

STATE OF THE CITY 2008 – MAYOR GREGORY A. BALLARD

THANK YOU COUNCILOR COCKRUM FOR THE INTRODUCTION. I LOVE SHORT INTRODUCTIONS. GOOD EVENING AND WELCOME TO UNION STATION FOR THE STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS. I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE SPECIAL THANKS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CITY-COUNTY COUNCIL PRESENT,

AND THE MEMBERS OF THE MARION COUNTY DELEGATION TO THE STATEHOUSE, SPECIFICALLY SENATOR MERRITT, SENATOR WALTZ, SENATOR LUBBERS, REPRESENTATIVE ELROD, REPRESENTATIVE BUELL, REPRESENTATIVE NOE AND REPRESENTATIVE MURPHY.

I AM ALSO HONORED TO HAVE PROSECUTOR BRIZZI IN ATTENDANCE, THE CONSUL OF MEXICO JUAN M. SOLANA AND MY FELLOW MARION COUNTY MAYORS, MAYOR THOMAN, MAYOR WRIGHT AND MAYOR RICKETTS.

INDIANAPOLIS IS A STRONG CITY, AND IT IS GETTING STRONGER. OUR STRENGTH DOES NOT COME FROM ANY SINGLE ACT OF ANY PUBLIC OFFICIAL. WE ARE STRONG AS A CITY BECAUSE INDIANAPOLIS IS HOME TO GREAT PEOPLE.

WHETHER ITS THE VOLUNTEERS AT GLEANER'S FOOD BANK, OR THE MENTORS AT THE BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS, OUR CITIZENS GO ABOVE AND BEYOND TO CARE FOR THEIR NEIGHBORS AND THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS.

OUR STRENGTH COMBINED WITH OUR IMMENSE POTENTIAL, SHOULD GIVE ALL OF US HOPE FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE.

OUR STRENGTH AS A CITY WILL ENDURE AND IMPROVE AS LONG AS WE WORK TO DEVELOP A GOVERNMENT THAT EMBRACES THE GOOD IDEAS OF OUR CITIZENS,

INCORPORATES THOSE GOOD IDEAS INTO PLANS FOR THE FUTURE, AND REMEMBERS THAT GOVERNMENT EXISTS TO SERVE ITS CITIZENS, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

OUR CITY FACES SERIOUS CHALLENGES, NONE MORE SERIOUS THAN THE LEVEL OF CRIME.

I BELIEVE THAT GOVERNMENT'S PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY IS PUBLIC SAFETY, AND THAT'S WHY MY TEAM AND I HAVE MADE PUBLIC SAFETY JOB NUMBER ONE. ONE OF THE MOST OBVIOUS WEAKNESSES REGARDING PUBLIC SAFETY WAS A DISJOINTED CHAIN OF COMMAND. IN A CRISIS SITUATION POLICE AND FIRE MUST WORK TOGETHER, OTHERWISE LIVES WILL BE LOST. THAT IS WHY I WORKED TO BRING IMPD BACK UNDER THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR.

UPON TAKING CONTROL OF IMPD, WE LOOKED AT THE STRUCTURE, TACTICS, AND GOALS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND DECIDED TO MAKE CHANGES. IMPD IS FILLED WITH HARD-WORKING, DEDICATED OFFICERS,

BUT, WE HAVE RESTRUCTURED THE DEPARTMENT IN A WAY THAT MAKES USE OF THE IDEAS AND ENTHUSIASM OF THE OFFICERS CLOSEST TO THE PROBLEMS.

WE ELIMINATED SOME TOP COMMAND POSITIONS AND ARE REINVESTING THAT MONEY INTO PUTTING MORE OFFICERS ON THE STREET.

WE ARE REDEDICATING OURSELVES TO COMMUNITY POLICING BECAUSE THE TRUE GOAL OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT SHOULD NOT BE TO REACT TO CRIME, BUT TO PREVENT IT.

THIS CANNOT BE DONE BY IMPD ALONE. IT REQUIRES COLLABORATION BETWEEN COMMUNITY, POLICE, AND OTHER AGENCIES OF GOVERNMENT.

RECENTLY WE LAUNCHED THE “PEACE IN THE STREETS” INITIATIVE CITY-WIDE TO TELL THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT IN OUR COMMUNITY THAT WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH.

