in the West End. While African-American houses were being destroyed, the displaced inhabitants could find new housing only in what remained of the African-American neighborhood. As a result of all this, socially conscious Rhode Islanders advocated for a state-wide fair housing bill in 1958.³²

The fight for fair-housing legislation in Rhode Island was started with the creation of Citizens United for a Fair Housing Law in Rhode Island. This group included 175 concerned citizens from the business, religious and educational sectors of Rhode Island as well as members of the Urban League and the Providence branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The early leaders in this organization were wealthy industrialist Irving Fain, the organization's first chairman and first lobbyist, and Father Anthony Robinson, a Roman Catholic priest stationed at the Assumption Parish. Father Robinson served the poor African Americans of the West End of Providence through his work in the Martin DePorres Center. Father Edward H. Flannery, the editor of the Catholic newspaper, *The Providence Visitor*, was also a strong early advocate for fair housing and wrote editorials supporting the cause. *The Providence Visitor*, with the backing of Bishop Russell J. McVinney, was the first Rhode Island newspaper to support the fight for a fair housing law. Father Flannery wrote his first editorial on fair housing, "Rhode Island Can Lead the Way in Integration," which was published in the *Visitor* on December 11, 1958, a month before the Fair Housing Practices

³¹"Official Praises City for Housing Program," *Providence Journal*, June 25, 1966.

³²Frusher, "The Conscience of the City," 34; MacKay and McPhillips, "Times a-Changing."

Act was proposed to the Rhode Island General Assembly.³³ In this editorial, Father Flannery wrote that in a Christian context “racial discrimination is as immoral in the case of housing as in other spheres of living”.³⁴ In 1960, Flannery and his newspaper received awards from the National Conference of Christian and Jews and the Catholic Press Association for his editorials on fair housing. In the same year, Flannery was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize “for distinguished editorial writing.”³⁵

Irving Fain, a civil rights advocate, was disturbed by the struggle that African Americans had to fight in order to gain basic rights in the South during the 1950’s and 1960’s. Fain was also disturbed by the fact that many African Americans displaced by the Lippitt Hill renewal project were struggling to find suitable housing in Providence. At this time, even the few African Americans who could afford to purchase homes in all white neighborhoods were in some cases threatened by neighbors and ultimately denied the right to purchase homes by builders and real estate agents.³⁶ The Fair Housing Practices Act, which was introduced at the behest of Citizens United for a Fair Housing Law, was proposed to both houses of the Rhode Island General Assembly in January, 1959, covered both private and public housing. Support for the law was bipartisan. The proposed act stated that:

³³Robert W. Hayman, *Father Flannery’s Legacy: From Static to Dynamic*, available from <http://thericatholic.com/pages/history.html>, (accessed May 10, 2010); Joseph Conforti, “Irving Fain and the Fair Housing Movement in Rhode Island, 1958-1970,” *Rhode Island History*, vol. 45, no. 1 (February 1985), 25; Bell, *An Assessment of Life in Rhode Island as an African American in the Era from 1918-1993*, 45-46; Edward H. Flannery, “Rhode Island Rejects Fair Housing,” *St. Joseph Magazine*, vol. 60 (November 1959), 4-5; Edward H. Flannery, *The Providence Visitor Backs a Fair Housing Bill* (Providence, Rhode Island: *The Providence Visitor*, 1959), 1-3.

³⁴Flannery, *The Providence Visitor Back a Fair Housing Bill*, 3.

³⁵Hayman, *Father Flannery’s Legacy: From Static to Dynamic*.

³⁶Conforti, “Irving Fain and the Fair Housing Movement,” 25-26.

No owner, lessee, sublessee, assignee, managing agent, or other person having the right to sell, rent or lease a housing accommodation shall make or cause to be made any written or oral inquiry concerning the race or color, religion or country of ancestral origin of any prospective purchaser, occupant or tenant of such housing accommodation; or shall refuse to sell, rent, lease or otherwise deny or withhold from any individual such housing accommodation because of race or color, religion or country of ancestral origin of such individual....³⁷

The passage of the fair housing bill was also supported with editorials printed in the *Providence Journal and Evening Bulletin*, the *Pawtucket Times* and the *Warwick Beacon*. While the bill had the support of Rhode Island's most prominent citizens, many opponents emerged within a few weeks after the bill was introduced to the General Assembly. The chief among them was Providence attorney, Theodore Dresser. Dresser joined with the Realtors' Association of Pawtucket and the Associated Industries of Providence in loud opposition to the bill. Dresser paid for a large ad opposing the bill that was printed in the *Providence Journal* and also sent out mailings. The ad and the mailings asked citizens opposed to the bill to send Dresser signed statements. At this time, Dresser claimed to have collected over six thousand signatures against this bill. In March 1959, he said the bill was communistic and a threat to American freedoms. Dresser later wrote a letter to the *Providence Journal* and retracted his charges against the bill. Strong passions for or against the bill were expressed by both sides. Dresser and opponents of the bill were labeled as bigots and fascists and supporters of the bill were called communists. Irving J. Fain and James Williams, the executive director of the Rhode Island Urban League, received threatening phone calls and letters because of their support of this bill. Three public hearings took place before the House Judiciary Committee and both sides presented their arguments for or against this bill. Over two hundred opponents of fair housing descended on the

³⁷ Flannery, "Rhode Island Rejects Fair Housing," 4.

corridors of the state house to have their voices heard by members of the General Assembly. Legislators took note of all of the controversy that surrounded this bill and as a result it was amended by the Senate Judiciary Committee to cover only twenty percent of housing in Rhode Island. In April 1959, the bill died in the Senate Judiciary Committee. The effort to defeat passage of the bill exposed the latent prejudice of many Rhode Islanders.³⁸

After the defeat of this first attempt to pass a fair housing law, many fair housing advocates continued the fight to have a law passed. In every legislative session from 1959 – 1964, fair housing bills were presented to the General Assembly for passage and were defeated. While several passed the Senate, they later died in the house judiciary committee after a caucus of House members voted against them. It would take seven years for fair housing advocates to finally “put the sanction of law” behind their “moral positions.”³⁹

Because of the repeated difficulties in having a statewide law enacted, Mayor Walter Reynolds was urged by the Providence Human Relations Committee, which he had reluctantly formed, to have a fair housing ordinance passed for Providence. He was prompted to advocate for this ordinance because a May 1963 report from the Rhode Island Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights stated that the urban renewal projects together with housing discrimination served to segregate African Americans. Reynolds’ idea regarding the passage of this ordinance was not acted upon because it was found that the city had no power to enact this ordinance without the consent of the General Assembly.⁴⁰

³⁸Flannery, *The Providence Visitor Backs a Fair Housing Bill*, 1; Flannery, “Rhode Island Rejects Fair Housing,” 5-6; Joseph Foote, “Chronology of Efforts to Pass Fair Housing,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, April 4, 1965.

³⁹Conforti, “Irving Fain and the Fair Housing Movement,” 27.

On January 9, 1964, three fair housing bills were introduced in the Rhode Island House of Representatives. These bills were introduced on the day after the entire General Assembly met in grand committee to honor the late President John F. Kennedy. During these ceremonies, legislators were encouraged to pass a fair housing bill in the memory of Kennedy. Each bill that was presented prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed or national origin in the sale and renting of housing units. The bill presented by the Democrats exempted rentals in two family houses that were owner occupied and also exempted room rentals to lodgers in homes that were owner occupied. The bill called for an appropriation of ten thousand dollars in order to send the bill to a friendlier committee. As they had in 1962, the Democrats also included fair housing as part of their platform in 1964. Citizens United for a Fair Housing Law presented a bill that only provided exemptions in the case of rooms rented to lodgers in homes occupied by the owner. Fair housing advocate, Representative John J. Skiffington, a Democrat from Woonsocket, Rhode Island, introduced a bill that was sponsored by the Equal Opportunities Housing Group, a group that had broken off from Citizens United. This bill did not include any exemptions. The bills sponsored by the Democrats and Citizens United for a Fair Housing law were sent to the House Finance Committee for consideration. Speaker of the House, Harry F. Curvin, a Democrat from Pawtucket, Rhode Island, hoped that one of these bills would be acted upon early in the 1964 legislative session.⁴¹

An opponent of these bills, House Minority Leader, Republican Oliver L. Thompson, Jr, vowed not to support any fair housing measure because he believed that “the constitutional right

⁴⁰Frusher, “The Conscience of the City,” 60-61.

⁴¹“3 Fair Housing Measures are Given to House,” *Providence Journal*, January 10, 1964.

to buy and own property” could “only be enjoyed if the right to reject a buyer or tenant is allowed.” Thompson predicted that none of the proposed bills would be passed during the 1964 legislative session and felt that African Americans must be provided with “homes and not integration”. Thompson stated that ninety percent of his constituents were against the passage of a fair housing law.⁴²

Speaker Curvin encouraged his fellow representatives to take action on the fair housing bill during the 1964 legislative session. He reminded his colleagues that consideration of a fair housing bill had never reached the floor of the House for a vote since it was first introduced in 1958. Curvin wanted the entire House to consider fair housing so that this issue could be decided on “once and for all.”⁴³ Governor Chafee also introduced a fair housing bill to the House for consideration. The bill was introduced by Republican Representative, Frederick Lippitt of Providence and exempted owner occupied two and three family houses and the rental of rooms in houses in which the owners or tenants resided.⁴⁴

Supporters of fair housing were among the participants at the first Rhode Island Conference on Religion and Race. During the closing session of this conference, Father Flannery announced that, if a fair housing bill was not passed, by April 2, 1964, a large outdoor demonstration would be held in downtown Providence. The idea for the demonstration was proposed by twenty-four African-American leaders who attended the conference. Msgr. Arthur

⁴²“Predicts Defeat of Fair Housing – Republican Leader Says No Such Bill Has Chance in ’64,” *Providence Journal*, January 14, 1964.

⁴³“Curvin Calls for Decision on Housing – Issue Must be Faced, He Tells House,” *Providence Journal*, January 17, 1964.

⁴⁴“Fair Housing Bill Offered by Gov. Chafee,” *Providence Journal*, January 24, 1964.

Geoghegan, then chairman of Citizens United, stated in his closing summary that he wanted a fair housing bill to be considered on the House floor by Lincoln's Birthday.⁴⁵ Representative Frank A. Martin, Jr., a Democrat from Pawtucket, Rhode Island, was a key leader in the opposition to fair housing. He attempted to get House approval to have the voters of the state decide through a referendum if the General Assembly should enact fair housing legislation. He wanted this question to be on the November 1964 ballot. Sixty-three representatives signed his proposal but it was not supported by the Democratic majority leaders and the proposal died in the House finance committee.⁴⁶ Martin was against fair housing legislation because he felt that "government should not control the personal property rights of the owners involved."⁴⁷

The battle for fair housing continued with both sides presenting petitions for or against fair housing to the House finance committee, which was considering two fair housing bills that were thought to have the best chance of being passed. The Committee for Individual Liberty, which opposed fair housing, paid for newspaper ads that asked people to voice their opposition to fair housing by signing and sending in coupons that included their signatures. This effort yielded 1,495 signatures that were sent to the House finance committee. Citizens United for a Fair Housing Law also organized an effort to gather signatures that were collected by priests, ministers and rabbis. This effort yielded 3,412 signatures and they were given by Dr. James P. Adams, a member of the advisory board of Citizens United for a Fair Housing Law and former

⁴⁵James T. Kaull, "If Fair Housing is Not Enacted Mass Protest Set April 2," *Providence Journal*, January 29, 1964.

⁴⁶"Asks Public Poll on Fair Housing – Foe of Plan to Offer Bill Co-Sponsored by 63 House Members," *Providence Journal*, February 7, 1964; "Fair Housing Poll Measure Filed in General Assembly," *Providence Journal*, February 8, 1964; "42 Democrats, 19 Republicans Opposed to Bill," *Providence Journal*, April 10, 1964.

⁴⁷"Fair Housing Bills Pending in Assembly Are Debated," *Providence Journal*, March 4, 1964.

chairman of the Board of Trustees of State Colleges, to Representative John Wrenn, a deputy majority leader who represented Providence, at a ceremony at the state house. Others present at this ceremony were Speaker Curvin and fair housing supporters Irving Fain; Very Reverend Vincent C. Dore, O.P., President of Providence College; Reverend R. Leroy Moser, pastor of Spring Green Baptist Church; Reverend Arthur L. Hardge, pastor of the A.M.E. Zion Church and chairman of the Rhode Island branch of the Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E.) and the Very Reverend Ronald E. Stenning, dean of the Episcopal Cathedral of Saint John. Former Providence College basketball star, John Thompson, joined Father Dore at this ceremony to show his support for fair housing. C.O.R.E. also planned several peaceful sit-ins at the state house.⁴⁸

A letter endorsed by prominent religious and civic leaders was also sent to each member of the House to urge them to pass a fair housing bill. The letter stated that fair housing legislation should be acted upon because “every governmental commission, party platform committee, religious assembly, labor organization, and many business leaders having studied the matter, have agreed that we have a problem and recommend legislation as part of the solution.” The following religious and civic leaders co-signed this letter: Bishop Russell J. McVinney, Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Providence; Reverend Wayne Artis, director, Rhode Island Council of Churches; Rabbi Eli A. Bohnen of Temple Emmanu El; former Rhode Island Governors, Christopher DelSesto, John A. Notte, Jr. and Dennis J. Roberts; Very Reverend Vincent C. Dore, O.P., President of Providence College; William C. Gaige, President of Rhode Island College; Rt. Reverend John Seville Higgins, Episcopal Bishop of Rhode Island; Barnaby

⁴⁸“Sit-In Planned at State House – Demonstration Will Launch Series to Back Fair Housing,” *Providence Journal*, March 13, 1964.

C. Keeney, President of Brown University; Very Reverend John A. Limberakis of the Church of the Annunciation and Thomas Policastro, President of AFL-CIO in Rhode Island.⁴⁹

Governor Chafee joined an estimated crowd of five hundred to one thousand fair housing supporters in a rally that took place in the late afternoon of April 7, 1964 at the John F. Kennedy Plaza in downtown Providence. Chafee joined other speakers who assembled on the steps of the civil war monument and was applauded six times as he made the following comments:

I don't want any straw vote. I don't want any referendum which can only create a divisive effect in the state. This is a matter for the legislature to decide. Fair housing is not a cure-all, but it will help in getting on with the job of ending discrimination in Rhode Island. We should be concerned with what is happening in Florida, Alabama and Georgia, but let us direct our primary struggle to our own state. Let us do our part in Rhode Island, and hope that men in other places do their part, not because of what people in France or England will think or what anyone else in the world or nation will think, but because what we're doing is right . . .⁵⁰

The Democrats' version of the bill finally reached the floor of the House for full debate on April 7, 1964. This bill came out of the finance committee with two amendments. The first amendment gave an exemption to three-family owner-occupied houses. The second amendment would allow owners, renters and lenders "to set standards, 'preferences,' terms and limitations not based on race, religion or nationality in selling or renting property, or in financing purchases or improvements." The proposed public opinion poll bill that would ask the voters to decide if the legislature should consider a fair housing law was sent to the floor by the special legislation committee. This bill was sent to the House floor as a substitute for the fair housing law, proposed

⁴⁹"Bp. McVinney Urges Fair Housing Approval," *Providence Visitor*, March 26, 1964.

⁵⁰John E. Simonds, "Fair Housing Rally Hears Gov. Chafee," *Providence Journal*, April 8, 1964.

by the Equal Housing Opportunities Group, that this committee was considering.⁵¹ After a three hour debate that took place before a packed House chamber and galleries, the roll call vote on the Democratic fair housing bill with amendments described above was taken on April 9, 1964. The measure was defeated sixty-one to thirty-two. In the end, forty-two Democrats and nineteen Republicans voted to postpone any further action on this bill and fair housing supporters lost the battle for yet another year. On the same day, the public opinion poll bill was sent back to the special legislation committee and died there. Because of the defeat of the fair housing bill Irving Fain called the day “a black day in the history of Rhode Island.”⁵²

After the defeat of the fair housing bill, supporters planned non-violent demonstrations that would show their disappointment and desire to continue the fight until a fair housing legislation was passed. To avoid a planned sit-in at the state house, Governor Chafee and Speaker Curvin met with Reverend Arthur L. Hardge and leaders of C.O.R.E. and agreed that Curvin would read a letter written by Hardge to the entire House. Forty- Five C.O.R.E. members dressed in mourning clothes with black armbands and C.O.R.E. buttons attended the session when the letter was read. Before Curvin read the letter from Hardge, he said that no discussion of the letter would be allowed and that it would be placed on file. The letter read by Curvin stated the following:

The Congress of Racial Equality stands before you, Mr. Speaker, in funeral garb. We come to mourn the morally dead of the House of Representatives – those members who perpetrated so monstrous and incredible a deed of human callousness in refusing to lift a subtle modern web of bondage from a people whose ancestors so short a time ago bowed beneath a brutal lash and chain of slavery. Those members we wake today because by that act, so manifestly

⁵¹“Mild Fair Housing Bill Reaches House Floor,” *Providence Journal*, April 8, 1964.

⁵²“House Kills Fair Housing for This Year by 2-1 Vote,” *Providence Journal*, April 10, 1964.

opposed to all voices of religion and morality which have been so eloquent in our state in this matter; they have destroyed their moral souls. They have placed indifference and inhumanity above the principles of democracy and Christianity and so, on that Black Thursday of April 9, 1964, their moral lives expired⁵³

To continue their protest, C.O.R.E. planned a series of sit-in demonstrations that would take place at the state house. These all night sit-ins lasted from April 21 – April 24, 1964. The sit-in that took place on April 24 caused the House to adjourn because of singing during the session by C.O.R.E. members and their supporters. As the midnight hour approached, the singing of the “The Star Spangled Banner” and various freedom songs disrupted the business of the House. Speaker Curvin brought the House to order and C.O.R.E. members started singing again. Curvin and other House members then joined the demonstrators in song. As the singing came to an end, Representative Oliver J. Thompson moved that the House be adjourned. His motion was seconded by Representative Joseph V. Ortoleva of Providence and the motion passed. Many legislators on both sides of the fair housing issue did not like the fact that the demonstrators disrupted this House session. Fair housing opponents, Representatives Frank A. Martin, Jr. and Oliver J. Thompson stated that the demonstration was helpful to their cause because they felt it would sway public opinion against fair housing legislation.⁵⁴

The battle for fair housing legislation started once again in 1965. James N. Williams, executive director of the Urban League of Rhode Island, stated that his group and other civil rights groups would once again fight for passage but that he thought that a law would not pass in

⁵³“CORE Mourns Fair Housing Foes,” *Providence Journal*, April 15, 1964.

⁵⁴“CORE Sit-In Launched at State House,” *Providence Journal*, April 22, 1964; “CORE Sit-In Goes on for 3rd Night,” *Providence Journal*, April 24, 1964; “House Adjourns as Sit-Ins Start Songs,” *Providence Journal*, April 25, 1964.

the 1965 legislative session. Early in the year a bill was sent to the Senate that was drafted by the Equal Opportunities Housing Group. The bill provided no exemptions and would ban discrimination in the sale or rental of housing. Governor Chafee sent a bill to the House that provided exemptions for rentals in owner occupied two and three family houses and the rental of rooms in owner or tenant occupied houses. If this law passed, its enforcement would be administered by the Rhode Island Commission Against Discrimination. The Chafee bill was sponsored by ten Republican representatives and Chafee felt that it had a good chance for passage but warned fair housing law advocates that demonstrations would be harmful to their cause. Dennis M. Lynch, president of the Pawtucket Board of Realtors, predicted that the bill would be defeated.⁵⁵

Speaker John J. Wrenn sent the bill sponsored by Governor Chafee to the House finance committee for consideration. This bill did not have an appropriation attached and fair housing opponents Representatives Thompson and Martin questioned Wrenn's rationale on this matter. Wrenn, a supporter of fair housing legislation, stated that he sent the bill to the finance committee because enactment of this bill would "entail additional expenditures by the state." Martin and Thompson wanted the bill to be sent to the special legislation committee, chaired by Martin, or the judiciary committee for consideration and felt that Wrenn sent it to the finance committee because he felt the finance committee would have enough votes to send the bill to the House floor for consideration. Martin also indicated that he would introduce again a proposal to

⁵⁵"R.I. Fair Housing Law in '65 Seen Unlikely," *Providence Journal*, January 26, 1965; "Fair Housing Bill is Filed in the Senate," *Providence Journal*, January 7, 1965; "House Gets Chafee Fair Housing Bill," *Providence Journal*, January 14, 1965; "Chafee Hopeful on Housing Bill," *Providence Journal*, January 15, 1965; "The Fair Housing Battle," *Providence Sunday Journal*, January 17, 1965.

have voters decide if they thought the General Assembly should consider fair housing legislation.⁵⁶

The Democrats introduced their own fair housing bill in the House on February 4, 1965. The bill exempted rentals in owner occupied two and three family houses and single rooms in an owner occupied house. The bill stated that the legislature would appropriate an amount of money it felt was necessary to enforce the law. Because of the attached appropriation the bill was sent to the House finance committee for consideration.⁵⁷ Representative Martin and fifty-one of his fellow representatives sponsored a proposal for a question that would have been placed on the November 1966 general election ballot. The question asked “shall the General Assembly enact ‘fair housing’ legislation forbidding discrimination because of race, creed or color in the sale or rental of housing accommodations?” Speaker Wrenn sent this bill to the special legislation committee for consideration. Fair housing bill supporters felt that placing this question on the ballot would have been unconstitutional because it left the power of deciding on legislation to the voters. Fair housing opponents felt that asking the voters their opinion without the decision being binding was a valid action.⁵⁸

Placing the fair housing question on the November 1966 ballot was seen by many fair housing advocates as a move that would have increased racial tensions in Rhode Island. On March 4, 1965, action on the referendum bill was postponed while Democratic leaders of the House determined if referendums on fair housing in other parts of the country upset relations in

⁵⁶“Action by Democrats on Fair Housing Seen,” *Providence Journal*, February 3, 1965.

