

# State of the District Address 2017 – Mayor Muriel Bowser – Medium

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Mayor Muriel Bowser  
As Prepared Remarks

Good evening, Washington, DC!

It's great to be here in the Theater of the Arts at the University of the District of Columbia.

Thank you, Jalia, for that wonderful introduction.

I also want to thank UDC President Ronald Mason for hosting us tonight. And for his tremendous leadership of our great University.

I know that with students as bright as Jalia ... and with a President as bold as President Mason, UDC is headed in the right direction.

As I begin, I would like to take a moment to say that our thoughts and prayers are with the families whose loved ones are not at home tonight.

We will continue to do everything we can to give you the support you need.

And we will continue to ensure that equal attention and priority is given to every child.

Last week, I put in place six steps to protect our youth so that your government:

- Creates an innovative reunification protocol,
- Coordinates its efforts through a multi-agency task force, and
- Supports non-profits that serve children and families

And most importantly, that we remind our young girls and boys that we understand how tough growing up can be—the challenges they face are tougher than even what most of us experienced when we were their age.

They should know that there are adults who care, and that we all want them to succeed.

We do all of this because it matters to me as Mayor, and it matters to the hardworking men and women of the Metropolitan Police Department who are bringing our missing children home.

More than two years ago, you trusted me to lead and chart the course for a shared vision of our great city.

You believed that prosperity is only realized when it is inclusive.

You believed that the middle class is worth protecting and fighting for.

And you believed that every family in Washington, DC deserved a fresh start.

Over the past two years, so many moments have overwhelmed me with gratitude.

Because you place your confidence in me.

You trust me with your aspirations—for yourselves, for your children, and even for their children.

You believe that, together, we can reimagine a future that is brighter, bolder greener, healthier, smarter, safer, stronger than even our most recent prosperous days.

I want you to know that I never take that trust for granted. And I would never seek to squander it.

Nearly 10 years ago, I took the oath of office for the first time as the Ward 4 Councilmember. And just two years ago, I swore that oath again as Mayor.

That day, I promised you that we would build a government for this city that makes all 681,000 residents proud.

I promised to knock down barriers to opportunity ... to protect the things that unify us ... to re-affirm the values that make Washington, DC the greatest city in the world... and soon to be the 51st state.

And tonight, I am proud to say that we have delivered on those promises and the State of the District is strong.

Without question, the past several years have been an exciting chapter in the ever forming history book of Washington, DC.

A growing collection of memories marked by our fight for Home Rule and now Statehood, bust and boom times, renewal, flight out of town, and flight back into town, a legendary 4-term mayor, a bow-tie mayor, a triathlon mayor; a king of the go go swing. Of blockbusting and desegregation. Of seekers of LGBTQ rights, and immigration justice.

Because of our DC values, we are the human rights capital. Our diversity alone does not make us great; our embrace of it does.

That's why, since Election Day this past November, we have worked to ensure that no one undermines our core DC values of fairness and equality, of mutual respect and justice, of falling down and getting back up, and of self-determination.

And that no one disrupts the character of Washington DC.

I'm guided every day by President Jefferson's words:

"On matters of style swim with the current, and on matters of substance, stand like a rock."

Last November, I was only the second Mayor to meet with the then President-elect Trump. I wanted to make it clear to him who we are:

-We are a self-sufficient CITY- COUNTY-STATE.

-We are tax-paying Americans.

-We are no more dependent on the Federal Government than any other state.

-We don't want anything special, just full access to our birthright.

-Full representation for the taxes that we pay.

-And the only way to get there is—is Statehood for the District of Columbia.

Now my job as mayor is to work with the White House and the Congress no matter who holds those seats. And to protect and fight for the values that we hold dear and to find common ground where it may exist.

They tell me President Trump likes to do things BIG. Well, we have some big league ideas for him too —

We call on the President and Congress to invest more in Metro. Increasing the federal government's financial commitment to Metro would be a win for the District and the region. And I am confident that Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao is the woman who can deliver.

We call on the President and Congress to do more for Metro than hold hearings, and we also call on the Governors of Maryland and Virginia to identify dedicated revenue rather than study what we already know: Metro needs greater investment for safety, reliability and capacity.

Isn't that right, Jack?

This is also the time to get a final plan in place, once and for all, that will put RFK Memorial Stadium campus back on the map.

We call on the President and Congress to expand their view of RFK and embrace a mix of uses, not just a stadium, but a more diverse plan that will ensure a vibrant future for the more than 100 acres on the Anacostia River.

We call on the President and Congress to fix FEDERAL roads and bridges. And to - Get the much-needed Beach Drive Renovation back on schedule, We call on the President and Congress to fund and replace their Potomac River Crossing—Memorial Bridge ...

and let the District take over major Federal Parks that public private partnerships can help us enliven at Franklin, Hains Point, Rock Creek, and Langston.