IN THE WORDS OF OUR PUBLIC SAFETY DIRECTOR, SCOTT NEWMAN, CRIMINALS WILL TAKE WHAT THE COMMUNITY WILL TOLERATE. THEY THRIVE IN ENVIRONMENTS THAT ACCEPT CRIME. WE ARE LETTING EVERYONE KNOW THAT WE DO NOT ACCEPT CRIME: NOT IN OUR STREETS, NOT IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS, NOT IN OUR SCHOOLS, AND NOT IN OUR CITY.

WE HAVE OPENED TWO NEW OFFICES – ONE DEALING WITH ABANDONED HOMES, AND ONE DEALING WITH EX-OFFENDER RE-ENTRY. THESE TWO AREAS HAVE BEEN NEGLECTED BY OUR CITY FOR FAR TOO LONG.

ABANDONED HOMES POSE A THREAT TO SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS IN INDIANAPOLIS. MANY OF THESE ARE WAREHOUSES FOR GUNS AND DRUGS. AT A MINIMUM, THEY ARE A BLIGHT TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

A FEW WEEKS AGO, I APPOINTED AN INDIVIDUAL WHOSE JOB IT IS TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM USING ALL OF THE RESOURCES WE CAN BRING TO BEAR. WE HAVE ALSO CREATED AN ABANDONED HOMES TASK FORCE THAT HAS BEGUN MEETING.

THERE IS NO SINGLE SOLUTION TO TACKLING ABANDONED HOMES. ADDRESSING THIS PROBLEM WILL INVOLVE CHANGES IN OUR POLICY AND PERHAPS OUR ORDINANCES, BUT BY WORKING WITH NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS, CONCERNED CITIZENS, OUR CITY-COUNTY COUNCILORS,

AND CITY AND COUNTY AGENCIES, I AM CONFIDENT THAT WE CAN REDUCE THE NUMBER OF ABANDONED HOMES IN OUR CITY.

EX-OFFENDER REENTRY IS AN AREA THAT THIS CITY HAS NEVER ADDRESSED. WE HAVE ABOUT FIVE THOUSAND INDIVIDUALS EACH YEAR WHO HAVE PAID THEIR DEBT TO SOCIETY – AND WHO RETURN TO OUR COMMUNITY. WE HAVE MANY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, PLACES LIKE WORKFORCE INC. AND THE HOPE TEAM, WHO ARE WORKING TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR THESE INDIVIDUALS, HELPING THEM BECOME PRODUCTIVE, VALUED MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY. BUT AS A CITY, WE HAVE NEVER ADDRESSED THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM.

A KEY COMPONENT OF OUR EX-OFFENDER REENTRY PLAN IS DEDICATING A POINT PERSON WHO WILL WORK WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND COMMUNITY GROUPS TO INSURE THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE NOT SLIPPING THROUGH THE CRACKS.

WHILE PUBLIC SAFETY WILL ALWAYS REMAIN JOB ONE, IN TALKING WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, THE ISSUE THAT COMES UP TIME AND AGAIN IS EDUCATION. BUSINESSES NEED AN EDUCATED WORKFORCE AND GOOD SCHOOLS FOR THEIR EMPLOYEES’ CHILDREN TO ATTEND.

WE CANNOT IMPROVE OUR ECONOMY WITHOUT ALSO WORKING TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

THE MAYOR CONTROLS FEW OF THE LEVERS OF EDUCATION, BUT I HAVE MET WITH, AND WILL CONTINUE TO MEET WITH SCHOOL LEADERS TO UNDERSTAND AND ASSIST WITH THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE.

THERE ARE MANY GREAT ORGANIZATIONS IN THIS COUNTY THAT TUTOR AND MENTOR CHILDREN THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS.

MY ADMINISTRATION, THROUGH MY DEPUTY MAYOR OF ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IS WORKING TO BRING THESE

GROUPS TOGETHER IN A COORDINATED EFFORT TO MAKE SURE EVERY CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ARE MET.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND EDUCATION ARE TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES WE PLAN TO ADDRESS IN THE COMING YEARS, BUT ONE OF THE GREATEST OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME, IS THE WAY OUR GOVERNMENT IS STRUCTURED AND ITS EFFECT ON OUR BUDGET.

WHEN I WENT TO THE STATE LEGISLATURE EARLIER THIS YEAR, I DIDN'T GO THERE TO CONVINCING STATE LEGISLATORS TO STOP PROPERTY TAX RELIEF. I WENT THERE TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO ENACT IT, BECAUSE THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF PROPERTY TAXES THREATENED TO MAKE MARION COUNTY UNLIVABLE.