⁵⁷“Democratic Leaders File Housing Bill,” *Providence Journal*, February 5, 1965.

⁵⁸“Fair Housing Vote is Urged – Referendum Sought in Election Ballot in November, 1966,” *Providence Journal*, February 10, 1965.

communities where they took place. Referendums on fair housing legislation resulted in the failure of laws to pass in Tacoma and Seattle, Washington; Akron, Ohio; and Berkeley, California. John F. Capaldi, the newly elected Democratic state chairman, did not support the referendum and urged Democratic legislators to pass a fair housing bill. The referendum bill eventually came out of the special legislation committee with the support of fourteen of the nineteen members of the committee. Supporters of the bill felt that a majority of House members would vote in favor of this bill and that it would be sent to the Senate for consideration. The Democratic leadership in the House and Senate were opponents of this bill. Senate Majority Leader, Frank Sgambuto a Democrat from North Providence, stated that, if the bill passed in the House, the Senate would reject it and send back the fair housing bill sponsored by the Democratic Party as a substitute. Governor Chafee vowed to veto the bill if it ever reached his desk. In the end, the House never considered this bill and it was sent back to committee. The supporters of this bill stated that they did this to comply with the wishes of the Democratic leadership but it was also known that they discovered that they would not have enough votes to pass this measure.⁵⁹

On March 25, 1965, 2,500 people held a civil rights demonstration at the Rhode Island State House. The demonstration was peaceful and those who took part were greeted by Mayor Doorley and Governor Chafee. Reverend Hardge spoke to the crowd and predicted that a fair housing bill would pass in Rhode Island because the residents of the state did not want to

⁵⁹“Fair Housing Delay Adopted – Action on Referendum Bill is Postponed to Study Other Areas,” *Providence Journal*, March 5, 1965; “Capaldi to Ask Housing Bill – Will Urge Assembly to Kill Referendum Plan, Pass Measure,” *Providence Journal*, March 17, 1965; “Fair Housing Set for Fight – Bill on Referendum Reported Out for R.I. House Action,” *Providence Journal*, March 24, 1965; “Housing Bill Back in Committee,” *Providence Journal*, March 25, 1965.

experience more violent protests like those that were held during this same period in Montgomery, Alabama.⁶⁰ At this critical juncture, Doorley, then newly elected, proved a strong advocate for a state-wide fair housing law and assisted fellow Democrats, State Chairman John F. Capaldi and House Speaker John J. Wrenn, in the fight to get the Rhode Island Fair Housing Practices Act passed. Doorley had conversations with most of the state representatives and state senators from Providence to ask them to support the passage of this bill. He persuaded many to change their thinking and to support the bill. The *Providence Journal* reported that Doorley thought that the ideal situation would be integrated neighborhoods where those who were well off might be neighbors to people on welfare. He also stated that a poor family might be inspired to try to become more successful if they lived near successful neighbors.⁶¹

After a seven year fight, the bill finally passed in the House by a fifty-four to forty-two vote on April 2, 1965. The lobbying efforts of the Democratic Party leaders of this time, Doorley, Capaldi, Wrenn and Senate majority leader Walter J. Kane, were major factors in the passage of the bill in the House. Doorley's support for the bill and the pressure he put on Providence's Representatives were key elements in the bill's passage. The Senate passed the bill by a twenty-eight to sixteen vote on April 8, 1965. Governor Chafee signed the bill into law on April 12, 1965. At the ceremony in which the bill was signed, Irving Fain joined more than one hundred members of civil rights organizations and former governors, Christopher DelSesto and

⁶⁰"Impressive Providence Parade," *Evening Bulletin*, March 27, 1965; "Fair Housing Chances Better Now – Doorley," *Evening Bulletin*, March 26, 1965.

⁶¹"Doorley Will Lobby for Fair Housing," *Evening Bulletin*, February 15, 1965; "A Private Fund Program for Low Income Housing," *Evening Bulletin*, February 18, 1965; "Doorley Holds Large Projects No Aid to the Poor," *Providence Journal*, February 17, 1965; "Doorley Pledged to Promote State Fair Housing Bill," *Evening Bulletin*, February 18, 1965.

John Notte. Both Notte and DelSesto had supported the bill during their administrations. Fain stated that signing of the bill was a demand “for the people of this community to work for integration.” Although the bill was signed into law, there were still many problems that African Americans encountered when trying to rent or buy suitable housing and many had no choice but to continue to live in substandard housing in the blighted neighborhoods of Providence.⁶²

The Model Cities Program

As mentioned above, there were many citizens of Providence that lived in poverty and in substandard housing. Many cities of the United States were going through trying times as a result of poverty and racial unrest of the 1960’s. In his second inaugural address, Doorley pledged to “transform the poverty, ignorance and substandard housing of the city into a viable and productive community.” He pledged that his entire administration would be “devoted to a program of action” which would “give Providence a truly new profile.”⁶³

In order to combat poverty and improve the slum areas of Providence, Doorley realized that his administration would continue to need the assistance of the federal government to acquire additional funds for urban renewal projects. During his second term in office, Doorley continued to use his connections on the national level to make the acquaintance of federal officials who administered funds for urban renewal projects. One federal program in which

⁶²“Fair Housing Chances Better Now – Doorley”; “Leadership Won the Fair Housing Battle,” *Providence Journal*, April 13, 1965; “Fair Housing Prospects Look Up,” *Providence Journal*, April 1, 1965; “Governor Signs Fair Housing Bill,” *Providence Journal*, April 12, 1965; “Fair Housing Bill Passes R.I. House by 54 to 42,” *Providence Journal*, April 3, 1965; “R.I. Senate Passes Fair Housing, 28 to 16,” *Providence Journal*, April 9, 1965; “Pressures, Noble and Raw, Won Day for Fair Housing,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, April 4, 1965; “The Fair Housing Measure is No Cure-All,” *Providence Journal*, April 10, 1965.

⁶³“Text of Mayor Doorley’s Inaugural Address,” *Evening Bulletin*, January 3, 1967.

Doorley was very interested was the federal Demonstration Cities Program. This program was sent to Congress by President Johnson on January 26, 1966. Johnson stated the following about this initiative:

I propose a Demonstration Cities Program that will offer qualifying cities of all sizes the promises of a new life for their people. I propose that we make massive additions to the support of low and moderate-cost housing. I propose that we combine physical reconstruction and rehabilitation with effective social programs throughout the rebuilding process. I propose that we focus all the techniques and talents within our society on the crisis of the American city. We intend to help only those cities who help themselves....⁶⁴

President Johnson asked Congress for a 2.3 billion dollar, six year program to rebuild slum neighborhoods in cities throughout the country. The program would provide both physical and social renewal to slum neighborhoods. Johnson proposed that only sixty to seventy cities would qualify for federal funds under this program. In order to qualify, cities had to submit a proposal to the government that demonstrated both physical and social renewal in a specific area of a city. The proposal would require that cities concentrate on one neighborhood. In a 1967 interview, Doorley explained that Providence was a “laboratory” for federal urban renewal funds because in his view Providence had a smaller number of similar problems than other American cities. Doorley concluded that if the problems could not be solved in Providence, then they certainly could not be solved in larger cities with more challenging situations.⁶⁵

The Demonstration Cities program was meant to be different from urban renewal already in place in many cities throughout the United States. The latter focused on the renewal of

⁶⁴ “Pressures, Noble and Raw, Won Day for Fair Housing,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, April 4, 1965; “The Fair Housing Measure is No Cure-All,” *Providence Journal*, April 10, 1965.

⁶⁵ “2 Key Assistants Sworn by Weaver,” *New York Times*, February 3, 1966; “Mayor Views Mayor – Doorley Discusses Himself and His City,” *Providence Journal*, 1967.

commercial areas of cities and in the process displaced many poor families. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Robert C. Weaver, stated that Demonstration Cities intended “to improve the supply of low and moderate cost housing and in addition to improve the social services available to the people in the areas involved.”⁶⁶

Even though the Democrats enjoyed a majority in both the House and the Senate, the Demonstration Cities proposal produced vigorous debates. At this time, there was a strain on the federal budget as a result of funding the conflict in Vietnam. Many southern Democrats also did not support the bill because they were against racial integration and aid for African Americans who lived in many of the poor ghettos at this time. Representative Paul A. Fino, from the Bronx, New York, also caused many congressmen to oppose the bill because he charged that Title II of the bill would give federal approval for the busing of minority students to gain racial integration in the nation’s schools.⁶⁷

The bill eventually passed both the House and the Senate. President Johnson signed it into law on November 3, 1966. On its way to passage, the name of the bill was changed from Demonstration Cities to Model Cities and funding was cut from 2.3 billion dollars to 11 million dollars for planning for the first year and 900 million dollars for the following two years. Nearly one thousand cities from across the entire United States were interested in submitting applications to participate in the Model Cities program. May 1, 1967 was the deadline for submitting completed applications. Doorley and his administration were eager to get started on

⁶⁶“Weaver Defends Anti-Slum Program,” *New York Times*, April 20, 1966.

⁶⁷“Program for the Cities,” *New York Times*, January 27, 1966; “No Demonstration Cities,” *New York Times*, May 15, 1966; “Signing of Model Cities Bill Ends Long Struggle to Keep It Alive,” *New York Times*, November 4, 1966.

drafting a proposal to have Providence designated as one of the Model Cities. Upon recommendation of the Citizen's Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal, the upper and lower sections of South Providence were designated as the Model Cities area for Providence.⁶⁸

The original application that Providence submitted made a request for a \$207,000 planning grant. On April 20, 1967, the Providence City Council gave complete authority to Doorley to work with federal officials on the Model Cities proposal. Mr. Sirrowka Howard was the federal metropolitan expediter for Rhode Island at this time. Howard was from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and was in charge of helping Providence city officials with their Model Cities proposal. The original application that was submitted by Providence included the entire Federal Hill/South Providence area which made up thirty-five percent of the city's population and seventeen percent of its land area. The area in the final project proposal had to be cut back to focus only on South Providence in order to comply with federal guidelines that stated that an area with no more than ten percent of a city's population be included for the application. At this time the city council also approved a change of position for Doorley's administrative assistant, John F. Cicilline. Cicilline became the new Administrative Assistant for Urban Renewal. The change caused the cost of his \$13,232.96 salary to be divided by the city, the anti-poverty program and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.⁶⁹

⁶⁸“Johnson Signs 8 Bills Supporting Great Society,” *New York Times*, November 4, 1966; Weaver Expects Congress to Help,” *New York Times*, November 11, 1966; “Model Cities Plans Must be in by May 1,” *New York Times*, March 19, 1967; News Release from the Mayor's Office City Hall, Providence Rhode Island, April 18, 1967, PC Archives; “South Providence Designated for Model Cities,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 18, 1967.

⁶⁹“South Providence Designated for Model Cities,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 18, 1967; “Mayor Gets Green Light on Model Cities Program,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 21, 1967.

On October 18, 1967, the *Providence Journal* reported that Providence was selected as a Model City. This unofficial announcement was reported in a so called top secret list of those cities that were chosen for participation in the program. The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* first reported this story. A spokesman from the Department of Housing and Urban Development responded to this story by stating that no “secret” list existed. It was reported at the time that President Johnson was holding off on making the list public in order to keep support for the program from congressmen whose cities were not among those chosen to participate in the program. At this time, the final funding of Model Cities was still being worked out by a conference subcommittee from the House and Senate.⁷⁰

Providence received the official word that it was chosen to participate in the Model Cities program on November 16, 1967. Providence was on the list of sixty-three cities that would be allowed to share in eleven million dollars in planning funds and to draft a detailed proposal that would allow the city to share in three hundred million dollars of additional funds allocated to the program. The program in Providence was administered under the city Department of Planning and Urban Development, Progress for Providence, Inc., the city’s antipoverty agency that was in charge of urban renewal programs, the City Plan Commission and state and private agencies that were involved with the residents of South Providence.⁷¹

Doorley’s close alliance with the Johnson administration helped Providence to be selected as a Model City. Since 1966, Doorley served as of the Democratic National

⁷⁰ Hamilton Davis, “Providence Reported OK’d as Model City,” *Providence Journal*, October 18, 1967.

⁷¹“Providence Put on Model Cities Program List,” *Evening Bulletin*, November 16, 1966; “63 Cities Chosen to Get Slum Aid; New York Listed,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1967; “Cities to be Aided,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1966.

Committeemen from Rhode Island. Doorley also had a seat on the 1968 Democratic Site Selection Committee. Congressman Fernand J. St. Germain, a member of the House Subcommittee on Banking and Currency, which handled the Model Cities Bill, also helped Providence in its quest to become a Model City.⁷² In an April 1967 speech, Doorley recognized St. Germain's assistance on urban renewal projects:

Congressman St. Germain is driven by a resourceful determination to show that he can get things done for his state. While only 4 of 13 city wards are in the congressman's district, he has untiringly worked to capture added urban renewal credits, funded new programs and has given Providence the federal monies to make urban renewal really work. The congressman is certainly a close political ally whom I confer on most state party issues⁷³

In the final Model Cities grant application that city officials submitted, the city asked for \$196,771 dollars in planning funds. On December 1, 1967, Doorley announced that Providence would actually receive only \$156,000. In Doorley's opinion, Model Cities was "the most important action" that Providence could have taken "to eliminate poverty in our inner city." Doorley vowed to give this program "personal attention."⁷⁴

Many criticized Doorley's grant application because they felt that the Doorley administration failed to include South Providence residents in the initial planning for the Model Cities grant application. Doorley did consult with the Citizens Advisory Committee on Urban Renewal when it decided that South Providence would be the area designated for the Model

⁷²Hamilton Davis, "Providence Reported Ok'd as a Model City"; "Mayor to Visit Miami, Houston, Washington," *Providence Journal*, April 24, 1967; Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Meg Zwiers, January 1969, PC Archives.

⁷³Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., "Political Articulation in the Metropolitan Area," (speech given at United States Civil Service Commission Seminar on April 24, 1967), PC Archives.

⁷⁴"Model Cities Fund is Cut by \$40,000.00," *Providence Journal*, December 1, 1967; News Release from the Mayor's Office City Hall, Providence, RI, December 1, 1967, PC Archives.

Cities program, but failed to get citizen input in his drafting of the final proposal. The lead critic was Chester George, chairman of the Flynn Neighborhood Advisory Committee. George stated that Doorley failed to allow him and other South Providence residents to examine the proposal that was sent to Washington. Doorley denied George's charges and stated that what he called the "Model Cities machinery" was set up "to ensure maximum feasible participation of area residents." Despite his statement, Doorley provided no evidence that he consulted South Providence residents regarding the preliminary planning for Model Cities. A December 1, 1967 *Providence Journal* article reported that Doorley still had not announced when he would appoint the Model Cities Council. According to the application, this group was to consist of seventeen members who would be in charge of developing the policies for the Model Cities program. Doorley continued the planning without consulting residents because the criticism was limited to George and a few other residents.⁷⁵

Doorley came under more criticism as a result of an article that appeared in the December 11, 1967 *New York Times*. The article reported on the tensions in areas across the country regarding whether city officials or local residents should make local decisions regarding Model Cities. The article reported that a top aide to Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Robert C. Weaver, had noted the negligible participation of Providence residents in Model City planning: "But in Providence, R.I. where the city hall has been unresponsive, we might insist on representatives from an executive board of seven or require some kind of parallel organization." The official later denied that he made this remark and said that he was misquoted about the

⁷⁵Nino V. Luciano, "Citizen Participation in the Providence Model Cities Program" (unpublished Honors Thesis, Brown University, 1977), 58-62; "Information Please," *Providence Journal*, December 24, 1967; "Model Cities Fund is Cut by \$40,000," *Providence Journal*, December 1, 1967.

situation in Providence. But the article nevertheless served to validate the concerns that many residents had regarding Doorley and the lack of citizen participation in planning for the Model Cities program.⁷⁶

Doorley addressed these criticisms at a news conference where he revised his earlier statement. In this news conference, Doorley stated that the reason for the lack of citizen participation was due to the difficulty of finding a practical way to include residents in the decision making process.⁷⁷ Many South Providence residents were not satisfied with Doorley's explanation. A *Providence Journal* editorial criticized Doorley for ignoring the citizens of South Providence:

Mr. George and those he represents are justly concerned. Their desire to be informed and consulted at every step of the planning process is not unreasonable. They are determined to protect their statutory privilege of participation at the earliest stages of political action to prevent the adoption of procedures that could affect their rights throughout the months and years the program may be operative. Mr. Doorley has not been charged with eliminating participation of South Providence residents, merely ignoring them at the outset. Would it have been too much to invite several delegates to take part in the original discussions at City Hall?

The editorial also reported that South Providence residents wanted to join forces to block the project, if they did not have proper representation for the planning of Model Cities.⁷⁸

At the end of 1968, it was reported that there were problems within the city's Model Cities Planning Committee. There was a federal government requirement that called for citizen involvement in the process of renewal in their neighborhoods. The planning committee was

⁷⁶ "A Problem Arises for Model Cities," *New York Times*, December 11, 1967; Luciano, "Citizen Participation in the Providence Model Cities Program," 61-65.

⁷⁷ Luciano, "Citizen Participation in the Providence Model Cities Program," 61-65.

⁷⁸ "Information Please," *Providence Journal*, December 24, 1967.

originally made up of twenty-eight residents of South Providence. By December of 1968, twelve committee members were suspended for lack of attendance at meetings and three resigned. The meetings of this committee were not productive because of conflicts among committee members and conflicts between the staff of the Model Cities program and committee members. Model Cities director, Richard R. Torchia, was also at odds with committee members. Many uneducated committee members felt ashamed to speak at committee meetings and did not understand the technical language, zoning laws and the charts and graphs presented by Torchia and his staff. Committee members felt that they were only there to approve the ideas of the staff and not to really participate in the planning process for their neighborhoods.⁷⁹

During the last days of the Johnson administration, Doorley was concerned about city project applications that requested \$12,559,406 in federal money. Doorley met in New York City with regional officials from the Model Cities program, the Renewal Assistance and Housing Assistance Administrations and the Economic Development Administration. The requests that Doorley asked about were an eleven million dollar proposal to modernize public housing developments; a \$569,788 grant for code enforcement in the South Elmwood neighborhood; \$400,000.00 to be used to control rodents; \$339,618 to build a new park on Kenyon Street in the Federal Hill neighborhood and \$150,000.00 for a planning grant to develop a new master plan for urban renewal for Providence. Doorley was told that he would receive two to three million dollars for improvements in public housing developments, development of industrial land in the South Providence Model Cities area and for a playground on Kenyon Street. The officials told

⁷⁹Brian W. Dickinson, "A Voice or a Rubber Stamp," *Evening Bulletin*, December 18, 1968; "Gulf Separates People, Plans in Model Cities," *Evening Bulletin*, December 18, 1968.

Doorley that he would have to wait until the Nixon administration took office to hear about the other federal money.⁸⁰ Two different White House task forces concluded that the Model Cities program should be continued and the Nixon administration approved 2.3 billion dollars and continued to fund this program from 1969-1973.⁸¹

Racial Tensions and the Poor in Providence During the Doorley Era

As African Americans fought for their civil rights, racial conflicts occurred in many of America's cities during the 1960's. These conflicts also took place in Providence. As mentioned above, urban renewal uprooted many poor African Americans and increased the racial segregation in Providence and in many cities. In June 1967, Doorley unveiled what was called the "Summertime Plan." The plan was designed to prevent violence from taking place during the hot months in the slums of Providence. Centered in the neighborhoods of South Providence this plan established programs that demolished abandoned houses, cleaned up trash, provided extra police to eliminate the sale of liquor to minors and used federal funds to give summer jobs to the youth of the area. Under the program, one thousand youngsters from South Providence were given jobs with the Neighborhood Youth Corps. They were both black and white Providence residents who were given the opportunity to work for thirty hours per week at the rate of \$1.40 an hour. The young workers performed neighborhood clean ups.⁸²

⁸⁰"Doorley Plans Drive to Get Federal Aid," *Providence Journal*, December 24, 1968; "Doorley Gets Assurances of Federal Aid," *Providence Journal*, December 31, 1968.

⁸¹Joan Hoff-Wilson, *Nixon Reconsidered* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 57.

⁸²"City Hoping Youth Jobs Will Help to Keep 'Cool,'" *Providence Journal*, June 27, 1967; "City Planning Slum Program," *Evening Bulletin*, June 27, 1967; Wendall E. Pritchett, *Robert Clifton Weaver: A Biography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 4-6.

