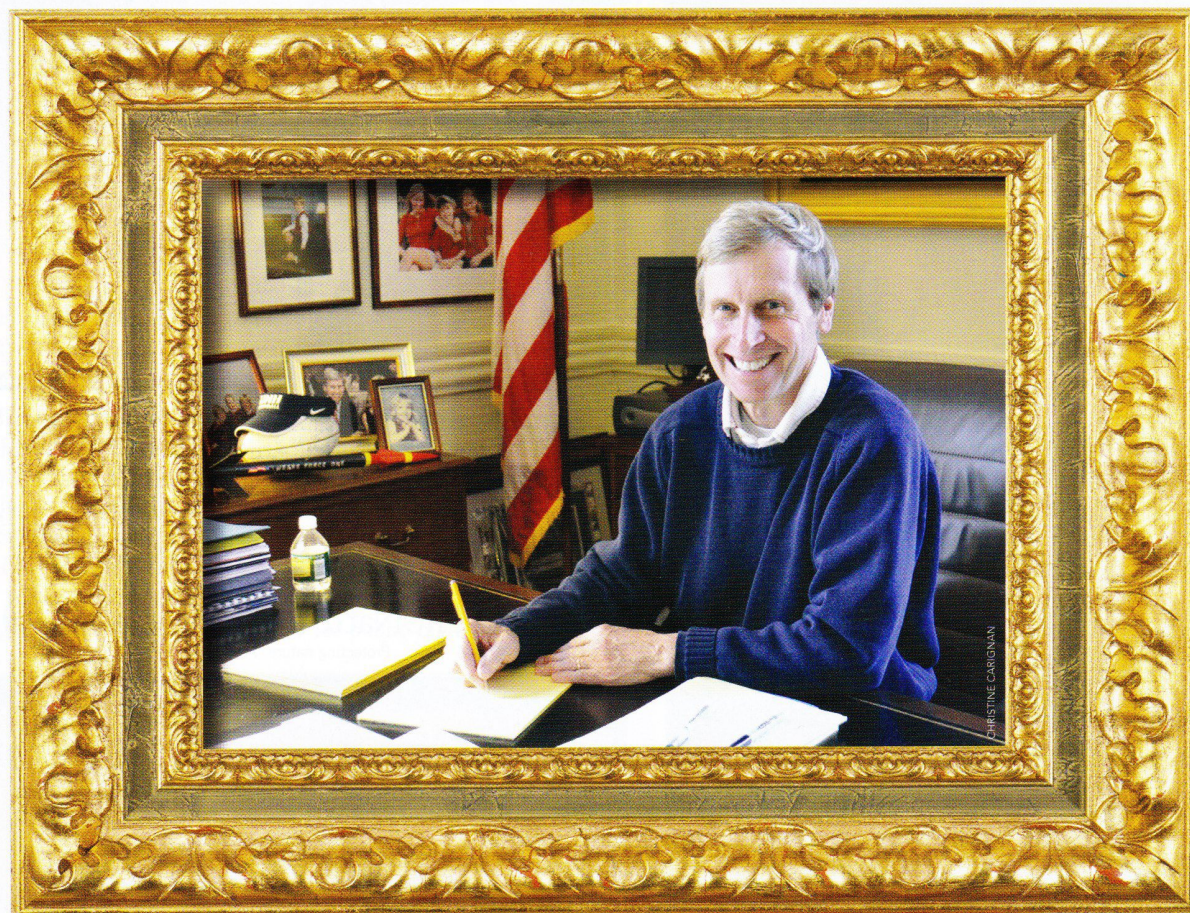


The Non-Politician's

Gov. John H. Lynch reflects on his historic tenure.



As you sit in the Governor's reception area in the Concord Statehouse, the previous heads of state stare down at you from portraits. Most are bedecked in suits and ties, sitting stiffly in chairs or behind desks. While Democratic Gov. John H. Lynch doesn't have an official portrait yet, the most popular governor may want to break with tradition and pose in a windbreaker and hiking boots.

After all, that outfit fits the legacy of his historic eight-year run as governor. This was a governor who reached out, talking with residents of Alstead after the 2005 floods washed away area roads and homes, thanking power crews during the Ice Storm of 2008, and touring the Berlin biomass plant during its construction.

"I loved being governor," says Lynch, sitting in his office in khakis, a sweater and hiking boots, having just returned from serving Thanksgiving meals to the homeless. "What I liked most about the job was I liked being with people and solving problems. I often say if you like being with people, it's the best job in the world and I further say if you don't like being with people, it's the worst job in the world."

