

Believe in Lansing: Inaugural Speech of Mayor Virg Bernero

LANSING - Mayor Virg Bernero today delivered the following remarks at the City of Lansing 2006 Inaugural Celebration at the Lansing Center in downtown Lansing:

Thank you so much for being here on this day of new beginnings. Whether you came from down the street, across town or across the state, I thank each of you for helping us celebrate Lansing today.

I am delighted to be celebrating today with the love of my life, my wonderful wife and Lansing's First Lady, Teri Bernero. With us are our daughters Kelly and Virginia. They are my number one source of inspiration and support. Thank you for always being there for me.

Special thanks to our Master of Ceremonies, Michigan's First Gentleman Dan Mulhern. Mr. Mulhern and the Governor are doing double-duty today. The Governor has two inaugurals in the Detroit area, and Dan was kind enough to join us here in Lansing.

Also, special thanks to Inaugural Co-Chairs Kelly Rossman and Gregory Eaton and the Planning Committee for putting this event together. Thank you for sharing some of our precious holiday time and energy with me and the City of Lansing.

Thanks also to the many sponsors, participants, and countless others who have helped make today possible. Your generosity is much appreciated.

I want to take a moment to recognize the outstanding leadership and support of my transition leaders, David Hollister and Don LeDuc. Dave Hollister was the architect of the transition and is totally engaged in the process. He is also my Advisor-in-Chief. I feel very fortunate to have the benefit of his advice, support and experience.

Don LeDuc's leadership has had a giant impact on Lansing. This quietly effective man at the helm of Cooley Law School is a visionary not just for Cooley, but also for downtown Lansing. He is a constant source of knowledge and impartial, balanced input.

These gentleman have a burning desire to see Lansing succeed just as I do.

Together, they make up the best transition leadership that any new mayor could ever hope for. David, Don, thank you for what you do for this community and what you have done for me.

When it comes to answering the call to duty, Lansingites step up like no other. Over 500 citizens have joined my transition process and are currently working on recommendations

for some of our most vexing challenges. I have always believed we have the talent in this community to tackle most any issue, especially when we all pull together.

Would the members of my transition team - leadership, staff, committee chairs and members - please stand and be recognized.

Thank you for answering the call, and for spending some of your holidays in service to Lansing. And thanks for believing in me.

I am blessed to receive so much encouragement in this new endeavor. People often stop me at the store or elsewhere in the community to say good luck, Godspeed or some other positive word. Occasionally, someone will remind me what a big job I've taken on. And they're right. Thank God I don't have to do it alone. Will the outstanding members of my new city government leadership team please stand up.

These talented individuals represent some of the very best our community has to offer. They share my belief that Lansing is poised for rebirth. Their collective knowledge, experience, energy and optimism will help propel our community vision forward.

Their efforts - combined with that of the hardworking men and women who currently serve our city - will be key to our success. Thank you for answering the call. I know you will give your all for this city.

I want to congratulate my newly elected and re-elected colleagues who will join me in leading Lansing forward -- Sandy Allen, Brian Jeffries, Kathie Dunbar Tim Kaltenbach and Chris Swope. You have earned the trust of Lansing voters, and I look forward to working with each of you and the entire Council in good faith and in the spirit of true cooperation. We have a big job to do -- together.

And I'm confident that by working together, we will help Lansing reach its full potential as a great mid-western Capitol City.

I am humbled by the responsibilities that Lansing citizens have entrusted me with. I will not let you down.

We are the inheritors of a great legacy, this proud American city, Lansing, Michigan, a city that more than 100 years ago became an economic powerhouse built on the bedrock foundation of the automobile industry, a world-class research university and the state Capital.

Our legacy was created by visionary entrepreneurs like R.E. Olds, generous citizens like J.W. and Sarah Potter, who bequeathed the land that is today Potter Park Zoo, and leaders like John Hannah, who turned Michigan Agricultural College into Michigan State University, our world-class research university. This same visionary spirit is at work in our community today.

Over the course of the campaign and the weeks of the transition, I have come to believe in Lansing as never before. I believe in our community. I believe in our people. And I believe in our incredible potential. Just look at who we are and what we have here in our hometown:

State government, General Motors, Cooley Law School, Accident Fund Co. of America Headquarters, Michigan State University, Lansing Community College, Davenport College, Impressions Five Museum, Sparrow Hospital, Ingham Regional Medical Center, the Lansing Center and the greatest, most skilled and diverse workforce anywhere.

Our biggest fault as a city, and maybe as human beings, is our failure sometimes to believe in ourselves and invest in our own potential.

The world is changing fast, and sometimes we worry about being left behind. We worry for old dogs like us and even more, we worry about our children. Sometimes we wish we could "stop the world, so we could get off," as the old song said.

But the world isn't stopping. And it isn't slowing down.

So it's time, ladies and gentlemen, my friends, it's time we start running to catch up.

And catch up we will. We will win the race for Lansing's future. We will leverage all of our assets. We will be the hub of the wheel once again.

We will grow this city by design and not by accident. We will put out the welcome mat for business expansion and grow our economy. We will improve our downtown and riverfront to the point that downtown Lansing will become downtown to mid-Michigan.

We will work to improve our neighborhoods and schools so that Lansing becomes the best city in Michigan in which to live, work, learn and raise a family. We will become one of the great Midwestern capitol cities.

We will work with our regional partners to deliver better public services at lower cost.

We will look for every opportunity to collaborate, cooperate, coordinate and yes, even consolidate for greater efficiency because that is what leaders are called upon to do and because that is what tough budget times demand.

The challenges that lie ahead will likely be the greatest our community has experienced in generations. The coming years promise to be a time of change, a time to reassess who we are and what we're capable of; a time to find our footing in this global economy.

The status quo is no longer a viable option. We just don't have the luxury of doing things the same old way anymore.

Just as our predecessors found strength, the courage and the wisdom to conquer the challenges of their day, so I am confident we too will rise to the challenges of ours.

So I hope you'll join me in accepting the challenge, in embracing change. I hope you'll join me in believing in Lansing and more importantly, believing in YOU.

Lansing, Michigan is unique. We have incredible potential. Reaching that potential starts with the magic of believing. I hope you'll join me and Believe in Lansing.