Despite the efforts of Doorley and his administration to avoid slum violence in Providence, tempers heated up from the end of July into early August of 1967. The race riots and violence that took place in Providence made national headlines. They were started on July 31, 1967, by black and white gangs in South Providence that Doorley referred to as a “relatively small group of hoodlums.”⁸³ It continued during the evening of August 1, 1967 and included fighting by more than a hundred young white people chanting “White Power” against black gangs that threw rocks and bottles. Gunfire was used by both gangs. Providence Police battled sniper fire from behind fire trucks in the Willard Avenue Shopping Center. During this second night of violence, a liquor store was looted and about seventy-five white gang members smashed the front and rear windows of a car they thought was driven by a black man. The man in the car was Ernest Pistocco, a thirty-four year old white man from Providence, who managed to escape uninjured. The August 1 violence caused thirteen gang members to be arrested and twenty-two gang members to be injured. One fifteen year old African-American youth, Eugene Sawyers of Providence, was shot in the stomach. Also injured were five policemen, one fireman and fourteen people not associated with gangs. The fireman was injured as a result of being stoned as he was fighting a house fire near the Willard Avenue Shopping Center. As a result of this violence, Governor Chafee returned to the state from a vacation in Maine. On August 2, Chafee and Doorley made a tour of the area where the violence took place.⁸⁴

⁸³News Release from the Mayor’s Office City Hall, Providence, Rhode Island, August 1, 1967, PC Archives.

⁸⁴“Violence Grows at Providence,” *New York Times*, August 2, 1967; “Police Stop Violence at Providence,” *Providence Journal*, August 1, 1967.

In order to help end the violence, Doorley was granted unlimited emergency powers by the Providence City Council. The emergency powers allowed Doorley to establish a curfew, ban the sale of fire arms and ammunition and prohibit the gathering of six or more persons. Doorley instituted the curfew over the entire South Providence area on August 3, 1967. The boundaries for the curfew area were Broad Street on the west, Interstate 95 on the east, the convergence of Broad Street and Interstate 95 on the east and Byfield Street on the south. The curfew was instituted for four straight nights. The curfew hours for the first two evenings were from 9 pm through 6 am. During the third and fourth nights of the curfew the hours were from 1 am to 6 am. Doorley and the police were assisted in the enforcement of the curfew by black youths employed by Progress for Providence. The group of African-American youths called the Soul Patrol walked and drove the streets of South Providence. The group wore white helmets so that they could be recognized by police as assisting in the maintenance of the curfew. The curfew was finally lifted on August 7, 1967. Doorley praised the efforts of the Soul Patrol for all of the help in preventing more violence from erupting.⁸⁵

In the aftermath of these violent episodes, Doorley used funds from the Summertime Fund to bus inner city youth to Scarborough Beach, Goddard Park, the Newport Naval Base, the Quonset Naval Base and Crescent Park. These trips lasted for six weeks after the violence. The Summertime Fund program was established by Doorley and the *Providence Journal* in July of 1967. Money raised for the fund was used to provide recreational activities for inner city youth.

⁸⁵Douglas Robinson, "Curfew Imposed in Providence, R.I.," *New York Times*, August 3, 1967; "Providence Curfew Stands," *New York Times*, August 4, 1967; "Shorter Providence Curfew," *New York Times*, August 5, 1967; "Curfew Imposed by Wichita, Kan.," *New York Times*, August 6, 1967; "Curfew is Cancelled by Wichita Mayor," *New York Times*, August 8, 1967; Joseph A. Loftus, "Poverty Agency Praised on Riots," *New York Times*, August 10, 1967.

During 1967, the fund raised \$10,000.00 in voluntary donations. The Texaco Company also provided tickets for the youths to visit Lincoln Park. Despite the success of the Summertime Fund program, many civil rights leaders criticized the program because they thought the money would be better spent building recreational areas in the inner city and because they felt that Doorley still regarded blacks as second class citizens and only provided these excursions because he feared more violence.⁸⁶

During these turbulent times, Doorley realized that Providence needed federal dollars to help in its fight against poverty. Against this background, in November 1967, Doorley lobbied against proposed cuts in the funding for President Johnson's anti-poverty program which he was warned about by Sargent Shriver, the director of the federal office of Economic Opportunity. The warning by Shriver caused Doorley to send letters to fellow mayors and city managers across the United States to urge them to support the anti-poverty bill. Doorley asked the mayors to join him in Washington, D.C, to urge Congress not to cut funding for this bill from 1.6 billion dollars to 1.2 billion dollars. Doorley stated that it was not his "intention to be gored to death without witnessing the bull in action". Doorley's efforts succeeded and on November 16, 1967, the House passed the bill with 1.6 billion dollars in funding.⁸⁷

Doorley fully supported plans that President Johnson outlined in his January 1968 State of the Union Address. Doorley stated that federal funding was necessary in order to provide

⁸⁶News Release from the Mayor's Office City Hall, Providence, RI, August 8, 1967, PC Archives; Bob Mason, "Acting in Fear," *Providence Journal*, August 10, 1967; Ariel Sabar, "Summertime Fund Still Brings Warm Feelings," *Providence Journal*, May 3, 1998.

⁸⁷"Mayor's Letters Ask Poverty Bill Support," *Evening Bulletin*, November 1, 1967; "Doorley Presses Effort to Save Antipoverty Bill," *Providence Journal*, November 5, 1967; "Anti-Poverty Fight," *Evening Bulletin*, November 15, 1967; John Herbers, "Poverty Measure With \$1.6-Billion Passed by House," *New York Times*, November 16, 1967.

housing for the poor and to assist with the fight against poverty. Because of his contributions in the fight to rid Providence of poverty, Doorley was given an urban service award by the Office of Economic Opportunity. This award was very controversial and many blacks in the city felt that Doorley did not deserve the award. Doorley was not a favorite of many black residents of the city of Providence. Many African Americans were unhappy about remarks that Doorley made on March 6, 1968 that stated that racial problems in Providence were not as severe as those in other cities. Doorley made the comments in response to a national study on the causes of riots in urban ghettos.⁸⁸

Reverend Albert Q. Perry of the Providence-based Church of the Mediator joined about two hundred South Providence residents in protesting the fact that Doorley received this award. The conclusion of many in Providence's African-American community was that Doorley did not do enough for the poor and many African Americans thought of him as a racist. Doorley seldom visited the South Providence neighborhoods and many in his administration, including Larry McGarry, did not support federal programs aimed at helping the poor of the area. Doorley was seen to be very uncomfortable with the African-American community and received much criticism. Members of the Soul Patrol commented that Doorley had not visited South Providence since the August, 1967 race riots and that he did not try to make the residents of this area feel as though they were a part of the rest of the city.⁸⁹

⁸⁸News Release from the Mayor's Office City Hall, Providence, RI, January 18, 1968, PC Archives; "Doorley to Get Service Award," *Evening Bulletin*, March 26, 1968; "Doorley Scored on Race Views," *Evening Bulletin*, March 7, 1968.

⁸⁹"Urban Award to Doorley Scored Anew," *Evening Bulletin*, April 1, 1968; Hamilton E. Davis, "The Mayor of Providence, the City and the Negroes," *Providence Sunday Journal*, April 7, 1968.

Violence flared up in Providence again during 1969. A riot took place outside the Rhode Island Auditorium after an October 10, 1969 Sly and the Family Stone concert. After the riot, charges of police brutality against African Americans were voiced by community groups and the stories regarding this riot dominated the headlines of the *Providence Journal* and the *Evening Bulletin*. A report by the Providence Human Relations Commission stated that out of about 150 people involved twenty-five African-American youths and thirteen policemen were injured in the melee. Property damage to six North Main Street businesses totaled \$3,165. Doorley asked the Federal Bureau of Investigations to investigate this disturbance and defended the police. Members of the Concerned Citizens Committee criticized Doorley for not meeting with them after this disturbance and believed that the police only arrested African-American youths. Reverend Paul F. Thompson, pastor of the Olney Street Baptist Church and a member of the Providence Human Relations Commission, stated that some white youths were beaten but not arrested, and that the police acted with excessive force during this incident.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ "Doorley Asks FBI Probe Row," *Evening Bulletin*, October 15, 1969; "Pastor Says News Report Misquoted Him," *Evening Bulletin*, October 15, 1969; "Let's Have a Thorough Probe," *Evening Bulletin*, October 16, 1969; "Few People in Melee, Report Says," *Evening Bulletin*, November 22, 1969; "Auditorium Melee Report Described as 'Milk Toast,'" *Providence Journal*, April 1, 1970.

CHAPTER 5

DOORLEY RESPONDS TO THE PROBLEMS IN PROVIDENCE

Public School Desegregation in Providence During the Doorley Era

The desegregation of Providence schools was another large issue that Doorley had to face during his three terms as mayor of Providence. This issue in Providence added to the race problems that already existed between the African-American and white residents of the city. The segregation in the schools of Providence was de facto segregation caused by housing patterns. As already discussed the majority of African Americans during the 1960's lived in the South Providence and Lippitt Hill sections of the city. The housing patterns of Providence caused the neighborhood elementary schools of the city to mirror the ethnic composition of the neighborhoods where they were located and to become segregated. Thus, elementary schools in many neighborhoods had a majority of white students or a majority of African-American students depending on the location of the neighborhood where the schools were located. The African-American schools, since they were located in the older neighborhoods, were older and in need of repairs. Starting in the 1960's, many citizen groups in Providence started to advocate for schools that were integrated. The fight for integration of schools in Providence took place at the same time that this issue was also a concern on the national level.¹

¹*Providence Sunday Journal*, October 9, 1966; United States Commission on Civil Rights, *School Desegregation in Providence: A Staff Report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights* (Washington: The Commission, 1977), 6-7; For a detailed discussion on the national dynamics of federal mandated school integration, see John A. Kirk, *Beyond Little Rock: The Origins and Legacies of the Central High Crisis* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2007); Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960's*

In 1960, the school committee approved plans to build a new kindergarten to sixth grade school to replace the Thomas A. Doyle and Jenkins Street schools that were being demolished as a result of the renewal of the Lippitt Hill area. Many parents were not satisfied with the quality of the education and the physical conditions of these schools. At this time, Doyle was one of the worst school buildings in the city. Both schools also had no special programs or facilities for students. On November 7, 1962, city voters approved a 1.75 million dollar bond issue that would finance a replacement school for Doyle and Jenkins. The new school would be called the Lippitt Hill School. Two biracial citizen groups, Help Our Public Education (HOPE) and the East Side Neighborhood Council, were early advocates for integration in the Providence schools. These groups, as well as concerned parents, saw the building of a new school as an opportunity for change and put pressure on the school board so that they would have input concerning the racial makeup of the school, the physical building itself and the curriculum that would be offered there. White families who resided in this area, most of whom sent their children to private schools, wanted the new school to be integrated so that they could send their children there in the future. African-American leaders also wanted the school to be integrated although some feared that the white students would take over the new school. Both groups also wanted a modern curriculum of studies to be offered at the new school²

and 1970's (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); J. Harvie Wilkinson, *From Brown to Bakke: The Supreme Court and School Integration, 1954-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

²Anna Holden, *The Bus Stops Here A Study of School Desegregation in Three Cities* (New York: Agathon Press, Inc., 1974), 160-169.

As a result of community pressure, the school board commissioned Dr. Sarah T. Curwood, a professor of sociology at Rhode Island College, to complete a study of the Doyle-Jenkins area. The study, using demographic and sociological data, was completed on August 31, 1963. At the conclusion of the study, it was found that the proposed school would not meet the needs of the community groups in terms of being integrated and offering innovative programs. To establish a truly integrated school, Curwood recommended that a new attendance area be established for the school in order to establish a better mix of African-American, Cape Verdeans and white students. She also recommended that the school department offer community programs on the benefits of integrated schools and to end the permit system. The permit system allowed both African-American and white students to transfer out of schools with a high minority enrollment into schools that were predominantly white. As a result of the study and community pressure, the school department designated the new school as an experimental school and the plans to build a school in what was the traditional design were abandoned. As a result, the completion of the project was delayed for two years. The school committee also agreed to desegregate the school by setting new attendance boundaries for it. A racial count of students conducted by the school department in November, 1963 found that the Doyle and Jenkins schools were over ninety percent African American.³

At this same time as the Lippitt Hill Elementary School was being planned and constructed, other schools in the East Side and South Providence neighborhoods were still segregated and the school committee had not yet established a city-wide plan to integrate

³ Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 154-169, 174; United States Commission on Civil Rights, *School Desegregation in Providence*, 7.

Providence schools. The issue of desegregation was not discussed again until the spring of 1966 when Providence School Superintendent, Charles A. O'Connor, discovered that the plan for the new Lippitt Hill Elementary School would no longer make it an integrated school unless new attendance lines were drawn up and the permit system abolished. The permit system allowed students to attend schools that were located outside of their attendance lines. At this time, O'Connor did not make any recommendations to the school board that this problem be addressed, and he and the school board also neglected to make a policy statement regarding desegregation in the Providence schools. Public pressure once more began to mount regarding this issue. In June 1966, the incoming principal of the new Lippitt Hill Elementary School, Thomas J. McDonald, stated that he would reconsider his upcoming assignment if the new school did not open with sixty percent African American students and forty percent white students. O'Connor also received pressure from Reverend Raymond E. Gibson. Gibson was the chairman of the Rhode Island State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Gibson's committee commissioned a study regarding segregation in the Providence Schools and met with O'Connor regarding the findings of the study. Gibson threatened to invite the United States Commission on Civil Rights to have a hearing on school desegregation if some action to integrate Providence schools was not taken by the end of the summer of 1966. The Lippitt Hill Elementary School, which was finally opened on September 7, 1967, was designated as a city wide magnet school. The school had a very innovative program of studies and, in the first year of its existence, had a sixty-five percent white and a thirty-five

percent African-American enrollment.⁴

All across the United States public officials at this time failed to come up with plans to end school segregation. Harold Howe, the United States Commissioner of Education, stated that the schools in the United States at this time were as segregated in 1966 as they were in 1954. Howe stated that in order to have integrated schools, local school officials had to risk “irritating a fair percentage of our white constituents”. The *Providence Journal* supported integrated schools in Providence and called on Providence school department officials to listen to Howe’s advice and to issue a “firm and forthright policy statement” on how desegregation would be achieved in Providence schools.⁵

In response to the public pressure, Sherwin J. Kapstein, a school committee member from the East Side, introduced two resolutions on de facto segregation at the June 27, 1966 school committee meeting. The first resolution called on the school department to come up with a plan to eliminate de facto segregation in the schools that were not integrated. The second resolution called for a plan to be submitted to the school committee by Superintendent O’Connor that would fix the attendance lines and enrollment policies to ensure that the new Lippitt Hill School was integrated. The school committee passed both resolutions. While the school committee was meeting about twenty-five members of what was called the Negro Leadership Conference picketed outside. This newly formed group was a coalition of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the East Side Neighborhood Council and a civil rights group called the Fearless Fifty. The coalition was led by James D. McDaniel, then president of the Providence branch of the

⁴ Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 154- 169, 174.

⁵“A Challenge to Local School Committees,” *Providence Journal*, June 22, 1966.

NAACP. McDaniel addressed the school board and stated that by August 1, 1966 his group wanted a desegregation plan in place for all Providence schools that had at least a fifty percent ratio of African-American students. He stated that his group wanted to ensure that African-American children in Providence received a quality education and would boycott sending their children to segregated schools if necessary.⁶

In the aftermath of the school board meeting that was described above, the Negro Leadership Conference, Sherwin J. Kapstein and the press continued to call for the school board and Superintendent O'Connor to come up with a policy to deal with de facto segregation in Providence. In order to keep the pressure on O'Connor and the school board, McDaniel and his group threatened to have federal and state education funds cut off because of segregation in the schools. The State Board of Education responded to these threats by stating that de facto segregation in Providence did not violate any state or federal laws. On July 8, 1966, the Negro Leadership Conference also sent a formal complaint regarding segregation in the schools to David Seeley, Director of the Equal Opportunities Program of the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Seeley asked O'Connor to provide more information regarding the charges in the complaint but never followed up on this complaint.⁷

In response to all of the protests, Superintendent O'Connor realized that he had to address the problem of de facto segregation. To assist him to come up with a formal policy, he met with several local experts. This group included Dr. Harold Pfautz, a sociologist at Brown University; James N. Williams, executive director of the Urban League of Rhode Island; William P.

⁶Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 174-175.

⁷Ibid., 175-177.

Robinson, Jr., state commissioner of education; and Myrl G. Herman, director of laboratory experience at Rhode Island College. O'Connor held a press conference on July 28, 1966 to talk about a position paper that he had written regarding de facto segregation. The paper entitled, *Position Paper of the Superintendent on the Integration of the Providence Public Schools*, included a statement on the philosophy on de facto segregation and a plan to implement desegregation in the city's schools. At the press conference he indicated that his statement of philosophy had been unanimously approved on July 27, 1966 during a closed door meeting of the school committee. He also told the press that the school committee gave him the sole responsibility of implementing the plan.⁸ O'Connor ended his remarks by stating the following:

. . . In conclusion, let me summarize by saying that all of our philosophy and all of our deliberations to achieve these expressed goals will be fruitless without the full participation and acceptance of all of the people – Governor, Mayor, City Council, parents and children. We, the Providence school department and School Committee, are willing and eager to play the leadership role, but our success will be measured by community participation and community support.⁹

After this position paper was issued, O'Connor and the Negro Leadership Conference met and agreed on six principles that would be followed to desegregate schools in Providence. On September 1, 1966, O'Connor and the Negro Leadership Conference agreed that: African-American and white students would be bused if necessary. In addition, there would be hot lunch programs for all schools; special training for teachers in the new desegregated schools; qualified African-American teachers would be promoted; a public information program that stressed that desegregation was necessary. Finally educational resources would be reevaluated to make sure

⁸ Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 177.

⁹“Behind the City's Integration Plan,” *Evening Bulletin*, August 22, 1966.

that African Americans were portrayed in an accurate fashion.¹⁰ After these points were agreed upon, the Negro Leadership Conference waited for O'Connor to develop a specific plan that would address all of the agreed upon points. Meanwhile the African-American leaders kept the pressure on by staging civil rights rallies. On August 5, 1966, the Negro Leadership Conference held a rally in South Providence. Speakers at the rally encouraged African Americans to register to vote, help their children with homework and to oppose de facto school segregation in Providence. One speaker at the conference also criticized O'Connor's plan to end de facto segregation. Following the rally, some in attendance threw rocks and broke soda bottles.¹¹

Even before O'Connor announced the details of his plan, many white residents of the city were opposed to the elimination of de facto segregation. In a *Providence Journal* editorial that supported the elimination of de facto segregation, it was reported that the president of the John Howland PTA, Mrs. Alan B. Hopfenberg, stated that integration was "not our problem as such". The John Howland School had a majority white student enrollment at this time and was located on the East Side. Hopfenberg also stated that she felt that the entry of more African-American students into the Howland School would have lowered the standards there. The editorial concluded by stating that integration should have been a concern of every citizen those who supported it, opposed it and those who stood "idly by."¹²

¹⁰Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 179; United States Commission on Civil Rights, *School Desegregation in Providence*, 8.

¹¹"The Negro Leadership Conference Needs to Set Up Positive Goals," *Evening Bulletin*, August 6, 1966.

¹² "The Issue of Integration Concerns Every American," *Providence Journal*, August 22, 1966.

Doorley's Republican opponent for mayor of Providence in the November 1966 election, John Quattrocchi, Jr., was also against the proposed integration of Providence schools. Quattrocchi was looking for a campaign issue and stated that school department officials should "wait" regarding this issue because what Providence needed at this time was "quality education first, then larger neighborhood schools and/or busing." He felt that the busing aspect of the proposed plan would "drive many more families out of Providence."¹³

O'Connor agreed to have a detailed integration plan ready for South Providence schools by October 1, 1966 and a plan ready for the East Side schools by December 1, 1966. The timing of the East Side Plan would be determined by when the new Lippitt Hill School would be completed. The following steps were taken to prepare for integration. Using funds from the Carnegie Foundation, twelve teachers were trained at Rhode Island College in how to handle problems in poor neighborhoods, sixty teachers took courses on race relations at Boston University and twenty members of the national teacher corps were scheduled to work in South Providence in the fall of 1967.¹⁴

On September 30, 1966, O'Connor unveiled his integration plan for the desegregation of elementary schools in South Providence and part of Washington Park. Washington Park is a neighborhood that is adjacent to South Providence. In 1966, this neighborhood was a white middle class area that consisted of one and two family homes. The "O'Connor Plan", as this

¹³"Mr. Quattrocchi Loses Perspective," *Providence Sunday Journal*, September 18, 1966.

