

SPEECH BEFORE THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
JANUARY 7, 1985  
GOVERNOR PIERRE S. DU PONT IV

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chamber of Commerce for allowing me to speak this evening. Sadly, this is one of my last speeches as Governor of Delaware and it is fitting that I speak to all of you for each of us in this room is dedicated to the same objective: creating economic opportunity for people, giving the men and women of our community the opportunity to make tomorrow brighter than yesterday. In the past eight years you have helped me work towards that goal, for which I thank you. In the past eight years, we have, together, made progress towards that goal for which I thank you even more.

As I began thinking of what topic I might like to cover with you today, my mind returned to the many occasions I have spoken at events sponsored by this organization. Over the years the topics I have discussed with you have included state finances, potential tax cuts, reorganization of Cabinet agencies, economic development matters, job creation, and education.

But since Mike Castle will be making the next policy talks on these subjects, I thought I might look backwards for a moment to consider what I have learned in the past eight years about leadership, about being a CEO, about accomplishing things in government. Perhaps in my experience lie some useful thoughts for future leaders.

The first lesson I have learned in eight years is to enter the battle while it is at its lowest moment; there is nothing to lose, and there is nowhere to go but up. We would probably have to check with a Delaware historian, but I feel relatively confident that I became Governor in 1977 when the state was at perhaps one of its lowest points in history. We had the highest personal income tax rate, the second highest unemployment rate and the lowest bond rating of any state in America. During a five year period my two predecessors, one a Democrat and one a Republican, had raised taxes twenty-two separate times to try to keep revenue up with expenditures and had failed, since four of those five years Delaware had a budget that was in deficit.

In fact, things were so bad that when I went before a joint session of the General Assembly to deliver my budget message in March of 1977, I declared the state to be - um, well, perhaps even "bankrupt". You know, we politicians are used to

talking a great deal without anyone listening, and I learned quickly that, like E.F. Hutton, once you become Governor, everybody listens.

A second lesson learned is this: to achieve your objectives you must fight, but fight no small wars; choose the terrain and battle with care.

I put that philosophy to work in early July of 1977 when I vetoed the entire state budget. I thought then, and still do now, that I had good reason to take such a drastic step. There were still underfunding of known costs that would have run Delaware significantly in the red for yet another year.

To fight for integrity in finances, for integrity in government was essential; so on July 1, I became the first Governor in Delaware history to veto the state budget; a few days later I became the first Governor in Delaware's history to have my veto of the state budget overridden by the Delaware General Assembly.

While some thought that was a huge political loss for me and my administration, it was not. It showed we were serious about getting state finances under control, and showed the firm steps we were prepared to take to put the state on sound financial footing and begin a conservative economic course. We bloodied ourselves in battle, but the seeds of victory were sown.

Yet another thought: as a leader you must set a very few clear, concise public objectives and work them continuously, relentlessly, unceasingly.

You know, neither your energy nor the public's patience can tolerate any more than a few priority objectives in any legislative session. You can do just about anything in government, but you cannot do everything. You must set priorities.

In some measures, events decided that my administration must first focus on finances -- the opportunity issues of jobs and education would come later. But isn't one of the essential roles of government to provide economic stability, opportunity, and some measure of prosperity? If government cannot do that, then something's wrong. We learned that lesson in Delaware in 1977 and I believe the nation learned it in the late 1970's as well.

With that issue behind us, we were then able to focus on the issue of jobs and helping to create an economic climate in Delaware that would allow business to expand and produce jobs. Certainly the most important economic development measure we passed during my eight years as Governor was the Financial Center

Development Act. Coupled with our tax cuts, that legislation has meant that over fourteen major banks have come to Delaware, creating 3,000 direct new jobs for our residents.

The area of education, is also an opportunity issue; and our task force on education for economic growth, led by Governor-Elect Mike Castle, has produced recommendations that will hopefully keep Delaware at the forefront of public education in the country. I'd like to especially thank those in the business community who have provided the leadership and the support that made the work of the task force possible. I firmly believe that your businesses will be the beneficiaries of even more able employees tomorrow as a result of your work on education today.

So we focused on three objectives -- finances, economic opportunity and education -- and just to prove my point, I expect just about everyone in this room has heard me speak about those topics at least once in the past eight years.

Yet another lesson I have learned in those years is to insist upon brutal candor in analyzing issues. Be sure to understand the cost and consequence of every policy decision. Politics, promises and sentiment may be relevant, but they must come after factual analysis, not as part of it. Whether so-and-so is a loyal Republican, whether you have promised in the campaign to build no more prison beds - as I did, only to become the leading constructor of prison beds in Delaware's history - or whether a road reconstruction program to be a judge, well, consider them after you fully understand the consequences of a decision, not before.

Finally, a word of advice for the egos of future governors: just because they stand and clap, doesn't mean they love you. Most of the time it's the office they are applauding, not its occupant.

Now, I have been pretty fortunate to have sympathetic audiences during my appearances at events sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. However, at the end of my term next week, I will have appeared before joint sessions of the Delaware General Assembly at least sixteen times. Each time after I deliver my speech, the Cabinet, Judiciary and both Houses of the Legislature give me a standing ovation. Each time I shake the hands of members on the way out, they congratulate me on delivering a great speech and tell me what a good fellow I am. But, when I arrive home at night, prop my feet up, and begin to watch the nightly news following my speech, I know I have misjudged those who have applauded me so loudly.

First the reporters start talking to legislators -- leaders of the opposition. After two and three of those folks are done ripping my speech to shreds, the reporters turn to the Cabinet members. Now as my direct employees -- people I have appointed -- I feel sure that they will heap praise on my programs. However, even from these, my staunchest allies, I get little more than tepid reaction. The only time I am really happy is when the newscast is over, and I realize that all the judges who listened to what I had to say were not asked for their opinion! In their silence, is the only solace I've ever found. But, just because they stand and clap, doesn't mean they love you either.

Other lessons come to mind: lead, do not become entangled with followers; be bold, seize the initiative, use your office to make things happen.

Bring in the most able people you can find, seek their advice, then take it.

Success is a process, not a result; a successful progress will always (well, nearly always) produce a successful result.

And the first rule of that quintessential Chamber of Commerce game, Monopoly: when you pass go, you collect \$200 - but only \$200, not \$2000, or \$20,000. Expand your political, public and personal capital with care, for it is not unlimited. Or, to put it another way, decide what is not worth doing, and don't do it.

But, as I look back over my eight years as Governor, I find one lesson common to every major accomplishment that we enjoyed: government cannot do it alone; involve the private sector in the work of the public sector. While government alone can present opportunity, government alone cannot create opportunity, that requires a partnership with the private sector.

Each of our major accomplishments -- the tax cuts, the Financial Center Development Act, the Blue Collar Jobs Bill, the constitutional spending restraints, the job training programs and the new emphasis on quality education -- were the result of the direct involvement, assistance, and enthusiasm of the private sector. Without your support and energy, some of those things would never have seen the light of day, and Delaware would not today be a leader among the States in education, economics, and employment opportunities.

And so, in closing, I shall thank you for allowing me to be here this evening, and for eight years of support and encouragement and for all you have done to make

Delaware a better place in which to live, to work and to raise a family. Together, I believe we've made a difference.