MY JOB IS NOT TO MAKE GOVERNMENT COMFORTABLE FOR GOVERNMENT, BUT TO MAKE MARION COUNTY COMFORTABLE FOR ITS CITIZENS.

DOES IT MAKE BALANCING OUR BUDGET MORE DIFFICULT? YES IT DOES. IS IT WORTH IT TO MAKE SURE CITIZENS DON'T LIVE IN FEAR OF LOSING THEIR HOMES? DEFINITELY. NO QUESTION.

WHEN I TOOK OFFICE ON JANUARY 1ST, INDIANAPOLIS ALREADY HAD A STRUCTURAL DEFICIT OF \$26 MILLION. ADDITIONALLY, THE PROPERTY TAX REFORM ENACTED BY THE INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY WILL REDUCE OUR PROPERTY TAX REVENUE IN THE FUTURE.

BUT WE ALSO HAD SOME BIG WINS DURING THE PAST LEGISLATIVE SESSION, CHIEF OF WHICH IS THE STATE'S DECISION TO PICK UP THE PRE-1977 PUBLIC SAFETY PENSIONS.

THIS DECISION BY THE GOVERNOR AND THE LEADERSHIP IN BOTH HOUSES WILL SAVE MARION COUNTY TAXPAYERS OVER \$1 BILLION OVER 30 YEARS. OUR LEADERSHIP ON THIS ISSUE WILL BENEFIT CITIES FROM ALL ACROSS THE STATE.

EVEN WITH THE PARTS OF THAT LEGISLATION THAT WILL REDUCE OUR SPENDING OBLIGATIONS, WE WILL STILL FACE A REDUCTION IN REVENUES. THIS REDUCTION IN REVENUES NEEDS TO BE MET WITH A REDUCTION IN SPENDING.

WE HAVE ALREADY MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN REDUCING OUR SPENDING. EARLIER THIS YEAR, I INSTRUCTED ALL CITY AND COUNTY AGENCIES TO LOOK AT THEIR PLANNED SPENDING FOR 2008 AND SEE IF THEY COULD HOLD THEIR SPENDING TO 95% OF THEIR APPROVED BUDGET.

MANY AGENCIES IDENTIFIED WAYS TO CONSTRAIN SPENDING WITHOUT ADVERSELY IMPACTING SERVICES. THROUGH THIS SIMPLE PROCESS OF REVIEWING OUR SPENDING, WE HAVE IDENTIFIED NEARLY \$9 MILLION DOLLARS THAT WILL NOT BE SPENT.

WE WILL BE DILIGENT IN REVIEWING EVERY SERVICE THAT THE MARION COUNTY TAXPAYERS HAVE COME TO EXPECT AND ENSURE THAT THE SERVICE IS BEING PROVIDED IN THE MOST ECONOMICAL AND EFFICIENT MANNER.

WE MUST ALSO CONSIDER IF WE HAVE MULTIPLE AGENCIES PERFORMING ESSENTIALLY THE SAME SERVICE. RIGHT NOW THERE ARE OVER 40 DIFFERENT TAXING ENTITIES IN MARION COUNTY. SOME OF THESE ENTITIES PROVIDE NEEDED SERVICES, BUT MANY DUPLICATE FUNCTIONS ALREADY BEING PERFORMED.

WE MUST ALSO BE MINDFUL OF THE DEBT THAT WE ARE LEAVING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION. OUR LONG TERM DEBT IN THIS CITY IS 5.7 BILLION DOLLARS, 2.8 BILLION OF WHICH IS SUPPORTED BY PROPERTY TAXES. IN OUR SCHOOL SYSTEMS ALONE,

WE HAVE AMASSED A DEBT OF 1.8 BILLION DOLLARS. IN ORDER TO ADDRESS LONG-TERM SPENDING PROBLEMS, I WILL ASK THE STATE LEGISLATURE TO GIVE MARION COUNTY THE ABILITY TO FINISH THE JOB OF CONSOLIDATION THAT STARTED OVER 4 DECADES AGO.

I RECOGNIZE THAT WHEN WE BEGIN TO TALK ABOUT GOVERNMENT CONSOLIDATION, THE CONVERSATION BECOMES POLITICAL. THAT IS WHY I AM THANKFUL GOVERNOR DANIELS CREATED THE KERNAN-SHEPHERD COMMISSION,

WHICH TOOK A BI-PARTISAN LOOK AT MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND SAW THE SAME THING WE HAVE SEEN IN MARION COUNTY FOR A LONG TIME: GOVERNMENT HAS TOO MANY LAYERS AND HAS GROWN TOO LARGE.