¹⁴"A Dialogue on School Integration," *Providence Journal*, September 9, 1966; Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 178.

proposal came to be known as in the press, would involve the reassignment of approximately one thousand African-American and white students in eight elementary schools and one junior high school in the two neighborhoods mentioned above. The Flynn, Fogarty, Beacon and Temple schools were majority African-American schools, had a total enrollment of 2,162 students and were 67.4 percent non-white. The Lexington, Broad and Sackett schools were majority white, had a total enrollment of 1,655 students and were 88.9 percent white. The other elementary school, located in the West End neighborhood that would be affected by this plan was Hammond which had a majority of African-American students. All of the above schools were feeders to the Roger Williams Junior High school which was located in South Providence.¹⁵

The O'Connor Plan was to take effect on January 30, 1967 and required the approval of the school committee. In order to end de facto segregation in the elementary schools of the South Providence and Washington Park neighborhoods, the plan called for all ninth-grade students to be moved out from Roger Williams Junior High School to one of the four high schools of their choice. All sixth grade students in the elementary schools mentioned above would have been moved to Roger Williams. The elementary schools would then have been left with grades one through five and the neighborhood attendance lines would have been redrawn and five hundred students would have been reassigned to a new school. Three hundred students would have been reassigned to schools that they could walk to and two hundred students would have to be bussed to their new school assignment. The plan called for parental approval for those who would have had to take the bus to school. This plan would have reduced the percentage of

¹⁵ Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 179; "The Problem, The Schools, The Plan's Status, The Neighborhoods, The Issues, The Plan, Opposition, Support," *Providence Sunday Journal*, October 9, 1966.

African-American students in the eight elementary schools mentioned above to forty-five percent. The percentage of African-American students attending Roger Williams would have been thirty-seven percent. O'Connor was ready to present this plan to the school board for approval in October 1966 but his ideas were met with much opposition. Those opposed to the plan were school board members, politicians, political candidates, white grass roots resistance groups and Mayor Doorley. Although never formally presented, the plan was essentially dead by November 15, 1966.¹⁶

Many groups in the city and statewide supported the O'Connor Plan. Along with Catholic, Protestant and Jewish leaders, the Negro Leadership Conference, the Providence Human Relations Commission, the East Side Neighborhood Council, the State Commission Against Discrimination, the League of Women Voters, the Rhode Island Conference of Social Work, the Urban League of Rhode Island and the American Civil Liberties Union endorsed the plan. The various editors of the *Providence Journal, Evening Bulletin* and the *Providence Sunday Journal* also wrote many editorials that supported O'Connor's plan. Governor Chafee and State Commissioner of Education, William P. Robinson, Jr., also supported the plan. Robinson called for officials in Providence to desegregate the schools in South Providence and said, if they failed to do so, that they would face "the severest censure of posterity,"¹⁷

A major debate regarding the integration of schools was started as a result of the O'Connor Plan. The *Providence Sunday Journal* stated that "not since the dramatic fair housing

¹⁶Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 179-181; "The Problem, The Schools, The Plan's Status, The Neighborhoods, The Issues, The Plan, Opposition, Support," *Providence Sunday Journal*, October 9, 1966.

¹⁷Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 184; Leonard B. Stevens, "Robinson Calls for Integration," *Providence Journal*, October 5, 1966.

battle of 1965 has the community been so stirred.” Mayor Doorley, who had not commented on this issue during the summer of 1966, opposed major parts of the plan. He had no legal rights to approve or reject this plan but was a major influence on the school board members. The combination of the opposition of the majority of the members of the school board and Doorley’s were enough to doom the passage of this plan from the start.¹⁸ Doorley’s views on the plan were as follows:

. . . The proposal to use available space in Roger Williams Junior High School for a racially integrated sixth grade should be extended to receive pupils from the entire city or from the entire state. Thus the community will have an opportunity to demonstrate its support of the integrated school concept. Dr. O’Connor has stated that he will personally discuss his plan with the parents of the children who attend the schools involved. I believe that the expressed consent of the parent should be received before any child is transferred from the neighborhood school which he presently attends. I will not support any plan which calls for the involuntary busing from the neighborhood schools.¹⁹

Many educational leaders in the state supported the O’Connor plan and urged Doorley to change his thinking and to support the entire plan. William Gaige, the President of Rhode Island College, wrote to Mayor Doorley on October 14, 1966 and strongly urged him to change his thinking on the this issue.

. . . Unfortunately, everyone has his eye on the compulsory feature of Charles O’Connor’s plan. I wish that you could play down your own thinking and in your statements the compulsory part – at least for the time being. I am concerned that you become irrevocably committed. I wish also that you could begin to think of this plan as part of the improvement of education all over the City. You are operating schools that should be closed. If they are closed, then children will have to be transported to other schools. The issue is: Will the affected students get as good or better education in the other schools where they currently are? I think you know that virtually no progress can be made in any

¹⁸Leonard B. Stevens, “The City’s Debate Over Racial Balance in the Schools,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, October 9, 1966; Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 182.

¹⁹“Doorley Text on School Plan,” *Providence Journal*, October 5, 1966.

area without some compulsion. There could be no urban renewal; there could be no throughways or right of eminent domain. Much of the improvement and welfare of children would become impossible. The one feature that stands out in the current issue that is different from the problems which the city faces everywhere is racial prejudice. There is no sense denying it; it is there; it is difficult, tragic, and it effects good, decent, conscientious people in all walks of life. Let me get back to what is good for Providence. All cities have got to face up to the problem of integration. Before some do, there will be bloodshed and brutality. But fear should not be the motive; rather, the motive should come from a sense of justice and a search for economic and social profit....²⁰

On October 21, 1966, Doorley received a letter from twelve very prominent citizens of Providence regarding the O'Connor plan and the integration of Providence schools. Among the citizens that signed this letter were Roman Catholic Bishop Russell J. McVinney, Episcopalian Bishop John Seville Higgins, William P. Haas, O.P., President of Providence College, Superior Court Judge Frank Licht and former Governor Dennis J. Roberts. The letter urged Doorley to:

. . . (1) to encourage the School Committee to defer action with respect to this Plan until after the election; and (2) to take the initiative, immediately after the election, as Mayor of the City, in convening a working conference consisting of members of the School Committee, the Superintendent of Schools, the Commissioner of Education, the Chairman of the State Board of Education, the President of Rhode Island College, a few specialists in educational organization and one or more representatives of the Negro community, under the Chairmanship of some distinguished citizen who would have the respect of all concerned, to the end that, through examination of differences, search for alternatives and projection of possibilities, a solution may be found which will be acceptable to all concerned.²¹

The prominent citizens that signed this letter were afraid that, if the school committee voted on the O'Connor Plan during an election campaign, the measure would be voted down. Doorley wrote to each member of the school committee on October 25, 1966. He included with his letter

²⁰William Gaige, President of Rhode Island College to Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., October 14, 1966, PC Archives.

²¹Concerned Citizens of Providence to Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., October 21, 1966, PC Archives.

a copy of the letter which he received from the twelve prominent citizens and asked them to “defer action on the so-called ‘O’Connor proposal’ until we have had an opportunity to see if we cannot develop a workable solution to this social problem.” The members of the school committee agreed to not take action on the O’Connor plan until after the November election was over. Four members of the school committee including the chairman, Raymond F. Fricker, were strongly opposed to the plan and publically stated their opposition. The school committee did not meet until after the election when it voted to table the O’Connor Plan. This action by the school committee killed the plan because the school committee members in favor of the plan did not have the votes to have the issue taken off the table for a formal vote.²²

After Doorley was reelected as mayor, he went to work on making appointments to a working committee that would be charged with drafting a plan that would deal with desegregation. Many community groups were interested in having a representative on this committee and Doorley received many letters from these groups in which they suggested potential members. On December 1, 1966, Doorley made appointments to what became a twenty-seven member working committee. Superintendent O’Connor and the seven members of the school committee joined Doorley as members of the committee. Doorley wanted parental involvement and included nine PTA presidents on this committee. The following statewide leaders were also chosen by Doorley to serve on this committee: Dr. William P. Robinson; Reverend Raymond E. Gibson; Robert F. Pickard, chairman of the State Board of Education; Msgr. Arthur T. Geoghegan, superintendent of the Catholic schools of the Diocese of

²² Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Mr. Raymond F. Fricker, October 25, 1966, PC Archives; Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 183-185; Raymond F. Fricker to Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., October 29, 1966, PC Archives.

Providence; James N. Williams, the executive director of the Urban League of Rhode Island; Reverend Herbert O. Edwards, director of the Providence Human Relations Commission; Theodore M. Hathaway, vice-president of the Providence Central Federated Labor Council and Rabbi Eli A. Bohnen of Temple Emanuel in Providence. Doorley scheduled the first meeting of this committee for December 7, 1966 and was elected to chair this group. The group had a difficult assignment and had weekly meetings from December 1966 through April 1967.²³

The first recommendation from the working committee came from the December 12, 1966 meeting of the group. The committee recommended to the school committee that all ninth graders who attended Roger Williams Junior High School be transferred to senior high schools. This recommendation was approved by the school board at the January 10, 1967 meeting and scheduled to take effect on January 30, 1967.²⁴ At this time, the editorial staff of the *Providence Journal* was becoming impatient that it was taking the working committee so long to come up with a solution to the problem of de facto segregation. In response to the criticisms of the newspaper, Lawrence A. Paley, a member of the working commission, wrote the following comments in a letter to the editor:

. . . Certainly you are not under the assumption that any meaningful plan to eliminate de facto segregation can actually be put into effect before the start of the next school year in September. That being the case, isn't the willingness of Mayor Doorley's conference to devote long hours week after week in a sincere effort to arrive at the best possible plan worthy of commendation and encouragement rather than criticism?²⁵

²³Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 186; Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Reverend Raymond E. Gibson, December 1, 1966, PC Archives; Roster for Mayor's Comm. To Eliminate De Facto Segregation in Prov. Schools, undated, PC Archives.

²⁴Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 187; "Broad School Integration Plan Proposed to Mayor's Committee," *Providence Journal*, February 16, 1967.

²⁵Lawrence A. Paley to *Providence Journal* Editor, January 9, 1967, PC Archives.

The committee debated many issues surrounding de facto segregation in trying to decide if they should recommend a vote by the school committee on the O'Connor plan or develop a new plan to solve this problem. Reverend Raymond E. Gibson, a member of the working committee, recommended that a new plan be considered that would include desegregation plans for areas outside of South Providence, student busing, redistricting and limits on the ability of students to transfer out of a school. He felt that his plan was "necessary to prevent disaster" in Providence.²⁶

During the March 1, 1967 meeting of the working committee, a motion was passed to recommend that the school committee accept the O'Connor plan to end de facto segregation in elementary schools in South Providence. Because of prior commitments, Mayor Doorley was absent from this meeting. Many white parents protested that the committee recommended this plan. White parents had a problem with a mandatory desegregation plan that did not include schools in the entire city. White parents, who lived in the Washington Park and Elmwood neighborhoods, did not want to carry the entire burden of desegregation at the schools in their neighborhoods and stated that they would only accept a city-wide desegregation plan. Residents of the two neighborhoods mentioned above formed the Citizens Committee on Citywide Integration and threatened to take this issue to court. The members of this citizens committee felt that the desegregation was a citywide problem and that schools in all neighborhoods should be required to be involved in the solution. On March 15, 1967, the working committee members withdrew their support of the O'Connor Plan and moved that it would work to prepare a city-

²⁶"Broad School Integration Plan Proposed to Mayor's Committee," *Providence Journal*, February 16, 1967.

wide plan for desegregation that would limit the enrollment of African-American students in any school to thirty percent or lower.²⁷

Many community organizations that were in favor of desegregation of the Providence schools were growing wary as they waited for Doorley's working committee to recommend a plan.²⁸ The officers of the Providence League Women Voters wrote to Doorley about this issue to let him know that they were not satisfied with the situation:

The League of Women Voters of Providence is greatly disturbed by the fact that five months have elapsed since Dr. O'Connor first made a proposal to integrate schools in South Providence. During this period Providence School children have continued to attend defacto segregated schools, and a solution to the segregation is yet to be agreed upon. The League of Women Voters is very concerned that the proliferation of integration proposals may be used to further delay the accomplishment of integration.²⁹

As a result of this pressure, Doorley formed a subcommittee of the working committee in order to come up with a solution to school desegregation. Doorley promised that the solution that was recommended by the subcommittee be implemented by September, 1967. On March 21, 1967, Doorley invited Reverend Herbert O. Edwards; Dr. William P. Robinson; Dr. Charles A. O'Connor; James N. Williams; Reverend Raymond E. Gibson; Monsignor Arthur T. Geoghegan and Lawrence A. Paley to serve on this subcommittee.³⁰

The subcommittee worked quickly and at their April 4, 1967 meeting came up with a plan that they would present to the larger working committee at their April 12, 1967 meeting.

²⁷Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 188-190.

²⁸Ibid., 190.

²⁹League of Women Voters of Providence to Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., March 9, 1967, PC Archives.

³⁰Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 190; Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Mr. Lawrence A. Paley, March 21, 1967, PC Archives; Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Dr. William P. Robinson, March 21, 1967, PC Archives.

The plan was called the Providence Plan and was designed to have a maximum of thirty percent African-American students in any one school. This citywide desegregation plan would be put in to effect in September, 1967, was a mandatory plan and would include busing. At first the proponents of the Providence Plan had difficulty convincing Doorley that a voluntary desegregation plan would not work in Providence. He was eventually convinced and gave his support to the Providence Plan. Supporters of the plan convinced Doorley the plan would bring his administration a successful civil rights victory that would help him politically. The working committee approved this plan at the April 12 meeting and the plan was then approved unanimously by the school board on April 13, 1967. School board chairman Fricker was absent from both the April 12 and April 13 meetings and did not cast a vote on the plan. Doorley knew that he needed the support from the entire community in order to make this plan a success and stated that he did not know how much opposition would be encountered. He encouraged the working committee to do the best it could to sell this plan to the people of Providence.³¹

The Providence Plan included a plan for South Providence schools and a plan for the schools of the East Side. In South Providence, the plan called for the conversion of the Temple Street and Edmund W. Flynn schools into citywide centers for handicapped children; assignment of forty students from the Mary E. Fogarty school to the Henry Barnard School on the campus of Rhode Island College (tuition for these students was to be paid by the school department); the shifting of African-American students from Temple, Flynn, Fogarty, and Beacon Avenue schools

³¹Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 190-191; Summary of the Conclusions Reached by Mayor Doorley's Subcommittee on De Facto Segregation, April 4, 1967, PC Archives; Prentice Bowsher, "School Integration Plan is Approved," *Providence Journal*, April 13, 1967; Hamilton E. Davis, "The Plan, the Committee, The Negroes – and the Mayor," *Providence Sunday Journal*, September 17, 1967.

to other majority white schools in other areas of the city and the shifting of white students that attended Flynn and Temple to either Fogarty or Beacon. The East Side part of the plan called for pre-kindergarten through third classes to be assigned to Summit Avenue, John Howland and the new Lippitt Hill School and the assignment of fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in the Lippitt Hill area, which were at this time assigned to the majority African-American Doyle and Jenkins Street schools, to Howland and Summit (which would retain the fourth through sixth grades). The fourth East Side Elementary school was Fox Point and under this plan the pre-kindergarten through sixth grade would remain the same with a small number of students shifted to other schools and some students added.³²

Serious opposition to the Providence Plan by members of the African-American community started immediately after it was approved by the school board. On April 15, 1967, South Providence residents were led in a protest by Freeman Soares, the leader of the group called the "Fearless Fifty." The group was upset because it felt that the average people who lived in South Providence were not represented on the subcommittee that drafted the Providence Plan and that the plan called for their neighborhood to lose the Temple Street and Flynn schools. The group was most upset about the conversion of the Flynn school into a handicapped center. At this time, the Flynn school was new and had many facilities that would not be available at the schools their children would be assigned to under the plan. The group also had rallies in late April and early May and they threatened to boycott the schools. Many South Providence residents felt that entire burden of desegregation fell to the African-American community. It was ironic that their

³²Prentice Bowsher, "School Integration Plan Approved," *Providence Journal*, April 13, 1967.

representative to the school board was desegregation opponent Raymond Fricker, who lived in a neighborhood adjacent to South Providence. At a May 22 school board meeting, a representative of this group condemned the Providence Plan and demanded the resignation of Fricker who had not attended a meeting since December, 1966. Fricker claimed that the reason for his absences was that he was recovering from an operation and that his doctors advised him to stay away from meetings. This protests of this group continued, but they slowed down through the summer months of 1967.³³

Many groups in the city and state were very supportive of the Providence Plan. It was endorsed by the press, the State Board of Education, the Providence Human Relations Commission and the NAACP.³⁴ Government officials were also impressed with the plan. Professor Elmer Cornwell from the Department of Political Science at Brown University shared the news regarding the favorable opinion of federal officials in a short note to Doorley:

Just a line to pass on a bit of intelligence that came my way regarding the desegregation plan that your study committee and the School Committee have approved. Apparently some of the people in Washington that are concerned with these matters and have seen it are saying that it is the best in the country, or words to that effect. I hope the plan can be implemented smoothly. It will be awfully good to have that problem solved – as fair housing has been – in a way that will reflect credit on you and on the city.³⁵

Once the protests of the South Providence residents subsided, the school board did not schedule any further meetings. O'Connor did not provide parents with many details of how the plan was to be implemented until the end of the summer. He waited until the week before

³³Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 196-197; Hamilton E. Davis, "The Plan, the Committee, The Negroes – and the Mayor," *Providence Sunday Journal*, September 17, 1967.

³⁴Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 197-198.

³⁵Elmer Cornwell to Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., May 24, 1967, PC Archives.

schools started to disclose some details because he wanted to be able to implement the plan without more protests from community groups. On August 29, South Providence parents finally received the names of the new schools that their children would attend on September 6. Many parents were upset because many children from the same families were assigned to different schools. On August 31, sixty African-American parents mostly from South Providence descended on the school administration offices to express their dissatisfaction to O'Connor. These parents had children that would be bused to their new schools and they were concerned because the details of how this would take place were not made public until so late in the summer. They were not satisfied with the meeting they had with O'Connor and members of the subcommittee of the Doorley's working conference on desegregation. They began a thirty-six hour sit in and demanded that the Flynn school be changed from a handicapped center to an integrated school, that all children in the same family attend the same school, that an African American be appointed as a principal or vice principal at Flynn and that a meeting for them with the school board be scheduled.³⁶

A position paper drafted by this group on September 2 stated that they were not opposed to the desegregation plan and busing in general. The group had a problem with the South Providence integration plan because it felt that it placed the entire burden of desegregation on African Americans. A special meeting with five members of the school committee was arranged for the evening of September 4. This meeting that took place on the evening of Labor Day included over one hundred African-American protesters. The result of the meeting was that the

³⁶Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 213-214; Hamilton E. Davis, "The Plan, the Committee, The Negroes – and the Mayor," *Providence Sunday Journal*, September 17, 1967.

school committee members agreed to change Flynn back to an elementary school and to appoint an African-American principal or vice principal at one of the Providence schools. At the conclusion of the meeting the committee informed the group that their agreement would have to formally approved at the September 11 meeting of the school board because the committee bylaws stated that formal written notice was required in order to hold a special meeting of the school board. The group left with assurances that school board would vote to formalize these agreements at the next meeting.³⁷

Mayor Doorley was aware of the demands that the South Providence group would ask of the school board. Before the Labor Day meeting, he sent a telegram to O'Connor that was supposed to be read to the board before they acted on these demands. The telegram warned the committee not to give in to the demands to change Flynn back to an elementary school and was given to Herbert O. Edwards, who was chosen to be the moderator between the African Americans and the school committee. Doorley's message was never shared with the committee members because Edwards claimed that it "simply got lost in the shuffle." Once Doorley heard that his telegram was not read, he became very upset and issued a public statement that encouraged the committee not to follow through with their agreement with the protesters. In light of the feelings of the mayor on this issue, the five committee members began to change their positions on the demands which they agreed to support. The *Providence Journal* surveyed the five committee members and the published account showed that all of them were changing their positions on this matter. The African-American protesters realized that the school committee

³⁷Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 215; Davis, "The Plan, the Committee, the Negroes and the Mayor."

members would renege on their earlier promise of support and started to boycott Providence schools before the September 11 meeting.³⁸

Four hundred and twenty people were present at the September 11 meeting of the school board. The majority of those present were African Americans. The meeting took place in the auditorium of Central High School. Even though the committee members had already made their decision on this matter they took a twenty minute recess during which they stated they would make their decision. After the recess, the committee members gave into pressure by Doorley, the press and the Rhode Island Chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children and voted unanimously to go ahead with the Providence Plan, without voting to pass a resolution making official what was agreed to on September 4. The audience was upset and many in the crowd shouted and called the committee members white racists. The meeting became more heated when one of the leaders of the South Providence group asked the cops to come out from behind the curtains on the stage. Two members from the audience then got up and pulled back the curtains on the stage and it was found that six plain clothes policemen were hiding backstage.³⁹

At this point, the African-American protesters were furious and insulted at the events that took place at this meeting. Dal Nicholas, the elected spokesman for the protesters, made a brief statement after the meeting and said that the school committee members were “puppets of the mayor” and that the meeting was a “puppet show.” About one hour after the conclusion of the meeting African Americans and whites met to discuss setting up what they called freedom schools. These schools would accommodate the African-American children who would not

³⁸Davis, “The Plan, the Committee, The Negroes and the Mayor.”

