



Good Afternoon. I am delighted to see you today and share with you briefly my vision for the upcoming year. As Fay indicated, 2014 was a year of transition. If I were to pick a theme for 2015 it would be “honoring tradition while embracing change” as that is my approach to leading the MTF in this new chapter of its proud history.

Honoring Tradition. To do that, I have and will continue to focus on the core strengths of this organization that have made it the preeminent voice on budget and fiscal matters for eight decades. Since the beginning of my tenure in February, we have hit the ground running- analyzing the Governor’s deficit reduction plan, his budget proposal and the House’s budget. When the Senate releases its budget next week, we will analyze that too, following the budget process to completion and providing objective analysis and insight each step of the way. Later in the year, we will provide a revenue forecast.

The MTF is a trusted resource for the information we disseminate on municipal finances and our work on that will continue, as will our valuable research on OPEB and pension liabilities.

Tax issues are the Foundation’s bread and butter and there are several tax proposals that have garnered our attention this legislative session. We have publicly testified against the film tax credit and in support of increasing the EITC, as long as there is some offsetting revenue. When the hearings getting under way, we will testify on numerous other tax bills impacting businesses, such as the one pertaining to tax havens which is of interest to many of you. We have asked the Administration for relief from the DOR’s practice of defining equity for purposes of the net worth tax and we are preparing for another debate on adoption of a graduated income tax.

There is an awful lot that the MTF does behind the scenes that I would call to your attention. While it may go unnoticed, it is equally important to informing policy makers on a wide range of subjects. For instance, the Foundation sits on a Committee to review and recommend revisions to the definition of indigency and the verification process for purposes of public counsel. While somewhat obscure, this is a \$200 million line-item that has grown considerably in recent years and needs to be scrutinized.

We sit on the Commission to review and recommend revisions to the education foundation budget formula. Recently, we have taken a seat on the Special Commission for the Adjudication of UI claims to ensure that employers get a fair shake when appealing a decision of the Division of Unemployment Assistance (DUA). This list is far from exhaustive, but it does highlight the breadth and scope of the MTF’s work.

In March, we issued a seminal report on the dire state of the MBTA and have had significant influence on the action steps being considered to put the T back on track. We will lead a panel of business organizations at next week’s hearing on the Governor’s MBTA legislation. The Foundation’s focus on the MBTA will continue until our goal of having a reliable and financially sustainable MBTA has been achieved. This long-term approach is an added strength of the MTF that sets us apart from other organizations. I look forward to hearing the Governor’s remarks on the MBTA later in the program.

Looking ahead, Eleanor Roosevelt, a favorite first lady of mine, once said “With the new day comes new strengths and new thoughts.” And for the MTF, this new day involves changing not what we do necessarily but how we do it. For example, we will bring the same research excellence to bear on new topics and emerging fiscal challenges, such as the growth of the MassHealth budget and the collective demands on our capital budget at a time when there is limited borrowing capacity.

Embracing Change. How we do things must change with the times. Our transformation is now underway. We are excited to have very recently engaged in a partnership with Microsoft who will provide us with cutting-edge technology and equipment. This will enable our research and data to be presented, analyzed and used in compelling and innovative ways. We are also foraging into social media, exploring a partnership that will enable us to have a presence in this important medium and amplify our voice to new and broader audiences. This is critical to attracting Millennials who consumer information differently and new members who benefit from our good work. We will renovate the office so that we can host more events to engage our members, proactively discuss the issues of the day and highlight our important contributions to them. In short, we will bring the important work of the MTF to a new generation of taxpayers.

In closing, a special thanks to all of you for demonstrating your support of the MTF by your attendance today; by your feedback and participation throughout the year; and by your financial contributions that enable us to do the work we do.

Allow me to say a few words about the extraordinary staff at the MTF. First, I am pleased to announce that Andy Bagley has been promoted to Vice President in recognition of his many contributions to the Foundation. Next, let me recognize Carolyn Ryan and the value she provides through her extraordinary research and writing abilities. Lastly, let me introduce Andrea D'Attilio, the Office and Project Manager, who is the most recent addition to the staff. She has hit the ground running, creating our new monthly newsletter in her second week on the job. I am awed by them each and every day. They are dedicated, talent and good people who produce an incredible amount of stellar work. My heartfelt thanks.

I appreciate the opportunity to lead the MTF and know that the best days of this organization are still ahead.

Let me turn now to introducing our guest speaker, the Governor of this Commonwealth, Charlie Baker.

A quick reminder that this event is closed to the press.