



The Research Bureau

Worcester Regional Research Bureau

31st Annual Meeting

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DCU Center

Timothy J. McGourthy Remarks

As John Adams stated: “Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.”

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a fact is “something that truly exists or happens; something that has actual existence” and “a true piece of information.” Our democracy, and our nation, was founded and built on the importance of facts. In fact, in 1776, when the original thirteen colonies determined to separate from Great Britain, their Declaration of Independence outlined “Facts...submitted to a candid world” to illustrate clearly and completely the rationale for birthing a new nation.

Yet we live in an age where the term “post-factual” regularly makes headlines. Media sources across the country and the globe have lamented the rise of a “post-factual era” – a period when reality does not dictate public position or policy. Such outlets as *The Washington Post*, *The Economist*, *The National Review*, and the *Financial Times* have all explored issues of governance and politics in a “post-truth” era. An online platform – Politifact – has received a Pulitzer Prize for its efforts to fact-check the comments of public figures.

Facts are important and The Research Bureau has spent 31 years offering facts to Greater Worcester for information, for deliberation, and for a foundation of good public policy. We have gone further to explore, connect, and lay out the patterns of these facts. We have engaged the experts who understand the facts and have identified successful paths forward for cities like Worcester. We reject the premise that government – at any level – can succeed under a post-factual mindset.

Public policy unsupported by facts is rule by demagoguery.

Our theme this year is “All Politics is Local.” We recognize that the national debates are influenced by, and in turn influence, the local approach to local challenges. Worcester is a microcosm of the issues facing this country: how do we embrace new residents? how do we create economic opportunity? how do we ensure public safety and promote public health? how do we educate our children and instill our values? how do we ensure equal treatment for all?

Understanding the facts is the first step. Worcester has many successes – a growing population, a declining unemployment rate, a rising median household income, and an expanding tax base. We also have many challenges – too much embedded poverty that disproportionately impacts certain neighborhoods and certain racial and ethnic groups, an aging building stock, a student body in which 40% of its members struggle with the English language, a perception of public safety that deters engagement with the city and its residents. Incredibly, some cities across America are literally burning – Worcester, luckily, is not one of those cities. But the questions that tear those cities apart are the same in Worcester – we need to do a better job than they to understand the problems and identify solutions. While it is foolishness to say that what happens to cities on the other side of the globe could never happen locally, it is recklessness to say that what happens in Detroit, Ferguson, Flint, Orlando, Dallas, or Charlotte could never happen in Worcester.

In order to address these challenges, we need to understand them. The Research Bureau will continue to work with government officials, civic leadership, the business and philanthropic communities, and our

renowned higher education institutions to identify the problems and discover the solutions.

Without you, The Research Bureau could not do this work. You have ensured that, over the decades, we have not only survived but thrived as a critical voice in Worcester's civic life. We have many to thank for that success.

We are honored that our Board of Director's is a who's who of Worcester's business, education, and civic life. They commit their time, their resources, and their intellect to inform our mission and facilitate our efforts. Month after month, our Executive Committee, led by Chairman John Spillane, highlights issues and provides wise counsel to the staff. I am truly grateful for your ongoing support and commitment to The Research Bureau and the cause of informed public decision-making.

We cannot praise and thank our financial sponsors enough. In our Annual Report, you will see a listing of the many businesses, institutions, and individuals that provide invaluable support to our efforts. Our contributors represent the strength of the financial, legal, health, educational, industrial, insurance, real estate, and logistical organizations of Greater Worcester. I can't help but note a few that deserve special recognition. Commerce Bank has been our Presenting Sponsor for eight years – worthy of a round of applause. Many thanks to Duddie Massad, Brian Thompson, and Mike Crawford for their continuous support for and involvement in our efforts. Greenberg, Rosenblatt, Kull, and Bitsoli has been an integral part of The Research Bureau's operations for decades and provides incomparable accounting work on our behalf week after week. PENTA Communications has given The Research Bureau a loud digital voice that lets us share the lessons we've learned well beyond our traditional borders. We receive calls from organizations across the country that read about our efforts online and engage with us to understand how our region has addressed the challenges that they share. I also want to acknowledge our media sponsor the *Telegram & Gazette*, celebrating its 150th anniversary, and the DCU Center – organizations that work with us on multiple events and fronts. Finally, Worcester is very fortunate to have a strong

philanthropic community. The Alden Trust, Daniels, Ellsworth, Fletcher, Fuller, Harrington, The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts, Hoche-Schofield, McEvoy, Stoddard, Wyman-Gordon, and the Greater Worcester Community Foundation have supported our efforts over the years and have ensured that Worcester is the smallest city in the nation to boast a policy research organization.

Thank you, each and every one of you, for your commitment to our organization and our mission. We value the trust you have placed in our efforts and our impact. We will continue to work hard to earn it.

With that, I want to thank the staff of The Research Bureau. While a small non-profit, the skills and dedication of the staff over the years has enabled The Research Bureau to do great things. I highlight the contributions of our new Program Associate – Eric Kneeland – and our Research Associate – Mary Beth Burke. I also highlight the contributions of Jean DeIeso, who retired this year after nearly two decades with The Research Bureau. We miss her energy and enthusiasm but wish her well in her new travels. I also want to commend our interns – primarily from Assumption College and Holy Cross – who play an integral role in keeping our output strong.

Returning to the words of John Adams: “facts are stubborn things.” He said those lines during his successful defense of the British soldiers accused of murder during the Boston Massacre. For one of the colonies’ most ardent revolutionaries, he defended those soldiers because he knew that the facts of the case – the evidence in front of the court – mattered. Many years later, he said:

The Part I took in Defence of Captain Preston and the Soldiers, procured me Anxiety, and Obloquy enough. It was, however, one of the most gallant, generous, manly and disinterested Actions of my whole Life, and one of the best Pieces of Service I ever rendered my Country. Judgment of Death against those Soldiers would have been as foul a Stain upon this Country as the Executions of the Quakers or Witches, anciently. As the Evidence was, the Verdict of the Jury was exactly right.

We trust that our efforts to assemble the evidence and lay out the facts for Greater Worcester will allow our communities to tackle the issues of local policy, and lay a foundation for national priorities, “exactly right” as well.

Thank You.