



Inaugural Speech - January 1, 2014

On this bitter cold day, in this historic building, among this distinguished crowd of dignitaries, community leaders, family, friends and fellow citizens, I am both honored and humbled to place myself at your service as the 75th mayor of our great city. I am grateful for the trust you have bestowed in me and the support you have given me.

I thank Mayor Jennings for his 20 years of leadership and for his cooperation and guidance during this transition. I also thank my family, many of whom have traveled from far and wide to share this day with me; my son, Jay, and husband Bob for their loving and unfaltering support; and my parents, who are with me today not only in spirit but in the person I have become – the embodiment of their faith, guidance and abiding love.

Much has been said and written about the fact that I am the first woman mayor in Albany's 328 year history. While I hope that ultimately I am judged by the work that I do, I know that it is important for women to lead. I also know I didn't shatter this glass ceiling by myself. It was chiseled away at by women who came before me, and by those who believe that diversity in government leads to better government. Nelson Mandela once said

"I like friends who have independent minds because they tend to make you see problems from all angles." Diversity is like that too – it provides a wealth of knowledge shared through many lenses allowing us to see more clearly and lead more justly.

I am also mindful of the fact that I am only the fourth person to take this oath of office in nearly three quarters of a century, and while leaders may not have changed much during that time, our City certainly has. Our population is far more diverse and so is our community. We are not only a center for government, but a leader in healthcare and higher education. We are home to the world renowned College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering – our hosts here this morning – doing work that the passengers who once waited for trains in this very building could not have imagined possible.

And now our beloved city enters a new chapter in its great and storied history. It is a challenging chapter, and there is much work to do. As we begin 2014, our structural deficit stands at more than \$16 million and our rainy day fund will be depleted by the end of the year. Vacant, blighted and abandoned buildings mar far too many of our once vibrant, diverse and historic neighborhoods. One in four of our residents live at or below the poverty level, and many more struggle to support their families. And property taxes are so high that many families and businesses simply cannot afford to locate here.

But we also have tremendous opportunity. New mixed-use residential development projects downtown and in Park South offer the promise of new jobs and a growing tax base. Two weeks ago, Governor Cuomo announced that construction will start on a new downtown convention center in June, and that eight prime acres of downtown land will be available for redevelopment. Our school district is under the leadership of a dynamic new superintendent who is determined to make Albany the best school district in which to learn and work by 2020. And we have renewed our commitment to re-connect with our waterfront and make it a recreation destination for residents and visitors alike.

Paramount to the success of our city and the strength of our neighborhoods is access to these exciting opportunities. As Mayor, I'm committed to ensuring that new jobs in Albany mean new jobs for our residents; that equity and social justice guide our economic development decisions; and that we ensure that every child in our community graduates from high school ready for college or a career.

There is much work to do – creating a city government we can afford, bringing city hall into the 21st century and changing the way we deliver services to our residents and businesses will require hard work not only from me, but from many of you here today. And I know that our great city work force is up to the task. I'm privileged to lead the fine men and women who keep us safe, plow our streets, pick up our garbage, provide recreation programs to our children, and do all the other things – many of them invisible to our residents, that make this city work.

In his 1937 inaugural address, Franklin Roosevelt said “Government is competent when all who compose it work as trustees for the whole people.” In taking this oath today, I have made a solemn vow to commit myself to that work. Daunting as the task may be, I am motivated by another quote from Nelson Mandela:

"It always seems impossible until it's done."

Thank you