

STATE OF THE CITY 2019

January 15, 2019

Thank you everyone. To my mother Mary [Walsh], my brother John [Walsh], and to Lorrie [Higgins]: Thank you for never letting me forget where I come from. Thank you for always being there for me. I love you.

Governor [Charlie] Baker and Constitutional Officers; Speaker [Robert] DeLeo, President [Karen] Spilka, and our delegation at the State House; Ambassador [Ray] Flynn and Mrs. [Catherine] Flynn; President [Andrea] Campbell and the Boston City Council: Thank you for being here.

To the veterans and gold star families with us tonight or watching at home, thank you for your service and your sacrifice.

To the employees of the City of Boston, thank you for your partnership and hard work.

To a team who inspired our City last year, and brought home a championship, congratulations: Massachusetts State Basketball Champions, TechBoston Academy. And congratulations to the Red Sox for winning the World Series.

To the people of Boston: thank you for the privilege of serving you these past five years. I love my job.

Every day, I get to go out into the neighborhoods to talk, listen, and work with the people of Boston. And every day, Bostonians walk through the doors of City Hall and share their hopes and dreams with me. They remind me how grateful I am to live my dream and walk through those doors as the son of immigrants.

I think of another door that opened. It was the morning after my election in 2013. I was in a hotel room and opened the door for the worker to deliver breakfast. Her name was Leti [Legesse] and she emigrated from Africa to follow her dream in Boston. She came around the cart and gave me a big hug. She was crying and she said, "we did it. We won. We are going to be mayor."

It hit home, right at that moment, what this job means. It means opening doors for more Bostonians to walk through, people of every race, creed, and class, changing a city, changing a nation. That's what Leti's union did, when they won their strike last year and set new national standards for hotel workers.

[One year ago](#), I pledged my second term to strengthening and expanding Boston's middle class.

Today, more people are working than at any time in our City's history; unemployment is 2.4%, the lowest ever recorded; we are ranked #2 in the nation for moving people up and into the middle class; and we've been named the best city in the entire world to find a job.

We have thrown open the doors of opportunity and Bostonians are surging through to live their dreams and lead us forward. And because we are drawing on more of our people's strength, the state of our City is stronger than ever.

Our City's success is our motivation: to aim higher, work harder, and make sure every single person in our City gets a full, fair shot at these opportunities we are creating. That's how we truly succeed. That's how we are determined to lead.

Today, our leadership is needed more than ever. It's a pivotal time in our country. Too many people, in too many communities, are being left behind. Yet, instead of being called to unify, we're driven further apart. Instead of solutions, we are offered scapegoats. And our democracy, that we fought for right here in Boston, that generations of veterans defended with their lives, that Civil Rights and women's rights marchers risked everything to be part of, is under attack. A government that's supposed to be "of the people, by the people, for the people" is shut down.

The state of our City is strong, but I'm concerned about the state of our union. What happens in Washington, we feel on the streets of Boston. But here's what matters more: what we do in Boston can change this country. We've done it before, and we'll do it again, because in this time of uncertainty and division, Boston offers a way forward. We are welcoming more voices and expanding our democracy. We are committed to leaving no one behind. And we are not just surviving, we are thriving.

There's no federal housing policy, none. But Boston's moving forward. We've created [more affordable homes than any time on record](#).

There's no national infrastructure plan — nothing. But in Boston, we're rebuilding roads and bridges, [making our streets work for bikes and buses](#), and opening parks and libraries all across our City. [Smart fiscal management](#) has unlocked historic investments while keeping homeowner taxes among the lowest in the state.

The White House turned its back on climate change. But in Boston, we believe in science. Our [Resilient Harbor Plan](#) will protect us from floods and we have a strategy to be [carbon-free by 2050](#).

We've shown that differences don't have to divide us. When we come together, anything is possible. That's democracy in action.

It's how we built this administration.

We won office in a coalition that wasn't supposed to be possible. Working people — black, white, Latino, and Asian — came together. We created the most diverse administration in Boston's history, [from the cabinet to the front lines](#). We listened to the voices of every community. We took on Boston's toughest, long-standing challenges, and we began changing our City.

In a national crisis of police-community relations, we committed to [lifting people up, not locking people up](#).

Five years later, our police officers have taken over 4,100 guns off the street and we've put thousands more young people on pathways to opportunity. The result? Arrests are down 25 percent and our crime rate came down by 25 percent as well.

I know for some, the pain remains real — even one life lost is too many. So our path forward must be to build even more trust with the community, even more opportunity for our young people, and even stronger partnerships in our neighborhoods.