³⁹ Ibid.

attend the public schools because of the boycott. By September 18, four freedom schools were set up and were located at the South Providence Drop-in-Center, the Washington Park Methodist Church, the Church of the Mediator and the Episcopal Church House. The principal of the freedom schools was Brown University History Professor, William G. McLoughlin. The *Providence Journal* conducted a survey on the school boycotts and it found that, although many African Americans in South Providence were upset about this situation, they would not join the school boycott. About one hundred African-American students attended the freedom schools. The African-American protesters wanted to keep the pressure on Doorley and the school committee in hopes that they would change the Providence Plan so that the Flynn School would remain a neighborhood school. Despite the protests and what was called a “live in”, where a group of thirty-five African-American mothers did not leave the Providence Public School Offices for two days, the Providence Plan was implemented with no changes on September 6, 1967.⁴⁰

Even though the plan was implemented, the protests did not stop and many African-American children attended freedom schools for three weeks. Doorley tried to persuade frustrated parents to give it time to succeed. The Minister’s Alliance of Greater Providence urged the mayor to have the Providence Human Relations Committee discuss the situation with the protesters. Determined to solve the Flynn School problem in a peaceful way, Doorley established a thirty member commission to address this issue. The committee consisted of

⁴⁰Davis, “The Plan, the Committee, The Negroes – and the Mayor,”; Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 215; Dean Starkman, “Promise of Diversity,” *Providence Journal*, January 31, 1988; “Providence Negroes Protest Busing Plan,” *New York Times*, September 2, 1967; “Providence Pushes Integration by Bus Despite Negro Protests,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1967; News Release, Mayor’s Office, City Hall, Providence, RI, September 7, 1967, PC Archives.

educators, politicians, union leaders and unhappy parents and proposed that the Flynn School be designated as a model school. The school would offer specially chosen teachers, specialists in the arts and sciences and as few as twenty-five students per class. It was hoped that this school would attract students from neighborhoods all over the city. Mayor Doorley encouraged liberals from the wealthy East Side section of Providence to send their children to this school. Doorley also enrolled his own son, Brian, in the Flynn School. Other white liberals who sent their children to Flynn included William L. Robin, a school committeeman from the East Side, and State Senator Julius C. Michaelson. On January 30, 1968, the Flynn school opened as a model school with 265 white students and 150 African-American students. The quota of 350 white students was reached on February 28, 1968. The students at the newly desegregated school came from thirty-three of the Providence public schools as well as from private schools.⁴¹

During the battle for school integration, the school committee was criticized for lack of leadership by many parents of students attending the Providence schools. These criticisms led Doorley to push for the reorganization of the school committee in 1968. The planning that led to this reorganization was started by Doorley in 1965 when he appointed a nine man committee chaired by Representative Bernard Gladstone a Democrat from District Five in Providence. The charge of this committee was to study the Strayer Act and the financing of the Providence public schools. The Strayer Act, passed by the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1925, stipulated that the school committee was to be elected in a non-partisan fashion and that each year the school

⁴¹“Negroes End School Boycott,” *Hartford Courant*, October 10, 1967; Statement to the Press, Ministers’ Alliance of Greater Providence, PC Archives; Scott MacKay, “1968 the Year that Rocked the World,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, April 6, 2008; Dean Starkman, “Promise of Diversity,” *Providence Journal*, January 31 1988; News Release, Mayor’s Office, City Hall, Providence, RI, September 7, 1967, PC Archives; Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 218-219.

department would automatically receive thirty-five percent of the city's tax revenue. The act was amended in 1954 and the schools were guaranteed 1.1 percent of the value of assessed property in the city. Since the act was amended, this act did not provide sufficient funds for the operation of the schools because of the changes in the value of city properties. The committee finished their study in October 1967 and recommended that the school committee be appointed by the mayor and that the funds that the schools receive should be voted by the city council. These recommendations could only be acted upon if the Strayer Act was amended once again.⁴²

Doorley did not do anything to lobby to have a new law enacted until February 1968. Using his influence in the Democratic controlled state legislature, Doorley influenced Senator Julius Michaelson to introduce a bill that would allow cities and towns to have a referendum on having mayors appoint the school committees in their cities and towns. When the school committee realized that Doorley was lobbying for a new law that would allow him to appoint a new committee, they offered Providence teachers a 1.8 million dollar raise for the next school year. The offer of teacher raises was designed to hurt Doorley politically because at this time he was contemplating running for governor. The raises would put Doorley between a rock and a hard place because he could not pay for the raises without raising taxes and could not deny the raises without the teachers going on strike before the election. Doorley shot back at the school committee by declaring that the proposed raise was not fiscally responsible and said that the city could not afford the increase in teacher salaries. For many years the fiscal record of the school board was poor. The mayor continued to lobby for a law that would allow him to appoint the

⁴²Wallace I. Roberts, "Who Is to Run the Schools?" *Providence Sunday Journal*, October 22, 1967; Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 235.

school committee. A bill that would allow a referendum on this issue was introduced in the General Assembly on June 4 1968. After a week, the bill passed in both chambers without a public hearing. The choices on the ballot for Providence voters to consider were an appointed school committee that would be subject to city council approval or an elected school committee with the power to set its own taxes with no limit on the amount it could raise taxes. Governor Chafee allowed the referendum bill to become law without his signature. On August 20 1968, the Providence voters chose the option that would allow the mayor to appoint a nine member school committee with city council confirmation. Doorley choose Charles A. Kilvert as the new chairman of the school committee. Two African-American women, Ann D. Hill and Edna Frazier, were also appointed to the committee by Doorley.⁴³

At this time, the desegregation process started but problems with racial tensions occurred at some of the schools. Many white parents and students objected to the appearance of African-American students in what were traditionally white schools. African-American students during this era also protested because they felt that many teachers were racist. As a result of the elementary school desegregation moves, twenty-two percent of Hope's student body was African American by the middle of the 1968-69 school year. On May 9 1969, 150 African American students walked out of Hope High School because the principal, Max H. Flaxman, refused to listen to their demands. The students desired courses in African-American history, the removal of what the students called racist teachers and administrators, for the administration to waive grade requirements for entrance into summer school and a waiver of examinations for summer

⁴³Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 236-237; Richard Albert Frusher, "The Conscience of the City' Providence, Politics, and the Providence Human Relations Commission, 1963-1968" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1974), 224-225.

school students who received a grade of C or higher. These demands came near the end of a school year that was filled with racial tensions at Hope. The next day Providence school department officials agreed to all of the above demands except the one that called for removal of the so-called racist teachers and administrators. The student group turned violent on May 13 1969 and did an estimated ten thousand dollars worth of damage to school property. The student group broke windows, lights and furniture. Some teachers and white students were assaulted, auditorium props were damaged and flags were burned. This incident shocked many whites and the faculty refused to teach at Hope for four days. Teachers returned to their classrooms when the administration stated that the charges of racism claimed by the African-American students were unsubstantiated statements. During this same month, similar demands were also made by African-American students at Nathanael Greene and Nathan Bishop Junior High Schools. In response to student demands and to avoid more violence, school department officials added African-American history courses for the fall of 1969 to Classical, Hope and Mount Pleasant High Schools and Esek Hopkins, Nathan Bishop, Nathanael Greene and Roger Williams Junior High Schools. Human relations workshops were also planned for faculty and administrators. ⁴⁴

Phase II of the desegregation of Providence schools was implemented in September, 1970 and affected the middle schools. The attendance zones were changed and African-American students were assigned to predominately white schools in the western and northern sections of the city. Students were also reassigned in some of the elementary schools that had become segregated again. At this time, a new state guide line said that the “racial composition of

⁴⁴Holden, *The Bus Stops Here*, 244-250.

any school shall not deviate more than 10 percent from the overall black-white ratio of all schools at the same grade level.” As a result of this guide line, all of the ninth graders in the city were assigned to the high schools. In September, 1971, Phase III of school segregation dealt with the high schools. According to the new state formula, the populations of the high schools should have been between eight and twenty eight percent African American. At this time, Hope High School was thirty-two percent African American and Central High School was forty-two percent African American. The city’s two other high schools, Classical (the only college preparatory high school in Providence) and Mount Pleasant, had a one percent African-American student population. To desegregate the high schools, admissions standards at Classical were slightly lowered and students were reassigned to ensure that the high schools were desegregated according to state guidelines.⁴⁵

Phase III of the Providence Plan also caused racial problems. Central High School was closed for one week in October 1971 and one week in March 1972 as a result of racially motivated disturbances. In April 1972, Mount Pleasant High school again closed for two days. Problems occurred at Central and Hope during September through December in 1972 that caused more than eighty students to be disciplined after an investigation by the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Justice. Twenty-five police officers responded to a disturbance that took place at Central High School on September 19, 1974, where several people were injured. Arrests also took place as a result of this disturbance that caused the school to be opened on a reduced schedule for two weeks and attendance to go from 1,900 to 333 students.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 257-260.

The disturbance at Central caused a less violent disturbance to occur at Mount Pleasant High School a week later. As a result of this disturbance, many students left school and a small group was part of a shoplifting incident at a store located in downtown Providence.⁴⁶

Mayor Doorley played a large role in the desegregation of Providence schools. *Providence Journal* reporter Hamilton Davis felt that Doorley was forced into leading the way for the integration of the schools in order to be viewed as a “progressive big city Democratic” mayor. The mayor realized that he alienated many members of his white middle class political base by eventually supporting the Providence Plan. The white middle class did not like the idea of busing their children into the ghetto neighborhoods of South Providence, but it was important for Doorley’s political image on the national scene to have a viable desegregation plan in place in Providence.⁴⁷

Doorley’s Dream and Downtown Redevelopment

The redevelopment of the downtown area of Providence was a prime concern for many citizens of the city. A revitalized downtown would attract businesses and create jobs for the many unemployed and under-employed in Providence. In 1960, the Downtown Business Coordinating Council was awarded a federal urban renewal matching grant to undertake a study of what was needed to revitalize downtown Providence. The city of Providence also added funds for this purpose and the City Plan Commission worked with the Downtown Business

⁴⁶United States Commission on Civil Rights, *School Desegregation in Providence*, 18; “Central High Boycott End to be Asked,” *Evening Bulletin*, March 21, 1972; “2 Guilty, 1 Cleared of Assault at Central,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 5, 1972; “Five Hurt in Melee at Mt. Pleasant,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 25, 1972; “Mt. Pleasant to Remain Closed Again Tomorrow,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 26, 1972; Franklin S. Prosnitz, “Central High Student Conflict Ends Quietly After 9 are Hurt,” *Providence Journal*, September 20, 1974; M. William Salganik, “Lunch Periods at Central Ended After Trouble,” *Providence Journal*, September 21, 1974.

Coordinating Council to draft a master plan for the downtown area. The plan entitled *Downtown Providence 1970* was written by the City Plan Commission under the supervision of city planner Dieter Hammershlaag.⁴⁸

This plan envisioned the demolition of city hall, large public walkways and a heliport, facets that were never acted upon. The parts of the plan that were completed were the Westminister Mall (a pedestrian mall on Westminister Street completed in August 1965) and the Weybosset Hill urban renewal project, which included the building of Cathedral Square, the Beneficient House, Regency Apartments, Empire Plaza, the Gilbane Building, Blue Cross Headquarters and One Weybosset Hill. One urban renewal project that was at the core of *Downtown Providence 1970* was the railroad relocation project, which called for the moving of the railroad tracks and passenger terminal belonging to the New Haven Railroad. The project was only in the planning stages when Doorley became mayor. In the place of the relocated tracks and terminals, the plan proposed that a governmental civic center, a cultural center and a hotel be built. The civic center area would have provided office space for several city departments that were displaced as a result of the Weybosset Hill renewal project. The size of this renewal area was 119.5 acres and the gross price of the project was estimated at twenty-five million dollars. It was estimated that the city would have had to have contribute 5.4 million dollars to this project. In August of 1964, Congress approved a \$600,000 credit for the project.

⁴⁷Davis, "The Plan, the Committee, The Negroes – and the Mayor."

⁴⁸Charles R. Wood and Blair Associates, *Community Renewal Program* (Providence, RI: Blair Associates, 1964), 62-63; Francis J. Leazes and Mark T. Motte, *Providence The Renaissance City* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 56-57.

The federal government also reserved eleven million dollars for it. However, the Providence envisioned by *Downtown Providence 1970* never got beyond the concept stage.⁴⁹

Many problems associated with the railroad relocation project had surfaced since it was first proposed under the Reynolds' administration. The New Haven Railroad, the owners of the tracks and terminal building, had filed for bankruptcy in 1961, which in itself had created a plethora of legal problems. The legal turmoil stalled the project while the New Haven Railroad sorted out its problems. Doorley, after he became mayor, realized that this project was an important piece in the renewal of Providence and his administration worked on alternate plans for renewal in the center of the city that did not call for the moving of railroad tracks. Doorley realized that the prospects for the railroad relocation plan were not promising. He, nevertheless, worked hard to submit the completed plan for the project to the federal government by the mid-July 1965 deadline. Doorley had doubts about the railroad relocation plan because it would have cost more than one million dollars per acre to execute. This plan was rejected by the government in July of 1965. Federal officials agreed with Doorley and stated that the plan was "excessively costly". Upon hearing that the initial plan was rejected, the Doorley administration continued to work on a new plan that would be submitted to the government, and that did not call for the removal of tracks.⁵⁰

⁴⁹City Plan Commission, Providence, RI, *1964 Annual Report* (Providence, RI: City Plan Commission, 1964) 3, 13-14; John Fawcett, "Urban Renewal Our Investment in Tomorrow," *The American City*, vol. 78 (November 1959), 101; Walter H. Reynolds to Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., PC Archives; Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., *Inaugural Address of Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., Mayor of the City of Providence, Rhode Island Delivered January 4, 1965* (Providence, Rhode Island: The Oxford Press, 1965); "Doorley Civic Center Plan: Use Station Site," *Evening Bulletin*, February 22, 1966; Leazes and Motte, *Providence The Renaissance City*, 56-57; Patrick T. Conley and Paul Campbell, *Providence A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, Virginia: The Dunning Company; Publishers, 1982), 204-205.

On February 22, 1966, the Doorley administration announced what was called the Civic Center Plan for the urban renewal of what was called the downtown civic center area. The plan did not call for the removal of the railroad tracks owned by the New Haven Railroad. Rather, the plan called for the redevelopment of a forty-eight acre area and was less expensive than the earlier plan rejected by the federal Urban Renewal Administration. The Doorley administration worked with the Providence Redevelopment Agency and the members of the City Plan Commission to draft the new plan that was submitted to the Urban Renewal Administration for final approval. The new plan called for the demolition of three structures: the Union Station, the office building that belonged to the railroad, and the Railway Express Agency, Incorporated building. To replace the torn down structures, a new city hall, a state or federal office building and a parking garage between Eddy and Union Streets were slated to be constructed. At this time, Providence was eligible for seventy-five percent contribution from the government for development projects.⁵¹

Doorley received mixed reviews for his progress with downtown urban renewal. Dr. Peter H. Nash, dean of the graduate school at the University of Rhode Island, stated that the Doorley administration showed a “lack of leadership” in regards to downtown urban renewal.⁵² Although the process of urban renewal for downtown Providence met road blocks associated with railroad location, the city had made some progress since renewal began under Reynolds in

⁵⁰Doorley, *Inaugural Address of Joseph A. Doorley* ; “An Industrial Pact Dream That Failed,” *Providence Journal*, 5 March 1965; “Doorley in Appraisal of First Six Months,” *Providence Journal*, July 8, 1965; “Doorley Says Politics Renewal Go Together,” *Evening Bulletin*, December 9, 1965; James F. Laffan, “12 Months of ‘the Expediter’ in City Hall,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, January 2, 1966.

⁵¹“Doorley Civic Center Plan: Use Station Site,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 10, 1966.

⁵²“Mayor Notes Conflict in Views on Renewal,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 17, 1966.

1960. Msgr. William J. Carey, rector of the Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul, who was involved in the urban renewal process in the downtown area as the vice chairman of IMPACT, R.I., Incorporated, was optimistic about the urban renewal process in Providence and made the following comments about *Downtown Providence 1970*:

We have returned time and time again to a single conviction: Our Plan is a good one, and it can be put into effect. We know what we want, a rebuilt city to meet tomorrow's needs. The next five years will make the difference.⁵³

IMPACT, R.I., Incorporated paid for a proposal, by Charles A. Maguire Associates that outlined plans for renewal of the center of the city. The proposal as submitted to Doorley called for a 93,200 square foot multi-purpose building to be built on a site in the area of the Weybosset Hill renewal project. Under the guidelines established in this proposal, the new arena would be built between Mason and Sabin Streets on land that was then occupied by the Manufacturers Building. The proposed arena was to seat 8,800 people for basketball or hockey games at a cost of five million dollars. Based on this proposal, the Doorley administration announced in February of 1966, a plan for renewal of the center of the city and Governor Chafee announced that he would support the idea of the state assisting the city with the financing for a civic center that would be a combined sports arena and convention center to be built in downtown Providence.⁵⁴

⁵³“Downtown Renewal is Still the Big Goal,” *Providence Journal*, May 31, 1965. Impact Rhode Island Incorporated was founded in 1960 and was made up of a group of city leaders that helped in making the objectives of *Downtown Providence 1970* a reality.

⁵⁴“Downtown Arena Plans Are Revived,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 22, 1966; James F. Laffan, “The Arena Plan: Seats for 8,800 \$5-million Cost,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 28, 1966; “Plan Being Prepared for Arena Financing,” *Evening Bulletin*, March 4, 1966.

Doorley was a strong supporter of the proposal to build a downtown arena, or a civic center, for the city of Providence. He made the building of a civic center a goal of his administration. The results of a feasibility study regarding the proposed civic center were released in January 1968. The consultants who worked on the study recommended that the city build a convention hall and sports center that would seat up to 10,200 people, a large exhibit hall, a 1,000 seat theatre to be used by the Trinity Repertory Company, ten meeting rooms that would hold fifty to five hundred people, a five hundred space garage, a trade mart for jewelry companies and a restaurant. The consultants estimated the cost for this type of facility to be 8.4 million dollars. Mayor Doorley and Governor Chafee announced the findings of the consultants and their agreement that a bond issue should be put to the voters of the state that would cover the entire cost of the project.⁵⁵

To raise the eight million dollars needed for the civic center project, the November 5, 1968 ballot included two separate bond issues. One bond issue for four million dollars was to be voted on by residents of the city of Providence and the second bond issue for four million dollars was to be voted on by residents of the state of Rhode Island. Doorley urged Providence voters to vote in favor of the bond issues because the feasibility study he had had done indicated that a new civic center would add approximately eight million dollars a year to the economy of the Providence metropolitan area. The Providence voters passed the civic center referendum 24,175 votes to 17,422, but the state's voters rejected the referendum 132,617 votes to 111,864. Many city and state leaders wanted the referendum to be placed on a second ballot in hopes that it

⁵⁵"Let's Build it Boldly," *Providence Journal*, January 21, 1968; *Keystone of a New Providence*; available from <http://www.provcc.com/provhist.htm>, Internet (accessed March 5, 2009).

would pass. Former Providence Mayor Walter Reynolds headed a committee that worked to have the referendum placed on the ballot again and to gain statewide voter support for its passage. The committee Reynolds chaired was made up of T. Dawson Brown, special projects chairman for Impact R.I. Inc.; Edward F. Burke, former administrative assistant to Reynolds; Msgr. William J. Carey; Attorney William H. Edwards; Representative J. Howard Duffy, a Democrat from District 19 in Providence; Representative Frederick Lippitt, a Republican from District 3 in Providence; Michael A. Gammino, Jr., president of the Columbus National Bank; Leonard E. Johnson, president of Gladdings, Inc., and Edward F. McGarry, chairman of the Downtown Council of the Providence Chamber of Commerce.⁵⁶

Doorley, however, felt strongly that the citizens of Providence would pass a bond to finance the civic center without help from the state and advocated against having the referendum placed on the state ballot again. He already had tenants for the new building if a bond issue was ever passed by the voters of the city. The sale of the Rhode Island Reds professional hockey franchise on February 12, 1969 became contingent upon the construction of a new civic center in Providence. At the time, the Reds played their home games in the Rhode Island Auditorium, which was greatly in need of repair. The Providence Hockey Club, Inc. was formed to buy the Reds and the Rhode Island Auditorium which was built in the 1920's, but the sale was contingent on the passage of the civic center bond issue by Providence voters. George M. Sage, president of Short Line, Inc. and the Providence Hockey Club, Inc., wanted to bring all of the

⁵⁶ *Keystone of a New Providence*, available from <http://www.provcc.com/provhist.htm>; Internet (accessed March 5, 2009); *Journal-Bulletin Almanac 1970* (Providence, Rhode Island: The Providence Journal Company, 1970), 125; "Arena Campaign Renewed," *Evening Bulletin*, November 20, 1968.

Reds' home games to the new civic center.⁵⁷ The move to the larger facility doomed the Reds who could not fill the large arena.

