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REDISTRICTING

June 23, 2012

Stone Soup Leadership Institute
P.O. Box 4551
Vineyard Haven, MA 02568

Dear Youth Delegates,

Welcome to Martha's Vineyard, welcome to Massachusetts, and welcome to what I'm sure will be an inspiring, productive week together.

As the State Senator representing the Cape & Islands district, I want to welcome you to Cape Cod, and the islands of Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabethan's. Many of you come from beautiful places but I hope you take a few moments to truly appreciate your surroundings. All of you understand that you will be the stewards of your homes and mine – that's why you're here, and why I take great pleasure in welcoming you.

"Sustainability" is the rallying cry of your summit, a word which carries great meaning and weight. At heart it conveys an understanding to think beyond the immediate, use no more than can be replaced, make balance and harmony priorities, and build an economy that doesn't rely on exploitation of resources, or people. That's the big picture, and this week is about translating that vision into specifics, an exciting and crucial task.

Your charge brings to mind an excerpt of one of the greatest pieces of oratory I believe has ever been delivered in the English language, Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. In the earlier part of that speech, Dr. King said:

"We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy."

That phrase, "the fierce urgency of Now," has become a part of my thinking every day when I go to the State House, every evening when I think about how much we need to accomplish. And I sense that "the fierce urgency of Now" is a big part of the reason why you have come here.

I applaud your desire to engage, develop, and to apply the standards of justice and equity to a sustainable economy and environmental protection. The principles and strategies you are exploring are the same as those that Dr. King employed in the civil rights movement. The idealism is shared. And my hope is that with your leadership, as Dr. King predicted, success will ring out from the mountaintops and hillsides of the nation.

When Henry David Thoreau, the great naturalist writer from Massachusetts, visited Cape Cod and wrote about his travels in the mid-1800s, this was a wilder, more remote place. Thoreau stood on the Cape's high bluffs overlooking the Atlantic, much like the dunes you'll find here on the Vineyard, and reveled in his sense of being at the edge of things. "A man may stand here," he wrote, "and put all America behind him."

That's true, but during your time here, I would also challenge you to turn around, and put all of America and its vast opportunities for positive change in front of you. In a sense, that's what you're here to do: Use this time not as a retreat but as a moment to grow, to learn together and from each other, and then carry a renewed commitment to a healthier future when, as people say on the Vineyard, you step on the ferry, cross "the Pond" called Nantucket Sound, and return to "America."

Thank you for making the round-trip journey. I all look forward to your engagement and leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan A. Wolf". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Daniel A. Wolf
State Senator
Cape and Islands District