Less than a decade ago, neighborhood libraries were slated for closure. We listened to the residents who cherish them. Today, not only are they open, we invested [over \\$100 million in renovations for libraries](#) in Mission Hill, Brighton, Roslindale, Dorchester, Roxbury, [Chinatown](#), and other communities. That's in addition to a \$78 million renovation of our historic central library in Copley Square, where there's more to come.

Five years ago, many artists did not feel seen or heard by City Hall. We changed that with an Arts and Culture cabinet; an [Artists-in-Residence program](#) for City departments; and Boston's first commitment to include art in every public building project. We made Boston an arts leader again.

For many years, the condition of our parks was a cause for concern. Now we're investing \$28 million in Boston Common and another \$28 million in Franklin Park. We've added so much open space in our neighborhoods that, last year, we became the only city on the East Coast where [every single resident lives within a 10-minute walk to a park](#).

When we took office, the Boston Public Schools had not been on a regular construction plan in 40 years. Two-thirds of our schools were built before World War II. Many lack basic amenities like gyms and cafeterias that students in the suburbs enjoy. That's an injustice.

So we listened to parents, teachers, and students tell us [what they envision](#), and we more than doubled our building budget. Already, we've spent over \$300 million on brand new schools, major renovations, and modern furniture. Another \$800 million is on the way to give the children of Boston the great schools they deserve.

We are opening doors to new schools, new libraries, new homes, and new jobs. And we're listening to new voices. It's not always easy or comfortable. But a more open conversation means better solutions for our City. It's the sign of a more vibrant democracy. And it's working.

You hear it in the voices of students at the [new Dearborn STEM Academy in Roxbury](#), and soon at [Boston Arts Academy in the Fenway](#). You see it in the public art at the [new Jamaica Plain library](#). You feel it in a redesigned [Central Square in East Boston](#).

Let's never lose sight of how far we've come, how far-reaching our leadership has been, and how deep our obligation is now to stand together and keep leading.

We put social justice at the heart of our vision because a more equal conversation means a more resilient city.

So we'll keep leading the fight to [defend immigrants](#); we'll continue our groundbreaking work to achieve gender equality; and we'll never stop protecting the rights, and embracing the identities, of our LGBTQ community.

We stand strong against the growing evil of hate crimes in our country. This year, we'll re-activate the City's Human Rights Commission. It will provide a forum for Bostonians to address discrimination and secure the promise of equality.

Today is Martin Luther King Jr.'s 90th birthday. Soon, we will have a major memorial to Dr. [King and Coretta Scott King on Boston Common](#). It will be a tribute to their time in our City, where they met, fell in love, and formed their vision.

It's one part of a larger cultural shift that started with our dialogues on race. To make sure our City's workforce reflects our City's people, we created an Office of Diversity, we're diversifying our EMS team, we revived the Boston Police Cadet program, and now, we're proposing a [first-ever Fire Cadet program](#). We're making [City contracts](#) and public land more accessible for people of color and women. And in the coming weeks, I will sign an executive order to require all City employees be trained on how to recognize and correct disparities in City services.

This work is gaining national attention. I'm proud that we have been named a finalist for the 2020 NAACP convention. I ask all of you to join me in letting the NAACP know how welcome they will be in Boston.

We are changing Boston's culture for the better. Our City Council is the most diverse it's ever been, in background and in experience. Council members are attorneys, teachers, housing advocates, small business owners, and veterans. Our partnership is getting results, from adopting the Community Preservation Act, to regulating [short-term rentals](#), to making historic school investments.

Our State House delegation reflects our City's diversity, strength, and values, as they lead the fight for education funding, public transit, and the environment.

Our talented public safety leaders are national voices of progress. We have an African-American sheriff, Steve Tompkins; Boston's first African-American Police Commissioner, Willie Gross; and now, the state's first woman of color District Attorney, Rachael Rollins. And, Massachusetts' [first African-American woman in Congress is Boston's own Ayanna Pressley](#).

My goal for the work ahead is to make sure social progress and middle class opportunity grow together.

We set a precedent with Amazon's new building on the South Boston waterfront. Now, we not only require funds for job training; it must be training that helps local residents fill those new jobs. It's part of our mission to get [20,000 Bostonians into better paying jobs by 2022](#).

This year, we'll bring the policy to the people, with a Mobile Economic Development Center. We'll be in every neighborhood, with job training and business workshops, like how to open a restaurant or compete for a City contract.

We support small businesses because they lift up our neighborhoods. Recently we helped the Fernandez family make over an entire block in Jamaica Plain for their second supermarket. And Bill Banfield will soon open a live jazz restaurant in the City's own Bolling Building in Dudley Square. They're here, and I want to thank them for their partnership.