At a February 20, 1969 Providence city council meeting, Doorley presented a bill that called for a referendum question that would ask Providence voters to approve a six million dollar civic center bond. Doorley wanted the city council to endorse this bill in order that it could be sent to the Rhode Island General Assembly. The bill also called for the creation of a five member Providence Civic Center Authority that would be in charge of building and operating the new civic center. The council voted in favor of sending this bill to the General Assembly so that it could be placed on the ballot. The single question on the Providence ballot would ask voters to authorize the city to issue up to six million dollars in bonds in order to build a civic center that would be rented for sporting events, shows, conventions and exhibitions. Voters would decide on this question on April 29, 1969. Doorley, with the assistance of civic leaders and businessmen, campaigned for the passage of this referendum question. Both Democrats and Republicans were in support of the construction of civic center that was presented as something that would help downtown business and generate millions of dollars of income to the Providence metropolitan area. On February 27, 1969, the Providence Redevelopment Agency agreed that the sites for the civic center and a parking garage, which were worth \$900,000, would be leased to the Providence Civic Center Authority for one dollar per year. This agreement brought the proposed civic center closer to reality because of their savings. Doorley was able to cut the cost of the

⁵⁷“Civic Center Now Closer to Reality,” *Providence Journal*, February 28, 1969; “Vote Set Tomorrow on Civic Center Plan,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 28, 1969; “Hockey Franchise Sold,” *New York Times*, February 13, 1969.

entire project by 2.4 million dollars by the savings from this agreement and by excluding the proposed theatre, restaurant and jewelry trade mart from the project.⁵⁸

Providence voters went to the polls to vote on the civic center referendum on April 29, 1969. The vote was 16,353 in favor and 4,871 opposed. The measure was passed in each of the thirteen wards of the city. Doorley, George M. Sage, Larry McGarry and the civic leaders who supported the construction of a civic center celebrated the victory at the Biltmore Hotel. McGarry commented that the victory showed that voters in Providence were very supportive of Mayor Doorley. The mayor was impressed by the voter turnout and commented that the victory showed “the kind of spirit we like to see in Providence”.⁵⁹ To raise additional funds for the project, Providence voters were also encouraged to approve a second civic center bond issue. Providence voters approved this bond for an additional seven million dollars for the construction of a civic center during a special election that took place on January 12, 1971. Construction of the civic center started in 1971.⁶⁰

Despite the fact that many facets of *Downtown Providence 1970* were not completed, a few large office buildings were built in the center of the city during Doorley’s tenure as mayor. On October 28, 1971, a new twenty-three story office building at 40 Westminister Street was constructed by the First Hartford Realty Corporation. It was designed to accommodate more than

⁵⁸“Civic Center Measure Advanced by Council,” *Providence Journal*, February 21, 1969; “Vote Set Tomorrow on Civic Center Plan,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 28, 1969; “Civic Center Now Closer to Reality,” *Providence Journal*, February 28, 1969.

⁵⁹“Civic Center Bond Issue Approved by 3 to 1 Margin,” *Providence Journal*, April 30, 1969.

⁶⁰C. Fraser Smith, “Doorley Draws Fiscal Aid Paths,” *Evening Bulletin*, January 4, 1971; Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., Inaugural Address, January 4, 1971, PC Archives; “Backing Seen for Doorley’s Two Tax Plans,” *Providence Journal*, January 20, 1971; Robert Chiappinelli, “1971 – Year of Concern Pollution, Welfare, Joblessness, Economic Lag, State Income Tax,” *Evening Bulletin*, December 31, 1971.

thirty businesses. The cost of the 301 foot tower was \$11 million dollars. During this time, construction was also going on for the thirty-story Rhode Island Hospital Trust Tower as well as the Providence Civic Center. The skeleton of the Hospital Trust Tower was completed on May 3, 1972 and the Providence Civic Center, called by some Doorley's Dream, was opened on November 3, 1972. Despite the number of new office buildings being constructed in Providence during this time, the economic outlook in downtown was still bleak.⁶¹

Doorley was criticized for not showing enough interest in the true revitalization of downtown Providence and for having no vision for the future of the city. Despite the new construction, businesses in the city were not doing well and the new office buildings were adding to the number of vacant office spaces that already existed in the city. One observer at the time claimed that downtown Providence was "just a collection of grimy buildings and grim people." Most of the city's retail stores at this time were operating in the red and were suffering from competition from shopping malls in the suburbs. During this time, the business leaders and the Doorley administration did not work together to complete the projects outlined in *Downtown Providence 1970* or to come up with alternate plans to establish a viable downtown. Doorley claimed that it was the downtown businessmen who were to blame and stated that it was "not the responsibility of the taxpayers of this city to support business organizations in operations which are not competitive because of their own lack of investment." Doorley spent the bulk of his time in office planning for his re-election campaigns by providing city services and city jobs to his

⁶¹"2nd Tallest R.I. Building is Opened," *Evening Bulletin*, October 29, 1971; "Tower's Skeleton is Completed," *Providence Journal*, May 4, 1972; Merrill R. Bailey, "It's What's Not Happening A Dreary Downtown, Though Prosperous, Does Little Planning," *Evening Bulletin*, May 2, 1972; Francis J. Leazes, Jr., and Mark T. Motte, *Providence The Renaissance City*, 61.

supporters at the expense of providing ideas for the economic development of downtown Providence.⁶²

Many elderly citizens lived in Providence during the Doorley era. Another idea that his administration started to promote during his first year in office was that of federally financed centers for the elderly that would be located in the neighborhoods and downtown area of Providence. Rhode Island congressman, John E. Fogarty, worked on legislation that created the Older Americans Act of 1965. Under the Older Americans Act funding was available for programs for elderly citizens. On November 17, 1965 Doorley met in Washington, D.C. with Fogarty and the United States Commissioner on Aging, William D. Bechill, to investigate the possibilities of Providence getting federal funding for elderly centers. Upon his return from Washington, DC, Doorley named a committee on aging to develop a plan, to be submitted to the federal government, which would create programs for the elderly that could be offered in a federally financed elderly center.⁶³

On March 14, 1966, Doorley submitted an application to the Federal Administration on Aging for an \$88,350 grant that would provide funds to establish what was called a “multi-service center for elderly persons.” The grant application was prepared by Family Relocation Service administrator, David Joyce. The grant called for the center to be located in the downtown

⁶²Leazes and Motte, *Providence, The Renaissance City*, 57; Bailey, “It’s What’s Not Happening A Dreary Downtown, Though Prosperous, Does Little Planning”; Merrill R. Bailey, “Downtown Scarred by Vacancies,” *Evening Bulletin*, May 4, 1972; Merrill R. Bailey, “Downtown Shopping Fades,” *Evening Bulletin*, May 3, 1972; “Some See an Office Glut,” *Evening Bulletin*, September 20, 1971; Merrill R. Bailey, “Must Downtown Think Bigger?,” *Evening Bulletin*, May 5, 1972.

⁶³“Doorley, Fogarty May Confer on Aid to Aged,” *Evening Bulletin*, August 7, 1965; “Doorley Plans Elderly Center,” *Providence Journal*, November 17, 1965; “Program Centers for the Elderly Eyed,” *Evening Bulletin*, November 17, 1965; “Committee on Aging Named,” *Providence Journal*, December 13, 1965.

area of the city and have one or two neighborhood offices. The center would provide health, classes and educational activities to the elderly residents of Providence. The grant was written for a three year time span and called for the city to finance 25 percent of the costs in the first year, 40 percent of the costs in the second year and 50 percent of the costs in the third year of the grant cycle. The grant was approved and Providence received \$57,710 for the first year of the grant. Providence was among the first group of cities in the country that received a demonstration and training grant under the Older Americans Act. At the time, Providence had approximately 30,000 residents who were age sixty-five or over.⁶⁴ The grant that was awarded to Providence allowed the city to establish the first multi-purpose center for the elderly in the country. The elderly center was opened up on the second floor of the Caesar Misch Building on 51 Empire Street in downtown Providence. Doorley gave much credit for obtaining the grant to Congressman Fogarty. Fogarty assisted in pushing the grant through to the proper federal officials in order to have it approved.⁶⁵ The entire three year grant that was awarded to the city was \$225,000. The center was directed by John T. Myers and was dedicated on December 18, 1966.⁶⁶ Congressman Fogarty was the principal speaker at the dedication ceremony and remarked that he hoped the center would become “a vital dynamic force” in the community for years to come.⁶⁷

⁶⁴“City Council OK Sought,” *Providence Journal*, January 18, 1966; Press Release, United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare Administration on Aging, March 14, 1966, PC Archives.

⁶⁵ “Mayor Praises Grant For Center For Aging,” *Evening Bulletin*, March 9, 1966.

⁶⁶ James F. Laffan, “Prov. Aged to Have Their Own Center,” *Evening Bulletin*, December 7, 1966.

⁶⁷ “Service Center for the Aged Dedicated in Providence,” *Evening Bulletin*, December 19, 1966.

CHAPTER 6

THE END OF THE DOORLEY ERA

Third Campaign For Mayor

Doorley's opponent in the 1970 mayoral election was Republican Lester J. Millman. Millman was an architect and a life-long Providence resident. During the campaign, Millman decided to also run as an Independent so that he would have a better chance to defeat the Doorley-McGarry machine that he thought had failed to bring progress to the city. Millman stressed to the voters that he would have an open door policy and would not function as a political boss. He felt that Providence was a city that was experiencing urban decay and that it needed to be revitalized. By using his skills as an architect, Millman had plans to redevelop Providence. Doorley was also given low marks by the Millman campaign because of the problems in the Providence schools. Millman also stated that he considered Doorley a racist.¹

Millman stated the following regarding Doorley:

I am not just angry, I am really furious. The present administration is embarked on a deliberate attempt to destroy Providence. They are permitting the city to deteriorate beyond hope of rehabilitation. In Smith Hill, Federal Hill, South Providence, Fox Point, and the Camp Street area, McGarry and Doorley attack the poor through neglect, disinterest and a callous disregard for human life. They are inviting a tragedy similar to that of New Bedford; a tragedy compounded of hate

¹“Architect Seeks Mayoralty,” *Evening Bulletin*, May 28, 1970; “Millman ‘Serious’ on Mayoralty,” *Evening Bulletin*, June 26, 1970; “Candidate for Mayor Runs as Republican, Independent,” *Providence Journal*, July 1, 1970; “Millman Charges that Doorley is ‘Out to Destroy the City,’” *Evening Bulletin*, July 22, 1970.

and frustration, and alienation of white from black, rich from poor educated from uneducated²

During the campaign Larry McGarry highlighted the fact that the federal government awarded Millman an \$81,000 architectural contract for a design of a new post office in Woonsocket. McGarry asked if the fact that Millman decided to run as a Republican was the reason the Nixon administration awarded him the federal contract. McGarry also stated that Millman donated \$350 to the Doorley campaign in 1966 and that he voted for Doorley in 1964 and 1966. Millman responded that he had received the contract before he decided to run for mayor and that he never publically stated who he voted for in 1964 and 1966.³

The Doorley campaign published ads called The Mayor's Report Card in the *Providence Journal* and the *Evening Bulletin*. Doorley's slogan was "It's a tough job, but he gets it done". The Doorley report cards stated that he did much for the public schools in the city, selected political rival, Republican Charles Kilvert to be the head of the school committee, increased the school budget from \$13,427,500 to \$26,025,000, hiked the average teacher salary to \$11,200, increased spending on textbooks, classroom equipment and supplies and made repairs to school buildings.⁴ Doorley had a firm grip on the city's Democrats and a WTEV Channel 6 poll that was conducted by telephone on October 11 and 12 1970 showed Doorley with a 3-to-1 lead over Millman.⁵ Millman and Doorley only had one debate, which was co-sponsored by the Jewish Community Center and the Plantations Lodge of the B'nai B'rith. The debate was moderated by

²Lester J. Millman, News Release, July 22, 1970, PC Archives.

³"McGarry 'Curiosity' Answered by Critic," *Evening Bulletin*, September 28, 1970.

⁴"The Mayor's Report Card," Political Advertisement, *Evening Bulletin*, October 9, 1970.

WEAN news director, Harry V. McKenna, and took place on October 28, 1970. The final results of the November 3 1970 election made Doorley the winner of another four year term. In the balloting Doorley received 34,524 and Millman received 16,641 as a Republican and 979 as an Independent. Peace and Freedom Party candidate, Thomas S. Shola received 438.⁶

Doorley's Last Term in Office

Doorley was inaugurated as mayor for the third time on January 4, 1971. In his inaugural address, he indicated that at the end of this four year term that he would have spent ten years of his life as the city's chief executive. Doorley stressed that action on his part was needed in order to continue the physical and social renewal in Providence. In his address, Doorley was realistic about the many problems facing the city and stated that "the solutions to all these problems were not found yesterday, nor are they available today, nor will they be discovered tomorrow."⁷

During this new term, Doorley promised that his administration would conduct a revaluation of all the real estate in the Providence. At this time, property in the city had not been revaluated in ten years. Other promises included: a tax for city services that would be paid by out-of-town residents and city residents who paid no property taxes and the continuation of the review of city job classifications in order to combine or eliminate positions. The address also addressed problems beyond the city as when he called for regionalization of the state's school

⁵"Doorley Lead Widens, Poll Result Shows," *Providence Journal*, October 19, 1970.

⁶Board of Canvassers and Registration, *Record of Votes Cast at the General Election – November 3, 1970*, PC Archives; Merrill R. Bailey, "Millman, Mayor Spar in First, Only Debate," *Providence Journal*, October 29, 1970; "Doorley, Millman Slated for Debate," *Providence Journal*, October 12, 1970.

⁷C. Fraser Smith, "Doorley Draws Fiscal Aid Paths," *Evening Bulletin*, January 4, 1971; Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., Inaugural Address, January 4, 1971, PC Archives.

systems. His proposal called for the forty-one local school districts to be combined into a smaller number and be administered by the state in order to save money.⁸

The 1971-72 city budget process indicated that Providence was in the same dire financial straits as other major cities in the United States at this time. In order to submit a balanced budget, Doorley was forced to make unpopular decisions. Ninety-six jobs were cut from the school department list and fifty-three full-time and thirty part-time jobs were eliminated from other city departments. Since Doorley took office in 1965, he had eliminated over six hundred city jobs in order to save money. To balance the budget in 1971-72, Doorley was forced to increase the property tax rate by seven dollars. City property owners had to pay fifty dollars per one thousand dollars in taxes. Water rates were also increased by twenty-five percent and a sewer tax was imposed. The first draft of the city's \$71,976,378 budget did not include any additional wage increase for the city's 1,439 public school teachers, public school department heads or for non-classified employees in all city departments. The budget did include a previously negotiated wage increase for police, firemen and blue collar city workers. In years past, the city budget was prepared by the city finance director, the assistant director and a budget officer. As a result of the positions of assistant director and budget officer being eliminated to save money, the 1971-72 budget was drafted by Vincent T. Izzo, finance director and Mayor Doorley.⁹

⁸C. Fraser Smith, "Doorley Draws Fiscal Aid Paths"; Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., Inaugural Address, January 4, 1971, PC Archives; "Backing Seen for Doorley's Two Tax Plans," *Providence Journal*, January 20, 1971; Robert Chiappinelli, "1971 – Year of Concern Pollution, Welfare, Joblessness, Economic Lag, State Income Tax," *Evening Bulletin*, December 31, 1971.

⁹Merrill R. Bailey, "Ifs of Budget Pose Some Major Problems for Mayor," *Evening Bulletin*, May 17, 1971; James F. Laffan, "Mayor Lists Revenue Sources to Close a Gap of \$3.8-Million," *Evening Bulletin*, May 14, 1971; "Doorley's Budget," *Evening Bulletin*, May 17, 1971; "Balance Sheet," *Evening Bulletin*, May 14, 1971.

In September 1971, Doorley and Izzo, announced that the City of Providence had a three million dollar surplus from the 1970-71 fiscal year. They had kept the surplus a secret during the time that they were negotiating salaries with Providence teachers. 2.3 million dollars from the surplus was needed to balance the budget for fiscal year 1971-72. \$350,000 of the surplus funds was used to help finance a raise that Doorley himself later negotiated for Providence teachers. The total cost of a new contract was \$750,000. The Providence School Department contributed \$300,000 from its accounts to help with the cost of teacher raises. \$200,000 from the surplus was used to pay the increased costs of the bill for street lighting. During this time, the city replaced old street lights with new higher intensity lights that required more power. \$85,000 of the surplus was used to make up for shortages in the 1970-71 police and fire department payroll accounts. The reason why the city had a surplus during these hard economic times was a result of not filling vacant city positions, postponing the purchase of equipment and through the investments made using surplus funds. Izzo reported that he would continue the strategies mentioned above so that the city would have surplus funds in the future.¹⁰

The state of Rhode Island as well as the federal government was also having budget problems during this time. Civic finances in the state were in bad shape due to rising welfare costs, rising unemployment and a poor economy. In February 1971, Doorley and Democratic Governor Frank Licht parted ways over Licht's endorsement of a state income tax, equal to fifteen percent of one-half of the taxpayers' federal income tax liability, to help make up a twenty-five million dollar state deficit. During Licht's campaign for governor he had vowed not

¹⁰Merrill R. Bailey, "Providence Surplus is \$3-Million," *Evening Bulletin*, September 29, 1971; "Current Expenses Get City's Surplus Funds," *Providence Journal*, September 30, 1971.

to support such a state income tax. On his part, as a solution to the problem with the state budget, Doorley had proposed a one percent payroll tax and a six cent sales tax. Doorley was also upset with Licht because the governor did not communicate with him before proposing his income tax measure. As a leader in the Democratic Party, Doorley maintained that he could have provided advice to Licht on this matter. Licht decided not to run for re-election in the 1972 gubernatorial race. At one point, Doorley pledged his support to his friend, Lieutenant Governor J. Joseph Garrahy, who briefly considered running for governor. Garrahy decided not to run because he felt he did not have enough statewide support. After much speculation from party insiders, Doorley announced, on March 27, 1972, that he would run for governor of Rhode Island. However, he withdrew from the race three days later because Garrahy announced that he would run for re-election as Lieutenant Governor. Garrahy was also an Irish-American from Providence and Doorley believed that two men of such similar backgrounds would not be the best choice to head the state Democratic ticket. Doorley went on to support the candidacy of fellow Democrat, Philip Noel, the Mayor of Warwick, who eventually won.¹¹

In 1971, Doorley was asked to coordinate the Rhode Island campaign for Maine Senator Edmund S. Muskie's bid to become the 1972 Democratic nominee for President of the United States. Rhode Island had twenty-two delegates up for grabs in the 1972 Democratic convention. Doorley also was a liaison for Muskie to big-city mayors and travelled around the country,

¹¹John P. Hackett, "Doorley in Split With Governor," *Providence Journal*, February 10, 1971; Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., Press Release, March 30, 1972, PC Archives; "Doorley Sees R.I. Income Tax Hurting Party," *Evening Bulletin*, July 20, 1971; S. Robert Chiappinelli, "1971-Year of Concern, Pollution, Welfare, Joblessness, Economic Lag, State Income Tax," *Evening Bulletin*, December 31, 1971. Doorley later reunited with Licht. A state income tax law was passed by a 26-24 vote by the Senate on February 26, 1971, and the House approved the income tax by a 50 to 45 vote on July 14, 1971.

making speeches in the South on behalf of Muskie's candidacy. As a Democratic National Committeeman, Doorley had a good working relationship with committee members from the South. During February and March of 1972, Doorley made trips to New Hampshire, Florida and Nebraska for the Muskie campaign. These trips caused Doorley to be out of the city for long periods of time when he was involved in drafting the Providence budget. Doorley lost his post as a National Committeeman when Senator George S. McGovern won the Rhode Island Presidential Primary on May 23, 1972. In an attempt to put Doorley back on the committee, McGarry nominated Doorley for an at-large post on the Democratic National Committee. Despite McGarry's nomination, Doorley failed to regain his seat because the committee members voted to postpone the selection of twenty-five at-large members. As mentioned above, it was always assumed that Doorley would run for higher office. At this time, those in Democratic political circles believed that he might someday run for the United States Senate. Doorley had considerable influence in the Rhode Island Democratic Party because of his leadership of the strong Democratic organization that existed in Providence and because of his work on the Democratic National Committee.¹²

The Doorley-McGarry Split and The 1974 Mayoral Election

Larry McGarry took pride in being the undisputed boss of the Democratic Party in Providence and he was known in Rhode Island politics as "Mr. Democrat". Doorley left almost

¹²Hamilton Davis, "Doorley Joins Forces of Muskie," *Providence Journal*, August 4, 1971; John Hackett, "Doorley to be Nominated for National Committee," *Providence Journal*, August 7, 1972; "Doorley Moved Delayed," *Evening Bulletin*, August 10, 1972; "Mayor Says Party in Enough Trouble Without a Primary," *Evening Bulletin*, February 8, 1972.

all the day to day dealings with party regulars up to McGarry. McGarry was the powerbroker, and from his public works office, he gave out jobs and political favors to faithful Democrats. In order to work for the city of Providence during the Doorley years, it was an established fact that the applicant would have had to have been a loyal Democrat and would have to have gone through Larry McGarry.¹³ Professor Richard A. Gabriel estimated that at this time period more than 2,800 jobs in Providence were available for McGarry and Doorley to bestow upon loyal Democrats. It should be noted that the number of jobs declined during the Doorley years.¹⁴

Providence Democrat, Francis J. Rao, stated that together Doorley and McGarry were an “unbeatable team”.¹⁵ In an interview with the author, Mrs. Louise Gabriele (the long time secretary of McGarry) stated that the Doorley-McGarry team was the most powerful political team in the history of the city of Providence.¹⁶ The Doorley-McGarry partnership was still running very smoothly at the start of Doorley’s third term as the mayor of the city. In both a city and state controlled by the Democrats, it seemed that Democrats would control Providence’s City Hall for many years to come.