IF WE ARE GOING TO PUT MARION COUNTY ON FIRM FINANCIAL FOOTING, WE HAVE TO ASK OURSELVES NOT JUST HOW MUCH ARE WE SPENDING, BUT HOW AND WHY ARE WE SPENDING.

A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF THIS IS AN AGREEMENT MADE LAST YEAR TO SPEND \$3.5 BILLION OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS TO COMPLY WITH A FEDERAL MANDATE TO REDUCE THE DUMPING OF RAW SEWAGE INTO OUR WATERWAYS DURING HEAVY RAINFALLS, A GOAL THAT WE FULLY SUPPORT

HOWEVER, AFTER LOOKING AT THE PLANS, WE FOUND A WAY TO ACCOMPLISH THE SAME RESULTS WHILE SPENDING LESS. BY USING VALUE ENGINEERING AND OTHER MEASURES WE WILL LOWER THE COST BY 15-20 PERCENT AND USE THOSE SAVINGS TO REDUCE THE PLANNED SEWER RATE INCREASES.

MANY OF OUR PLANS HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY CONVERSATIONS WITH CONCERNED CITIZENS. I HAVE NO PRIDE OF AUTHORSHIP.

IT DOESN'T MATTER TO ME WHERE THE IDEA COMES FROM BECAUSE MY GOAL IS TO DO WHAT IS BEST FOR THE CITY. WHAT WORKS, WORKS.

IN FACT, SOME OF THE PLANS WE ARE IMPLEMENTING WERE CREATED BY THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION LIKE THE GREAT INDY NEIGHBORHOODS INITIATIVE, BETTER KNOWN AS GINI.

THIS IS A GREAT PROGRAM THAT ENCOURAGES NEIGHBORS TO WORK TOGETHER ACROSS TRADITIONAL BOUNDARIES TO ORGANIZE AND GET INVOLVED IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS, DECIDE COLLECTIVELY ON THE PRIORITIES FOR THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS, AND THEN ACT ON THOSE PRIORITIES.

WE ARE ALSO CONVENING THE HIGH-PERFORMANCE GOVERNMENT TEAM WHICH IS A BI-PARTISAN COMMISSION CREATED LAST YEAR BY THE CITY-COUNTY COUNCIL TO REVIEW THE MANY TAXING ENTITIES IN MARION COUNTY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY.

LAST YEAR, THE CITIZENS OF MARION COUNTY WERE HIT WITH A 65% INCOME TAX INCREASE, AND ALTHOUGH WE HAVE RETURNED MUCH OF THAT INCREASE IN THE FORM OF ADDITIONAL PROPERTY TAX RELIEF, IT IS MY GOAL THAT THE HIGH-PERFORMANCE GOVERNMENT TEAM, COUPLED WITH THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KERNAN-SHEPHERD COMMISSION BY OUR STATE LEGISLATURE, WILL PRODUCE ENOUGH SAVINGS FOR A REPEAL OF THE REST OF THAT TAX.

ONE OF THE WAYS WE REMAIN IN TOUCH WITH CITIZENS THROUGHOUT MARION COUNTY IS THROUGH THE "MAYOR'S NIGHT OUT."

EVERY MONTH, ALL THE DEPARTMENT HEADS AND I, GO TO A DIFFERENT NEIGHBORHOOD AND HEAR QUESTIONS FROM CONSTITUENTS ON EVERYTHING FROM POTHOLES TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

ONE SIGNIFICANT CHANGE WE MADE AFTER HEARING FROM CITIZENS INVOLVES A PROJECT ALREADY UNDERWAY WHEN WE TOOK OFFICE TO INSTALL REMOTE MONITORING STATIONS – 30-FOOT TALL METAL POLES -- IN PEOPLES' YARDS.

INITIALLY, WE WERE CONVINCED FROM THE WAY THE PROPOSAL WAS PRESENTED THAT THIS WAS THE ONLY WAY TO PROCEED.

AFTER HEARING THE OUTCRY FROM THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE HAD TO LIVE WITH ONE OF THESE STRUCTURES, WE WENT BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD, AND FOUND ANOTHER WAY TO MEET OUR NEEDS WITHOUT INCONVENIENCING THESE CITIZENS.

A TRUE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND ITS CONSTITUENTS IS MORE THAN LISTENING THOUGH. IT ALSO INVOLVES BEING TRANSPARENT AND HONEST.