We're serious about growing our middle class. We'll create 1,000 new homeowners in the next five years, by building more affordable homes and providing more financial help. I've seen this work change lives. Last summer, I had the chance to visit with Patricia Brown in the brand-new home she bought in Mattapan with the help of

our [Boston Home Center](#). I want to thank Patricia for welcoming me in, and I want to challenge her grandson Gabryel to a rematch in our slam dunk contest.

Boston is a community for every generation. This year we'll launch Boston's Age Strong Commission, formerly the Elderly Commission. This revamped office will serve our seniors' needs and draw on their tremendous strength. I want to thank the members of our first [Senior Civic Academy](#), and the volunteers in our City Hall greeters program who are here.

When we come together, we can change lives. Five years ago, Boston had a shelter system for the homeless. Today, we have a [housing strategy](#). Working with our provider partners, we've housed over 1,600 chronically homeless people. There's more to come. A year ago, we launched the Boston's Way Home Fund. The plan was to raise \$10 million over four years, for supportive housing. After just one year, we've already raised over \$5 million.

I want to thank Boston's business community for stepping up in a big way to get us this far. I invite everyone to please donate at [BostonsWayHomeFund.org](#) and help end homelessness in our time.

When I say no one left behind, I mean no one, because I believe in recovery with all my heart.

We put in place outreach systems to bring hope and help to thousands suffering from addiction. We are [suing the opioid makers who fueled this crisis](#), because we are all paying for their greed. Our EMTs, police, and firefighters work day and night responding to overdoses and saving lives. We launched a mobile sharps team, to take needles off our streets. Those financial costs are steep. The human costs are steeper.

Let me tell you what I think about when I see a needle. That needle went into an arm. That arm belongs to a person. That person is suffering from an addiction, and it tore a whole family apart. That family needs our compassion and that person needs help and treatment.

So if you see a needle, call 311. We'll come and get it. But if you want to see the needles stop, then understand what it takes. It takes resources. It takes commitment. It takes a community.

Our plan for a [recovery campus on Long Island](#) is not about rebuilding a bridge. It's about rebuilding a life, by getting that person, and thousands of others across our region, the care they need to get well. That's what we're doing.

In Boston, we don't lead by ourselves.

We lead as the capital city and economic engine of a great Commonwealth. This year, we are proposing legislation to address the major challenges facing our City and state. [It's an ambitious agenda and a necessary agenda](#). To create affordable housing and keep tenants in their homes; to reduce violence; expand the middle class, and protect our environment; to invest in education for all our students. We're building a coalition of residents, activists, and legislators. I invite everyone to make your voices heard.

I also look forward to a new chapter in Washington.

Our delegation brings Boston and Massachusetts leadership to the nation in ways we haven't seen for years: heading key committees, representing new voices, and leading the fight for change.

Recently, we heard threats from Washington to use the 2020 Census as another weapon to weaken democracy. Our representation and our federal funding are at stake. So we have appointed a Census Liaison to make sure every resident of Boston is counted, because every resident of Boston counts.

One more thing: Governor Baker and I are going on a road trip. We have a Republican-led Senate and a Democratic House. So we'll go to Washington with a united front and call for the investments in housing, transit, and the environment that our future depends on. Instead of building a wall, let's show them how to build bridges.

Fighting for others and leaving no one behind.

To understand the power of these values, we have the greatest role models in the world. A few years ago, veterans in our City got together to plan a tribute to their fallen comrades. One of the founders was Sergeant 1st Class Eric Emond of the Green Berets. Eric's idea was to create not only a monument, a movement to support veterans and Gold Star Families. That's what they achieved in 2016, when we dedicated the [Mass. Fallen Heroes memorial](#) in South Boston.

On November 27 of last year, Eric was killed in action in Afghanistan. Now, his wife and three daughters are embraced by the movement he was a part of. Let us keep this family in our prayers and make Eric's supreme example of service our guiding star.

In five years together, we've made Boston a more compassionate, a more dynamic, a more democratic city.

We've listened, we've learned, and we're leading. I'm proud of what we've achieved. We should all be proud, and we should be ready to do more. Our City needs us, our country needs us, and we're just getting started.

As we begin our sixth year together, I want you to know my door remains open to every voice, every idea, every dream, always. I invite you in, to help make Boston stronger.

And to our national leaders, I say:

If you want to learn how to bring people together, not push them apart, look to Boston.

If you want to grow good jobs and rebuild the middle class, look to Boston. If you want to see how social justice strengthens all of us, look to Boston.

If you want to cut crime, protect the environment, lift Americans up, leave no one behind, and build a more perfect union?

Then look to the city of hope and heart. Look to the city of courage and champions.

At a time when cities must lead, [look to Boston](#), the leader of cities.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the City of Boston.