Supporters praise him for increasing the compulsory age of school attendance to 18, requiring all towns to offer kindergarten, remaining opposed to an income and sales tax, passing tougher laws against sexual predators, creating a research and development tax credit, signing gay marriage into law, and making health care more accessible. But many of those positions also earned him criticism. Oppo-

nents, especially those on the far right, fault him for legislation allowing adults up to 26 years old to remain on their parents' health insurance, and for not opposing same sex marriage. They are also angered by his veto (which the NH House sustained) of right-to-work legislation, a top priority of House leaders that would bar union members from collecting a share of costs from non-members.

But Lynch maintained a high approval rating—as of October, it was 70 percent. At one point in 2007, his approval rating reached 80 percent. In short, his popularity is historic. To find a governor who has served more than four consecutive terms you have to go back to the early 1800s. "I believe that the people of New Hampshire want us to be moderate and govern in the middle. The majority of people are in the

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BY ERIKA COHEN

middle, which is where I am," Lynch says. "That is the message of each of the different pendulum swings, people want us to govern in a very centrist way. The people in New Hampshire don't like extreme ideology."

Beyond Party Lines

During the 2010 GOP sweep, Lynch not only won reelection, but did so with the backing of Republicans for Lynch, a group that included former Gov. Walter Peterson, former State Senator Dick Green and Joel Maiola, chief of staff to former Sen. Judd Gregg and now principal at Granite Edge Consulting in Concord. "I'm a very strong supporter of the way he led the state," Maiola says. "His first objective was trying to find a way to bridge the gulf and bring people together and that's what really attracted me. For him to withstand the politics and have people rallying for him who might be unlikely suspects just speaks to his character."

Pundits have called Lynch a non-politician's politician, and he basks in this label. "When I made judicial appointments, I never asked people if they were a Democrat or Republican; I never cared. I just cared about their qualifications."

What he does care deeply about is education, as he believes that, above all else, will help NH move ahead. That's why increasing the mandatory school attendance age to 18 (and reducing the high school dropout rate to less than 1 percent), requiring kindergarten for all students, and creating a job training fund that has helped to train more than 14,500 workers all top his personal list of accomplishments. "Education is so important for economic development and the economy. Education is the best thing we can do to help the economy," Lynch says. "As a former CEO of Knoll, I was looking to locate a factory, and that was the first question I asked. Education draws jobs."

That's why Lynch acted quickly in mid-2010 when Albany Engineered Composites, a company with \$800 million in revenue, was considering NH as a location for its headquarters and collocated there with its largest customer Safran, a move that would bring more than 400 jobs to the state. New Hampshire was up against South Carolina, Texas and Wisconsin. Those states had better financial resources, but Lynch knew education was key, says Joe Marone, CEO of Albany International.

Marone received a call from the president of the University of NH within three hours of the initial meeting with state economic development officials and Lynch called soon after. Within two weeks, Marone says, Lynch had worked with the Legislature to create special worker training funds and had arranged for Albany officials to meet with the community college to develop the needed programs. "We are here because the governor brought to bear all of the state's resources on the one issue that mattered most to us, talent," Marone says.

What's Next?

Despite his popularity, Lynch remains humble. He's had help with lessons on humility. Standing near the door to his office at the end of the interview, Lynch points to a framed letter from a fourth grader, one of many who visited the Statehouse on a class trip. "This one is one of my favorites," he says, pointing to one line: 'I would have taken your picture but I was saving my film.' "It makes me laugh. It's so real."

While Lynch says he's not sure what his next step will be, he expects it will involve teaching and returning to the private sector, probably in manufacturing. "I love New Hampshire. To make a difference in [people's] lives has been very special. I have mixed feelings about leaving, but it's the right time." ■

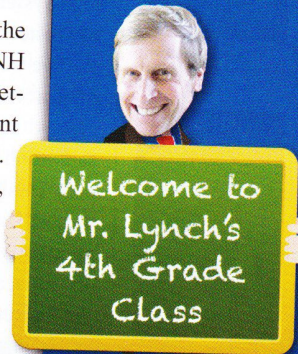
What Will Gov. Lynch Do Next?

Local 4th graders gave him suggestions.

"Jump off the Empire State Building with a parachute"



"Go skydiving in Spain"



"Work as a 4th grade teacher"

"Work at a famous pizza place"



"In the future you should be an astronaut and go to the moon. Then you should run for President. Then, after all that, you should take a nap because you deserve one."