SOON WE WILL ANNOUNCE THE DATES FOR INDYSTAT WHICH ARE ESTABLISHED PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR CITY GOVERNMENT AND WE WILL MAKE THESE RESULTS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

WE ARE ALSO GOING TO HAVE BUDGET REVIEWS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC SO THAT EVERYONE CAN SEE HOW WE ARE SPENDING YOUR MONEY.

TO INCREASE THE LEVEL OF TRUST OUR CITIZENS HAVE FOR THEIR PUBLIC OFFICIALS, WE HAVE ALSO INTRODUCED A COMPREHENSIVE ETHICS PACKAGE. THIS WILL GIVE CITY-COUNTY EMPLOYEES, AS WELL AS ELECTED OFFICIALS, CLEAR DIRECTION ON WHAT IS ETHICAL BEHAVIOR.

THIS WILL ALSO GIVE THE PUBLIC A CLEAR VIEW OF WHO IS INFLUENCING THEIR GOVERNMENT BY REQUIRING LOBBYISTS TO REGISTER AND GIFTS TO BE REPORTED.

BY IMPROVING ON THE FUNDAMENTALS: REDUCING CRIME, BALANCING OUR BUDGET, AND MAKING GOVERNMENT MORE TRANSPARENT, WE WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE INDIANAPOLIS STRONGER.

IF WE ARE TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE IN THE FUTURE, HOWEVER, WE NEED TO EXPAND THE IDEA OF WHAT INDIANAPOLIS CAN BE.

AS A MARINE, I TRAVELED ALL OVER THE WORLD, AND ONE THING THAT STRUCK ME WAS HOW THE WORLD, IN THE WORDS OF THOMAS FRIEDMAN, IS GETTING FLATTER.

IF INDIANAPOLIS IS TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE 30-40 YEARS FROM NOW, WE MUST DEDICATE OURSELVES NOW TO INCREASING OUR CITY'S INTERNATIONAL PROFILE.

THIS MUST BE A TWO-FOLD PROCESS.

FIRST, WE MUST IMPROVE THE CULTURAL FLAVOR OF INDIANAPOLIS. THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN A DESTINATION FOR PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.

IRISH IMMIGRANTS FOUNDED ST. JOHN'S DOWNTOWN IN 1837, IN 1910 IMMIGRANTS FROM GREECE ESTABLISHED THE HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, AND IN 1999 THE INDIANAPOLIS SIKH COMMUNITY BUILT A NEW HOME ON THE SOUTHEAST SIDE.

WE NEED TO MAKE OUR ETHNIC COMMUNITIES MORE VISIBLE TO THE REST OF THE CITY. ONE WAY WE ARE DOING THAT IS BY INCREASING ETHNIC DIVERSITY ON OUR BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS. BUT WE MUST ALSO INCREASE OUR VISIBILITY ABROAD.

THAT IS WHY I HAVE TASKED OUR DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS TO EXPAND THE SISTER-CITY PROGRAM. CURRENTLY WE HAVE FOUR SISTER CITIES: TAIPEI, TAIWAN; COLOGNE, GERMANY; MONZA, ITALY; AND PIRAN, SLOVENIA.

IN THE PAST, THIS PROGRAM HAS NOT BEEN VERY ACTIVE, NOR HAS IT BEEN USED AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL TOOL. WE ARE GOING TO CHANGE THAT.

THE MISSION OF OUR SISTER CITIES PROGRAM IS TO PROMOTE THE GLOBAL REACH OF INDIANAPOLIS BY NOT ONLY CREATING AWARENESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY EXISTING IN THE CITY; BUT ALSO BY CULTIVATING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD THAT PROMOTE INDIANAPOLIS AND BUILD ON OUR INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE. WE MUST BUILD A CITY THAT ATTRACTS THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE GLOBE.

IF THE FIRST 100 DAYS HAVE SHOWN ME ANYTHING, IT IS THAT OUR FUTURE IS BRIGHT. IF WE ARE TO REACH OUR POTENTIAL, IT WILL TAKE ALL OF US WORKING TOGETHER.

I INVITE ALL OF YOU TO COME TO A MAYOR'S NIGHT OUT; CALL THE MAYOR'S ACTION CENTER, OR CONTACT US THROUGH OUR WEBSITE.

THIS IS YOUR GOVERNMENT AND I ENCOURAGE ALL OF YOU TO GET INVOLVED.

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