In June of 1973, the first signs of problems between Doorley and McGarry were reported in the *Evening Bulletin*. The problems arose from Doorley trying to secure the Democratic endorsement for mayor twelve months ahead of schedule. McGarry did not support Doorley in

¹³“Lawrence P. ‘Larry’ McGarry, 76, Democratic Boss and Proud of It” (obituary), *Providence Journal*, August 17, 1995; Merrill R. Bailey, “Democratic Legend at Odds With Reality,” *Evening Bulletin*, August 6, 1974.

¹⁴Richard A. Gabriel, “The Political Machine is Still Alive and Well in Rhode Island,” *The Rhode Islander Providence Sunday Journal*, 1971.

¹⁵Merrill R. Bailey, “Split Shakes Potent ‘Team,’” *Evening Bulletin*, August 5, 1974.

¹⁶Mrs. Louise Gabriele, interview by author, Harmony, RI, March 26, 1997.

this quest and was also unhappy because of the lack of communication between himself and Doorley in regards to appointments to city boards and commissions. McGarry blamed the lack of communication on Doorley and felt that their once close working relationship had ceased to exist. Doorley also had many critics within the Providence Democratic Party, who maintained that he had lost focus on the problems in Providence and that he was not responsive to the poor and elderly of the city. Many also pointed out that he did not seem interested in the day to day running of city affairs. They noted that he was absent from city hall on many occasions for such things such as national political meetings, bowl and tournament games and long summer weekends in Jamestown. During the times that Doorley was away, McGarry took care of the day-to-day business of running the Providence Democratic machine.¹⁷

According to Louise Gabriele, some factors in the Doorley-McGarry split extended back to 1964. In 1964, Francis B. Brown had gained enough support from McGarry and the Democratic City Committee to secure the votes needed for the Democratic endorsement for mayor of Providence. Brown did not accept the endorsement because he did not think he would be able to raise enough money to finance a solid campaign. As discussed earlier, Doorley was given the Democratic endorsement because it was known that he would be able to raise the needed campaign funds. The understanding among Providence Democratic City Committee members was that Doorley would serve as mayor for a few terms and eventually move on to a higher political office. Once Doorley left city hall, Brown was promised that he would receive the support necessary to run as an endorsed Democratic candidate for mayor of Providence.

¹⁷Merrill R. Bailey, "McGarry Splits with Mayor on Early Endorsements," *Evening Bulletin*, June 20, 1973; Merrill R. Bailey, "After 10 Years, Mayor Doorley Finds Himself in a Dogfight," *Providence Journal*, February 17, 1974; Mike Stanton, *The Prince of Providence*, (New York: Random House, 2003), 38.

McGarry stated that in the summer of 1973 that he told Doorley that he should step down as mayor. At that time, Doorley had been mayor for nearly ten years and McGarry felt that Doorley should have moved on to become one of Rhode Island's United States senators.¹⁸

Gabriele also mentioned that a combination of Doorley's neglect of city issues, his closed door policy, and his frequent absenteeism from city hall contributed to the split. As a result of having no access to Doorley, Gabriele remembered that lines of people would wait outside of McGarry's Public Department office in order to see McGarry in an effort to attain city jobs and political favors. Gabriele explained that on some days, she and McGarry were unable to perform Public Works Department duties because of the constant interruptions.¹⁹ Later McGarry would comment regarding the split: "It was [Doorley's] lack of interest during the last four years that really turned me off. I paid attention to those people. Joe just wasn't interested." Doorley responded that he gave McGarry the power to control city patronage because he felt that the Mayor's office should not have lines of people waiting outside the door. Doorley also stated that McGarry used the power he was given for his own personal advantage and that he gave no credit to the mayor. McGarry was upset by the fact that on most days Doorley's daily work schedule ended at noon and he would end up at one of the city's many drinking establishments. McGarry was not happy with the reports that Doorley had a drinking problem. By this time, many Doorley supporters were also upset that Doorley was spending too much time in drinking establishments.

¹⁸Gabriele, Interview; James F. Laffan, "Endorsement of Doorley Reaffirmed," *Evening Bulletin*, February 14, 1974.

¹⁹Gabriele, Interview.

In the small city of Providence, many anecdotes about Doorley's drinking episodes in the Biltmore Hotel were related.²⁰

Another reason for the split was McGarry's anger over Doorley's brief appearance at a 1973 testimonial dinner held by the United Democrats of Providence's Fourth Ward. The United Democrats were the political foes of the Fourth Ward Democratic Chairman, Anthony J. Bucci. Bucci and McGarry were close political allies. Doorley believed that his split with McGarry started as a result of his appearance at this dinner. It was also reported that the Doorley-McGarry separation stemmed from disagreements over the Fields Point garbage shredder and reductions in public works jobs. The appointments to positions created by federal programs such as Progress for Providence also caused problems between Doorley and McGarry. Many of these jobs initially went to people from poor neighborhoods who were not engaged in the political process. McGarry was upset because he wanted to be able to give more of these positions to qualified Democrats who were loyal to the machine.²¹ As a result of the Doorley-McGarry split, the campaign for the Democratic Mayoral Primary of September 10, 1974 became a very interesting chapter in the history of mayoral elections in Providence. The split became official in June of 1973 when the Democratic City Committee, under the leadership of McGarry, refused to endorse Doorley for reelection in 1974.²² The political divorce of Doorley and McGarry divided a once united Democratic Party in Providence and left the door open for challengers to fight Doorley for

²⁰Bailey, "Democratic Legend at Odds With Reality"; Mike Stanton, *The Prince of Providence*, 36, 43.

²¹Bailey, "Democratic Legend at Odds With Reality"; Bailey, "After 10 Years, Mayor Doorley Finds Himself in a Dogfight"; Mike Stanton, *The Prince of Providence*, 40.

²²Mike Stanton, *The Prince of Providence*, 44.

the right to run in the November 1974 general election as the Democratic candidate for mayor of Providence. As promised, McGarry threw his support behind Francis B. Brown.

As a result of Brown's decision to run in the primary, Doorley asked him to resign from his post as Commissioner of Public Safety. Doorley had a letter hand-delivered to Brown's home which asked that he resign immediately. McGarry was also fired from his position as Public Works Director because of his support for Brown. McGarry's firing came a few months before he was to retire after working thirty years for the city of Providence. At this time, many Brown supporters feared that they would be removed from their city jobs by Doorley. With the absence of McGarry's support, what originally looked like another easy election for Doorley turned into a bitter primary in which Doorley had to fight for his political life.²³

Doorley fired three top Brown supporters who were also members of the Democratic City Committee. The men fired were William M. Keaveny, city sergeant, William H. Cunningham, a highway field supervisor and Second Ward Democratic Committee chairman and Edward M. Mulvaney, who was a mechanical equipment inspector. McGarry was not happy about the firings and commented that it showed that Doorley was vindictive. McGarry claimed that these positions were valuable to the city and that he "could name ward committeemen who are with him [Doorley] that earn as much as \$15,000 a year from the city and don't show up for one day's work out of the year."²⁴

²³"Doorley Set for Fight, Assails Party Chief," *Providence Journal*, February 28, 1974; C. Fraser Smith, "Pressure Mounts in City Hall," *Evening Bulletin*, June 7, 1974; James J. Laffan, "Doorley Asks for Brown's Resignation," *Providence Journal*, February 24, 1974.

²⁴"McGarry Assails Doorley Firings," *Providence Journal*, May 18, 1974.

When two other candidates had entered the primary race the situation for loyal Democrats became even more difficult. The candidates were Seventh Ward Councilman, Charles A. Pisaturo, and Ninth Ward Councilman, Francis J. Darigan, Jr. Pisaturo used the slogan “People Politics”. He hoped that voter dissatisfaction with the machine politics of Doorley and McGarry, as well as the support of Italo-American voters, would secure a victory for him. Darigan called himself “The Only Choice” and claimed that despite the split, Doorley and Brown were both the same type of Democratic machine politicians. Brown charged that Doorley did not act in the best interests of and was not accessible to the citizens of Providence. Doorley ran on his past record of achievements, which included low property taxes and his solid administrative experience. One of Doorley’s campaign slogans was “Vote for Joe and Save Dough”.²⁵

In a September 6, 1974 *Evening Bulletin* article, staff writer Merrill R. Bailey reported on the Doorley campaign. She mentioned that he was campaigning stronger at the end of this long campaign fight than he did when it started. Bailey mentioned that Doorley built up a new organization of “Doorley Democrats” that included groups to which he never paid much attention in past elections. The new Doorley group consisted of a mixture of old Doorley loyalists, young people, women, African Americans, Spanish-speaking and low-income citizens of Providence. The article also paraphrased Doorley’s basic stump speech:

“Look at me, look at what I’ve done. The record speaks for itself. I’ve rebuilt the city, kept pace with skyrocketing costs and held taxes stable. I’ve been stabbed in the back by ambitious politicians, betrayed by allies I trusted. It’s strictly a power struggle this year; my opponents have no real issues. If you like what I’ve done,

²⁵C. Fraser Smith, “Doorley et al at the Wire,” *Providence Journal*, September 8, 1974.

if you want to keep the same management of this \$80-million corporation called the city of Providence, vote for me on September 10.”²⁶

The heated primary battle also caused divisions between Democrats on the statewide level. Even though Brown emerged as the endorsed Democratic candidate, Doorley had the full support of Rhode Island’s United States senators, John O. Pastore and Claiborne Pell. Doorley also had endorsements from the majority of the members of the Providence delegation to the General Assembly as well as from the majority of the Democratic State Committee.²⁷

Charles T. Reilly, Chairman of the Democratic State Committee, backed the endorsed candidate, Brown, in the primary. Reilly urged Rhode Island Democrats to vote for endorsed candidates in an open letter in which he stated:

Based on this thesis, that the Democrats seek the preferential endorsed treatment and have come to expect the support which accrues from it, I today, without hesitation, without apology, with firm conviction, and, with honest appraisal of my role as Chairman of the Rhode Island State Committee, support the endorsed candidates in every city and town, of each and every Senatorial and Representative District Committee, including the Providence City Committees endorsed candidate for mayor, Francis Brown.²⁸

In addition to Reilly, Rhode Island Governor Noel and the entire Democratic state ticket also backed Francis B. Brown in the Providence Mayoral Primary.²⁹

²⁶Merrill R. Bailey, “Doorley Blossoms Where Others Wilt in Heat of Battle,” *Evening Bulletin*, September 6, 1974.

²⁷Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Charles T. Reilly, June 28, 1974, PC Archives.

²⁸Charles T. Reilly to Rhode Island Democratic Party Leaders, October 1974, PC Archives.

²⁹Merrill R. Bailey and John P. Hackett, “Noel, Democrats Back Brown in Mayor Race,” *Evening Bulletin*, September 12, 1974.

A *Providence Journal* poll, taken the Friday night before the election by Professors Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr. and Jay S. Goodman, showed that the race was too close to call. The poll showed Doorley ahead with twenty-seven percent of the vote but thirty percent were still undecided.³⁰ In the September 10, 1974 primary, Doorley won with 14,911 votes or thirty-four percent of the vote, Brown received 12,377 votes or twenty-nine percent of the vote, Darigan received 11,256 votes or twenty-six percent of the vote and Pisaturo finished last, receiving 4,776 votes or eleven percent of the vote. Although Doorley was the victor, the election results indicated that a majority of the primary voters were disenchanted with Doorley and wanted a change in city hall. After the election, Francis Darigan stated that the 28,400 people that voted against Doorley did not do so “for nothing”.³¹

The primary results indicated that many Democrats must have agreed with Brian Dickinson’s comments printed in a *Providence Journal* editorial on May 12, 1974:

Joe Doorley is a bright spunky guy who knows a lot about running a city. But he has wasted most of his capital. Drained by a penchant for high living and compromised by reliance on the dreariest sort of machine politics, he has been content to see the city drift and stagnate. Behind that rambunctious Frankie Fontaine exterior, whatever spark there used to be has flickered out.³²

At the conclusion of the primary, McGarry declared that it was his “last hurrah” in city elections. He declared that the Brown campaign was “without qualification” his last.³³ Many political observers thought that once the primary concluded that the Democratic Party in

³⁰Merrill R. Bailey, “Poll Finds Primary too Close to Call,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, September 8, 1974.

³¹Joel H. Sekeres, “Brown for Doorley; Darigan – Maybe,” *Evening Bulletin*, September 12, 1974.

³²Brian Dickinson, “Does Joe Doorley Really Care About the City?” *Providence Journal*, May 12, 1974.

³³C. Fraser Smith, “McGarry Eyes ‘The End,’” *Providence Journal*, September 11, 1974.

Providence would become united again and rally behind Doorley in the November election. *Providence Journal* editorial page editor, James J. Doyle, was confident that Doorley would win the November 1974 election and commented that the Republican challenger, Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., did not have the political organization necessary to win. Doyle also stated that despite the many Democratic votes cast against Doorley in the primary, “in the clutch on Election Day, most Democrats will vote for him in spite of earlier loyalties to defeated primary candidates.”³⁴ At this time, political observers did not know that, during the primary, Cianci’s campaign manager, Mickey Farina, and McGarry had secret meetings in the McGarry home on Royal Avenue. McGarry realized that his candidate might lose the primary and that Cianci would need Democratic votes if he were to ever win the general election. An agreement was made that in the event that Brown lost the primary, McGarry would secretly support Cianci. If Cianci won the general election, he promised that McGarry’s people would still receive city jobs and patronage.³⁵

Doorley called the primary victory “the sweetest victory” of his life.³⁶ After the primary, Doorley sat on top of the political world in Providence. He no longer had to share his power base with McGarry, whom Doorley believed betrayed him by supporting Brown in the primary. After the victory, Doorley vowed to control the city’s Democratic Committee from the mayor’s office. Doorley believed that he would win in November. He commented that, anyone, who concluded that the Democrats who voted against him in the primary, would vote Republican in

³⁴James J. Doyle, “Reflections on the Primary,” *Evening Bulletin*, September 17, 1974.

³⁵Mike Stanton, *The Prince of Providence*, 51.

³⁶Merrill R. Bailey, “Doorley Celebrates ‘Sweetest Victory,’” *Providence Journal*, September 11, 1974.

the general election were in for “a rude awakening”.³⁷ During the Gabriele interview, she explained that many Democratic supporters on the Brown side went to the Republican side because they were left with nowhere to turn after the Doorley victory. Gabriele commented that they could not go back to Doorley because the primary was a very bitter race and Doorley was not willing to welcome them back with open arms.³⁸

Upon hearing the news that Doorley won the primary, a group of bitter Brown campaign workers called Cianci from what was supposed to be a Brown victory party at the Rosario Club in Providence’s Silver Lake neighborhood. The group asked Cianci to meet with them. Some of Cianci’s aides advised against his attendance because they were not sure if Cianci would truly be welcomed at a Democratic gathering. Before Cianci decided to go, Cianci and Mickey Farina met with Tony Bucci and a small group of McGarry supporters at a hotel. After this session, it was decided that it would be safe to meet at the Rosario Club. Cianci received a very enthusiastic welcome when he arrived at the club and he delivered a speech. As a result of Cianci’s appearance, the group called Democrats for Cianci was established. Democrats for Cianci was a Cianci support organization that existed separately from his Republican organization. Former Deputy City Solicitor, Ronald H. Glantz, a Brown supporter in the primary, was chairman of this organization. A major reason for Glantz’s support for Cianci was that he believed that the city was not moving forward under Doorley. This group offered Cianci their support in exchange for

³⁷Merrill R. Bailey, “Future Bright for Doorley,” *Providence Journal*, September 15, 1974.

³⁸Gabriele, Interview.

the jobs and political favors to which they were accustomed under the old Doorley-McGarry machine.³⁹

The creation of Democrats for Cianci caused both the Doorley Democrats and Democrats statewide to call for party unity. Governor Noel also warned the Democrats of Providence that, if Doorley lost the election, it would be damaging to the Rhode Island Democratic Party. Noel called for party unity and for an end to infighting within the Democratic ranks. McGarry stayed very quiet during this time and Noel called upon him to unite the Democrats in Providence. McGarry did not throw his support to Doorley and claimed that he was not campaigning for any candidate in this race. Many political observers did not think Cianci had a chance to win the election. They did not realize that behind the scenes McGarry agreed to have his strong political organization work for Cianci. Democrats for Cianci provided Cianci's campaign with 150 workers, Brown's lists of thirty-one thousand Democrats who had not supported Doorley, and Brown's Fourth Ward and Fifth Ward campaign headquarters. In exchange for the support of McGarry allies Ron Glantz, Tony Bucci and Lloyd Griffin, Cianci called McGarry to personally tell him that McGarry's people would not lose their jobs if Cianci won the election.⁴⁰

Providence historians, Patrick T. Conley and Paul Campbell, have stated that after the primary McGarry became frustrated and that he was the leader of the independent Democrats

³⁹Merrill R. Bailey, "'Buddy' Cianci's Campaign A Six Month Introduction," *Evening Bulletin*, October 31, 1974; James F. Laffan and Sonya Gray, "Cianci and Smollins Seek Votes of 28,000 'Disaffected' Democrats," *Evening Bulletin*, September 19, 1974; Gabriele, Interview; Mike Stanton, *The Prince of Providence*, 52, 53.

⁴⁰Merrill R. Bailey, "Rao, Boyle Call on Democrats in City to Unite for Party Sake," *Evening Bulletin*, October 9, 1974; "Noel Says Loss by Doorley Would be Blow to Party," *Providence Journal*, October 18, 1974; John P. Hackett, "Heavy Damage to Party Seen if Doorley Loses," *Evening Bulletin*, October 17, 1974; Mike Stanton, *The Prince of Providence*, 54, 55.

that supported Cianci.⁴¹ In an interview with the author, Paul Campbell offered the information that McGarry was not involved with the establishment of Democrats for Cianci but that he “aided and abetted” the group. Campbell also indicated that Thomas Rossi, a leader in the Democrats for Cianci organization, told him that McGarry had some involvement with the group but that he was not a key player.⁴² Providence College Professor Paul O’Malley (who served as a policy aide and writer for the Darigan primary campaign) agrees with the Conley and Campbell conclusion. O’Malley stated that after Brown and his mentor, Larry McGarry, lost in the primary they both made “accommodations” with Cianci. O’Malley believes that McGarry and Brown supported Cianci so that they would not lose their political power. In O’Malley’s view it was also the “resounding silence” of Larry McGarry that brought support to Cianci.⁴³

In a letter dated October 13, 1974, from the Executive Chamber in City Hall, Doorley stated that he had “convincing evidence” that McGarry and Anthony Bucci were supporting Cianci for mayor.⁴⁴ Doorley also stated in a news release that:

The chairman and the secretary of the Democratic City Committee, Messrs. McGarry and Bucci, are actively working for Cianci. Under the guise of doing business McGarry has established an office in Lincoln. Coincidentally it is the same building where Mr. Glantz has his law office. Coincidentally, McGarry’s former public works secretary is there with them. Coincidentally, Glantz and Cianci have all the records used in the primary against me in September. Mr. Bucci has turned over his headquarters and workers in the Fourth Ward over to Cianci. He secretly plots and meets with them.⁴⁵

⁴¹Patrick T. Conley and Paul Campbell, *Providence a Pictorial History* (Norfolk, Virginia: The Dunning Company Publishers, 1982), 215.

⁴²Paul Campbell, phone interview by author, Manchester, CT, May 9, 1997.

⁴³Dr. Paul O’Malley, Interview by author, Providence College, Providence RI, April 30, 1997.

⁴⁴News Release from the Mayor’s Office City Hall, Providence, RI, October 17, 1974, PC Archives.

⁴⁵Ibid.

When he was asked about these allegations, McGarry denied them and stated that he was not taking any active role in the Cianci-Doorley race. McGarry also explained that he was not advising the Democrats for Cianci organization and that he, Glantz and two other men established a scholarship aid firm (located in the Glantz-Florio law offices in Lincoln) called the National Scholarship Locator Board of Princeton, New Jersey – Rhode Island Affiliate.⁴⁶ Louise Gabriele stated that McGarry never supported Cianci in the election and never even met Cianci until after the election. McGarry, afflicted with multiple sclerosis, was confined to a wheelchair during this period and Gabriele had to stay with him and drive him everywhere he went. Gabriele was with McGarry every day during the 1974 election campaign and remembers that McGarry never campaigned for Cianci, but that he did not stop his allies especially Glantz and Anthony Bucci, from supporting Cianci.⁴⁷ Statements from former Sixth Ward Councilman Raymond Cola also support the theory that McGarry never openly supported Cianci. Cola maintained that McGarry never supported any candidate in this election and that there were never any reports of McGarry campaigning for Cianci printed in the *Providence Journal*.⁴⁸

To make this election even more difficult for the Doorley camp, two independent candidates, John Smollins and Jean Coughlin, also were candidates for mayor of Providence in 1974. Smollins was a former Doorley administrative assistant, who had been fired in February,

⁴⁶Merrill R. Bailey, "Doorley Tells Dissident Democrats 'Fish or Cut Bait,'" *Evening Bulletin*, October 17, 1974.

⁴⁷Gabriele, Interview.

⁴⁸Mr. Raymond Cola, interview by the author, Providence, RI, April 30, 1997. Raymond Cola was a Providence City Councilman from the Sixth Ward during the 1974 election. Mr. Cola was never beaten in an election and claimed that through his years as a Providence City Councilman he obtained 997 jobs for his constituents.

1974, by Doorley for performing political work on city time for Edward P. Beard's congressional campaign. Doorley was a supporter of the incumbent Congressman Robert O. Tiernan and could not afford to have someone in his administration supporting Tiernan's primary opponent. In his work as administrative assistant to Doorley, Smollins represented the mayor to groups of the elderly and the poor and was more accessible and helpful to these groups than Doorley. McGarry stated that it was not a wise political move for Doorley to have fired a popular employee like Smollins and that it probably would cost him votes (McGarry and Doorley had not yet split at this period). Jean Coughlin was a member of the Mount Pleasant Parents and Citizens Council. In 1970, Coughlin had run as a Republican for the Providence city council. Throughout the 1974 campaign, Coughlin was very visible and drove around Providence in an old ice cream truck that was painted pink and covered with her campaign stickers. A loudspeaker was attached to the roof of the truck and Coughlin's husband would break into a song that would ask "Where's Joe Doorley?" The response to the question was "He's gone fishin". This song was used to point out the fact that, because of Doorley's repeated absences from city hall, the city was being run by his subordinates. Cianci, Coughlin and Smollins all stated throughout their campaigns that the city needed a new leader and that Doorley had been in power for too long and had done nothing to make Providence a better place.⁴⁹

Cianci, a former assistant attorney general, called himself the "anti-corruption candidate" and sought to gain some of the 28,000 votes that were cast against Doorley in the primary to help

⁴⁹"Smollins' Campaign Scored," *Providence Journal*, April 12, 1974; "Mrs. Coughlin Plans Run For Mayor," *Evening Bulletin*, March 21, 1974; William R. Morris, "The Long and Twisted Life of the City of Providence" (unpublished independent study, Brown University, 1976) 109; Merrill R. Bailey, "Smollins' Firing Adds Uncertainty to Fall Mayoralty," *Evening Bulletin*, February 7, 1974.

him win the election. Cianci welcomed the many anti-Doorley Democrats that supported him through the Democrats for Cianci organization and also gained the support of a group of South Providence Democrats who backed him because they claimed that Doorley had neglected their neighborhood and allowed it to decay. Defeated primary candidate, Democrat Charles A. Pisaturo, also threw his support to Cianci. During the campaign, Cianci talked about the need for change in Providence and hoped those Democrats unhappy with Doorley would vote for him.⁵⁰ According to Cianci, Doorley was the leader of a “dictatorial machine” that kept “Providence standing still for 10 years – all for the benefit of just a few” and that Providence was experiencing “inexcusable decay”.⁵¹

Cianci and Doorley fought a hard campaign battle. Both men did their best to create doubts about the other’s integrity. On October 2, 1974, the Director of the Providence Civic Center, Harold Copeland, was convicted of taking a thousand dollar bribe from concert promoter Skip Chernov. Cianci tried to connect Doorley to this incident and told the press that Doorley had attended a party for Copeland the night before the conviction. Doorley maintained that he still believed that Copeland was innocent. A week before the election, Doorley claimed that Cianci, in his role as prosecutor in the attorney general’s office, offered Copeland immunity if he would testify against him. Cianci denied this charge. During the heat of the campaign battle, Cianci even joined striking Providence policemen on their picket line. The police were protesting

⁵⁰Bailey, “Buddy Cianci’s Campaign A Six-Month Introduction,” Merrill R. Bailey, “Cianci Picks Up Supporters in S. Prov. Washington Park,” *Evening Bulletin*, October 18, 1974; Merrill R. Bailey, “2 More Democrats Back Cianci,” *Evening Bulletin*, October 25, 1974; James F. Laffan, “Cianci Announces for Republican Nomination for Mayor,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 22, 1974.

⁵¹ Lee Dykas, “Cianci Rallies GOP Faithful With Attacks on Doorley,” *Providence Journal*, May 3, 1974.

the fact that Doorley did not provide funds to buy winter uniform coats in their contracts. During a Democratic dinner that took place at Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet, Doorley made the announcement that a grand-jury would investigate Cianci's involvement in a kickback made to an insurance adjuster in an accident involving Cianci's wife. The investigation took place after the election and it was found that Cianci was not guilty.⁵²

Doorley stated that this was the toughest campaign he had ever fought against a Republican. A *Providence Journal* poll, conducted by professors Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr. and Jay S. Goodman, published two days before the election projected that Doorley would win the election with fifty-four percent of the vote. When the votes were finally counted, Cianci emerged as the winner. The final totals showed that Cianci had beaten Doorley in Wards Two, Three, Seven (Cianci's home Ward), Ten (South Providence) and Eleven. Doorley won the other eight wards of the city but his margin of victory in those wards was not enough to beat Cianci. The final results of the election showed that Cianci had received 26,832 votes, Doorley, 26,123, Coughlin 1,094 and Smollins 1,127.⁵³

Conley and Campbell concluded that a combination of the McGarry led "Independent Democrats" and the independent candidacies of Smollins and Coughlin "paved the way for the election of Buddy Cianci".⁵⁴ Professor Paul O'Malley stated that the ethnic factor was another reason for the Cianci victory. O'Malley explained that once the Brown-McGarry machine was defeated, the Italo-American supporters of that machine had nowhere to turn and voted for

⁵²Mike Stanton, *The Prince of Providence*, 55-56, 59-60.

⁵³Merrill R. Bailey, "Doorley vs. Cianci A Tough Race," *Providence Journal*, November 3, 1974; "Cianci: Journal Poll Cut His Victory Margin," *Evening Bulletin*, November 8, 1974; *1975 Journal Bulletin Rhode Island Almanac* (Providence: Rhode Island, Providence Journal Bulletin, 1975), 131.

Cianci because they felt that it was time for an Italo American to become Mayor of Providence.⁵⁵ John Smollins summarized the election of 1974 by stating that the election was a case of “two friends (Doorley and McGarry) that became foes and led to the demise of the system”.⁵⁶ During the election of 1974, many alliances were ended and many friendships were broken. The events surrounding the election also caused many rank and file Providence Democrats to have problems deciding which side to support. The election of Cianci as Mayor marked the end of the Democratic machine in Providence. With his victory Cianci became the city’s first Republican mayor in forty-one years as well as Providence’s first Italo-American Mayor. The McGarry Doorley split was the major reason that Cianci was able to win the 1974 election. If the split had not occurred, Doorley would have probably won the election and the Democratic machine would have probably controlled politics in Providence for another four years. After the election, the two men on the top of politics in Providence for over ten years were left with almost no political influence at all. Politics in Providence was a dirty business and the spoils always belonged to the victor.

⁵⁴ Conley and Campbell, *Providence A Pictorial History*, 215.

⁵⁵ O’Malley, interview.

⁵⁶ John Smollins, Interview by the author, Providence, RI, May 7, 1997.

CONCLUSION

The defeat of Doorley in the 1974 Providence mayoral election marked the end of thirty-four years of Democratic rule in the city. After the polls had closed and his defeat was almost certain, Doorley said: “I have no personal hurts. I have a record of ten years of achievement of which I am very proud. It’s a heritage that my sons will see as long as they live.”¹ Doorley was disappointed with the results of the election and blamed the split between himself and McGarry as a large factor in his defeat. In speaking of Cianci’s victory, Doorley said “Let every Democrat in this city and state be aware of one thing – there is a Republican mayor-elect in Providence because of the subversive activity of McGarry. He broke up an organization that contributed to Democratic victories on the city, state and federal levels.”²

After his departure from office, Doorley, from 1975 through October of 1999, administered two legal service plans for the Laborers Union in Rhode Island, managed two buildings on South Main Street in downtown Providence, and practiced law. He even ran for political office three times. In 1978, he ran as an Independent candidate for Governor of the State of Rhode Island against the incumbent, Democrat J. Joseph Garrahy, and the Republican candidate, Lincoln Almond. Garrahy won the election and received 197,386 votes, Almond

¹Merrill R. Bailey, “Doorley, Feeling Possible Defeat, ‘Cannot Concede,’” *Providence Journal*, November 6, 1974.

²M. William Salganik, “Mayor Loses Direction on McGarry,” *Evening Bulletin*, November 22, 1974.

96,596 and Doorley 20,381. Doorley rationalized his defeat by stating that he ran with few resources or manpower. In 1982, Doorley ran in the Democratic Primary for mayor of Providence but dropped out of the race before the election after an unsuccessful six-month campaign. His last hurrah in politics came in 1984 when he was a candidate in the June 12, 1984 special Democratic Primary for mayor of Providence. Joseph A. Paolino, Jr. won the primary with 13,465 votes, John A. Bevilacqua received 3,549, James S. D'Ambra received 4,522, Doorley 2,256 and Edward J. Collins finished last with 1,413 votes. In his last attempt to gain political office, the man who once was the king of the Democrats in Providence could only find just over two thousand supporters in the city.³

In 2012, Doorley is enjoying his retirement. He lives in Jamestown, Rhode Island and spends his winters in Pompano Beach, Florida. On June 11, 2012, a city of Providence office building, located at 444 Westminister Street, was named for Doorley. During the dedication ceremony, Doorley was honored for his achievements including the fact that the Hospital Trust Tower was erected when he was in office. Looking back on his political career, Doorley emphasizes that his greatest achievements as mayor were that he was able to hold the tax line, expand the tax base and secure for the city of Providence a double AA bond rating. Another accomplishment that is part of his legacy is that he was the major advocate for the creation of the Providence Civic Center. The press at the time called the civic center "Doorley's Dream".⁴

³Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to Carl A. Antonucci, Jr., March 4, 2000; Joseph O. Mehr, ed., *1979 Journal-Bulletin Rhode Island Almanac* (Providence, Rhode Island: Providence Journal Bulletin, 1979), 124; Dean Starkman, "Metro Diary Update Joe Doorley Looks Forward to Retirement but Former Mayor Still Keeps Eye on State, Politics," *Providence Journal*, May 5, 1991; Joseph O. Mehr, ed., *1985 Journal-Bulletin Rhode Island Almanac* (Providence, Rhode Island: Providence Journal Bulletin, 1985), 140-141.

Such a review hardly summarizes the accomplishments or indicates the disappointments Doorley experienced during his political career. Doorley served Providence at a time when, not only the city but also the nation, was facing a series of tensions – political, racial, fiscal – which would shape the development of the city and nation today. Doorley and his career offer insight into the dynamics of politics – both local and national – in the latter part of the twentieth century.

During his tenure in city hall, Doorley realized that the political landscape in Providence was changing. At the beginning of his political career, the way to win elections was to provide patronage jobs, adequate city services and to keep taxes low. One of the reasons that a split occurred between Doorley and McGarry was the fact that Doorley tried to change this political model. Doorley realized that the poor and minorities of the city also needed the help of the mayor's office. Doorley's attempt at outreach to those that were not traditional members of the Democratic Party angered McGarry because he wanted all of the patronage to go to the traditional Democratic political base. During the Doorley era many African Americans were not happy with their relationship with the mayor. They were the have nots in the city of Providence and felt Doorley did not pay attention to their needs because they did not have any political power. During his ten years as mayor, Doorley tried to advocate for the poor and minorities of the city by supporting a fair housing law, creating an antipoverty agency, integrating the schools, participating in the Model Cities program and securing federal funds for urban renewal. Because of the fact that Doorley kept his distance from the people and many of the problems of those who lived in the economically depressed areas of the city, much of his advocacy for the have nots was

⁴Doorley, Interview, July 16, 2001; *Mayors of the City of Providence*; available from <http://www.providenceri.com/history/ProvidenceCityHall/mayors8.html>, (accessed November 10, 2008); Thomas J. Morgan, "In Honor of Their Own; Providence," *Providence Journal*, June 12, 2012.

not perceived as being done without much conviction but only as a matter of expediency. To many Doorley was seen as the consummate machine politician and concerned only with winning the next election to keep himself in power. In February 1974, Doorley named Roosevelt Benton, an African American, as his top administrative assistant. This move illustrated that Doorley was at least making some efforts to include the voice of minorities in his administration but the move was too little and too late in his administration.⁵ McGarry never supported Doorley's efforts to advocate for the poor, minorities and elderly of the city and was concerned that political jobs went to the white Democratic supporters that lived in the city.

The above dissertation outlines both the success and failures of the Doorley era in Providence politics. Some of the urban renewal programs failed and many fault Doorley for not showing enough interest in development for the downtown area.⁶ At the end of the Doorley administration, for example, South Providence was still a blighted neighborhood with many problems despite the efforts of urban renewal. Former Doorley policy aide, John Cicilline, made this assessment regarding some of the policies of the Doorley administration: "In retrospect some of the well-intentioned solutions, such as tearing down buildings and putting up high-rises, proved misguided and even made things worse. But you had to be there, to see the city burning, to feel the urgency to try something, anything."⁷

⁵ "Liaison Man Named Top Aide to Doorley," *Evening Bulletin*, February 14, 1974.

⁶ Stanton, *The Prince of Providence*, 39-41; Frank J. Leazes, Jr., and Mark T. Motte, *Providence The Renaissance City* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 57.

⁷ Stanton, *The Prince of Providence*, 41. During the Doorley era there were many fires started during weekends in the blighted city neighborhoods.

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ABSTRACT

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“Machine Politics and Urban Renewal in Providence, Rhode Island: The Era of Mayor Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., 1965-1974”

Dissertation directed by Father Robert W. Hayman, Ph.D.

Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., was inaugurated as the mayor of the city of Providence on January 4, 1965. At that time, Doorley was both youngest mayor in the history of the city of Providence as well as the youngest mayor of any major city in the United States. His tenure as mayor was marked by a series of political, racial, and fiscal tensions and offers insight into the dynamics of politics – both local and national – in the latter part of the twentieth century. Doorley was a product of the Providence Democratic “machine” that dominated Providence politics from 1936 until his defeat in the Providence mayoral election of 1974. Democratic politicians in Providence started to build this machine in 1936 and, beginning in 1940, under a revised Home Rule Charter, were successful in electing mayors who were able to govern with substantial authority. The study provides a look at the rise of the Providence Democratic machine which operated on the premise of providing jobs and services in exchange for votes. During the Doorley era, 1965-1974, Doorley displayed his strength as mayor, and many times he and his administration were more interested in maintaining power than solving the problems of a declining industrial city.

This study also analyzes the many problems of the city of Providence during this era. Doorley and his administration dealt with a declining tax base, a decline in the population in the

city, racial tensions, the battle for fair housing and school desegregation. Doorley tried to respond to the many problems of his era by working on urban renewal projects, clearing slums, and bringing funds from the federal government to Providence. He attempted to breathe new life into an old industrial city by using a combination of machine politics, President Lyndon B. Johnson's "Great Society" legislation, and the power he enjoyed as the head of the Democratic 'machine' in Providence. The Doorley administration was a continuation of the old-style political machine and focused on assisting groups within the city that had high numbers of loyal Democrats with the premise of providing jobs and political favors. Doorley dealt with the financial crises during his terms by being fiscally conservative while attempting to balance the budgets and hold the tax rate.

The end of the Doorley era marked the end of Democratic Party dominance in Providence. The political split between Doorley and his Public Works Director, Lawrence P. "Larry" McGarry destroyed one of the most powerful machines in the history of the city of Providence. The conflict enabled Republican, Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., to win the mayoral election of November 5, 1974, by the slim margin of 709 votes. During the Doorley years, McGarry, who was also the chairman of the Democratic City Committee, was responsible for dispensing jobs in exchange for votes for Democratic candidate for mayor and city council.

During his tenure in city hall, Doorley realized that the political landscape in Providence was changing. At the beginning of his political career, the way to win elections was to provide patronage jobs, adequate city services and low taxes. However, during his tenure the mayor's office focused on providing decent housing for the poor and minorities of the city and helping them to fight poverty. During his ten years as mayor, Doorley advocated for the poor and minorities of the city. He was a strong supporter of the fair housing law that was signed into law

by Governor Chafee on April 12, 1965. The Doorley administration also created Progress for Providence, Inc., the city's antipoverty agency, drafted a proposal to have Providence designated to receive federal funds for urban renewal projects under the Model Cities Program, and played a large role in the desegregation of Providence Schools under the Providence Plan. The Doorley administration helped to fight poverty in the city. Doorley also continued to operate the city as a strong mayor, using the traditional old-style machine that had existed in Providence since 1940.

During the Doorley era many African Americans were not pleased with their relationship with the mayor. They were the have-nots in the city of Providence and felt that Doorley did not pay enough attention to their needs because they lacked any political power. At this time, segregation and bias towards African Americans was not as blatant in Providence as it was in the South but just as real. However, feelings of prejudice existed in the city especially in the areas of employment and housing. Because, for the most part, Doorley kept his distance from those who lived in the economically depressed areas of the city, the have-nots perceived his advocacy only as a matter of expediency and were not convinced of his support for them. For example, *Providence Journal* reporter Hamilton Davis thought that Doorley was forced into leading the way for the integration of the schools in order to enhance his political image on the national scene by being a progressive mayor. During his tenure in office, Doorley was seen by many as the consummate machine politician and concerned only with winning the next election to keep him and the machine in power. McGarry never supported Doorley's efforts to advocate for the poor, minorities, and elderly of the city and was concerned that political jobs went to the white Democratic supporters who lived in the city. In February 1974, Doorley named Roosevelt Benton, an African American, as his top administrative assistant. This appointment indicated that

Doorley was at least making some efforts to include the voice of minorities in his administration, but the move was too little and too late in his administration.

During his last term in office, Doorley had many critics within his own party who maintained that he had lost focus on the problems in Providence and that he was not responsive to the poor and elderly of the city. McGarry believed that he had lost interest in the day-to-day operation of city affairs. Doorley was absent from city hall on many occasions for such diversions as national political meetings, bowl and tournament games, and long summer weekends in Jamestown. During the times that Doorley was away, McGarry took over the running of the Providence Democratic machine. One factor in the split between Doorley and McGarry was the fact that McGarry and many Doorley supporters were upset that on most days Doorley's daily work schedule ended at noon and that he would retreat to one of the city's many drinking establishments. Another factor was McGarry's discontent that Doorley had been in the mayor's office for too long and should have moved on to a higher political office so that other loyal Democrats would have a chance to run for mayor. As a result of this political separation, the campaign for the Democratic Mayoral Primary on September 10, 1974, became a very interesting chapter in the history of mayoral elections in Providence. The breakup became official in June of 1973 when the Democratic City Committee, under the leadership of McGarry, refused to endorse Doorley for reelection in 1974. The political divorce of Doorley and McGarry divided a once-united Democratic Party in Providence and left the door open for challengers to fight Doorley for the right to run in the November 1974 general election as the Democratic candidate for mayor of Providence. McGarry threw his support behind Democrat, Francis B. Brown in the primary. Doorley won the hard-fought primary battle, but the battle better enabled

Cianci to win the general election to become the city's first Republican mayor in thirty-four years. With the election of Cianci the Democratic machine lost control of politics in Providence.

Some of the urban renewal programs and poverty programs during the Doorley era failed and did not help the residents in their fight against poverty. Urban renewal uprooted many poor African Americans and increased racial segregation in Providence. Many also fault Doorley with not showing enough interest in the revival of the downtown area. For example, at the end of the Doorley years South Providence was still a blighted neighborhood with many problems despite the urban renewal, and many businesses had moved away from the downtown area to the suburbs of other areas of the state. Many of the urban renewal efforts did not create better lives for the poor residents of the city and in some cases made the situation worse. In spite of these criticisms, Doorley did try to address the serious problems of Providence. He argued that his greatest accomplishments were that he was able to hold the tax line, expand the tax base, and secure for the city of Providence a double AA bond rating. Another mayoral accomplishment was the creation of the Providence Civic Center, referred to by the press as "Doorley's Dream." He was also credited with changing the physical skyline of the city of Providence with the erection of the Hospital Trust Tower during the time he was in office.

VITA

Carl Anthony Antonucci, Jr., is the son of Carl Anthony Antonucci, Sr., and Mariann Antonucci, and was born in Providence, Rhode Island on December 3, 1967. He is the grandson of Joseph and Nancy (Andreozzi) Antonucci and Nicholas and Natalie (DeMarco) Meola. He is the husband of Luisa Maria Antonucci and the father of Natalie Maria Antonucci and Antonio Carlo Antonucci. Carl graduated from Monsignor Bove School in 1981 and from Classical High School in 1985. In 1989, he received his Bachelor of Arts Degree from Providence College and in 1991 earned his Master of Arts Degree in History from Providence College. He received his Master of Science Degree in Library Science from Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science in 1993.

Also in 1993, he started a career as an academic librarian. He has been employed as a reference librarian at Mount Ida College, Providence College, Johnson and Wales University, and Manchester Community College. In 2002, he became the Director of Library Services at Capital Community College. In 2010, he became the Director of Library Services at the Elihu Burritt Library, Central Connecticut State University. He is a member of Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society and has been an adjunct professor of history at Manchester Community College and Capital Community College.