We call on the President and Congress to uphold our 3-sector school funding approach that enhances PUBLIC EDUCATION funding in DC.

We call on the President and Congress to be a part of our focus on Affordable Housing—don't eliminate Community Development Block Grants. And for the love of our great American Culture- FUND the ARTS!

And we call on the President and Congress to help us make American cities safer by investing in re-entry programs in the Federal Bureau of Prisons. This year, we will be proposing an innovative arrangement to bring our people back from the federal corrections system 6–12 months earlier to finish their sentences at a DC run facility that will be ready with intense re-entry services.

As I discussed with Robert White, our goal is to bring them back home to DC, so when they return home, they succeed.

So when our friends up on the Hill from Utah or Maryland's Eastern Shore tell you they are concerned about DC, tell them about their federal obligations in DC.

And in Trayon White's words. You tell them, "Don't just stand there, DO SOMETHING."

But if they ask you about our local issues—you tell them keep their HANDS OFF DC.

If they ask you about how we will advance a tax and regulate program for marijuana—stand with David Grosso and tell them to keep their HANDS OFF DC.

If their intrusion on how women get access to care persists, we will stand with Vince Gray and all who care about high quality health care services in all 8 wards, then we'll tell them HANDS OFF DC.

And just like we did weeks ago, when they attempted to overrule our law to regulate end of life decisions—I stood with Eleanor Holmes Norton, Phil Mendelson, and Mary Cheh to tell them to keep their HANDS OFF DC.

And as I told one million women at the Women's March—if the Congress can't help DC with our priorities, the best thing they can do is LEAVE US ALONE.

We need to remind them that we are a city that believes: where you are born shouldn't determine the kind of life you ultimately lead.

And we are a sanctuary city that's committed to protecting the rights of our immigrants, the underserved, and every single person whose contributions have been discounted or dismissed for way too long.

This is who we are. These are DC values. These are the priorities we are fighting for.  
Now is the time for a unified front.

Everyone knows I like a good fight. And just like all families, we fight sometimes.

Ask my good friend Phil Mendelson—down at the Wilson Building, we may disagree mightily with one another every now and then.

But let someone from the federal government or the Congress come after one of us ... they better be ready to take on all of us.

Isn't that right, Phil? Isn't that right DC?

So if the last several months have taught us nothing else, it is that now isn't the time to give in to the anxiety and chaos in the air.

We've learned that we are stronger than we thought we were and our fiscal discipline and good government has made us more resilient than we could have imagined.

We need everyone in this room and every Washingtonian to follow the advice of a new DC resident, First Lady Michelle Obama who said:

"...don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own."

My goal tonight isn't to diminish our collective challenges.  
I share many of your concerns and your anxieties.

But I want you to know that we are better prepared than ever to meet the demands of this moment.

Next week, I will present to the Council our 22nd balanced budget.

Last month marked the 20th year of clean audits for the District, and second consecutive year of no yellow book findings—that means no material weaknesses in our procurement, hiring, payment or any other critical system of our government. And that's a good government gold standard.

And we've proven ourselves to be exemplary stewards of our government's resources.

That means spending what we have. And spending it judiciously.

And that means not asking our taxpayers for a single penny more than we need or that we can use to achieve demonstrable improvements in the City's economic growth, inclusive prosperity, and world class city services.

That means making investments that make our city better and make our families stronger

... It means advancing the largest investment in public education in the District's history

...It means providing quality neighborhood services that make DC more affordable for singles, seniors, and families alike.

... and it means making sure calls are answered, trash and snow are picked up, grass is mowed, boilers are working, technology systems are strengthened against cyber attacks, systems are upgraded to hire the best of the best employees, pay people on time, and procure products and services.

...It means connecting more Washingtonians to job opportunities that put them back on the right track—through programs like the LEAP Academy, Career Connections, ASPIRE, and the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program.

And it means investing in young families —

Have you ever met someone who lived out in one of the Maryland or Virginia counties who told you—I used to live in DC—but then I had kids and moved. I say to them: You know we have kids in DC too.

Then, I add the billions of dollars we have spent on school modernizations, recreation center improvements, aquatic center transformation, and baseball, soccer, and football field remakes. Then I mention the remarkable playground installations across all 8 wards.

I tell them about the swelling public school enrollments and library sing, talk and read hours.

I tell them about the incredible world-class library transformations we've completed—and the new MLK library life center we will open in 2020.

And then I think about what they are saying and where they are pinched in DC—and one significant way is finding high quality childcare options.

Last year, I sat next to a high ranking Obama official during a White House dinner.

She raved about how lucky she was to get into one of the Centers supported by the Federal Government, and if she hadn't been able to—she wasn't sure what she would have done.

Things have changed in a lot of ways...when my mom and dad were raising five of us, with my mom working and going to school—right here at UDC.

My grandmother was there to help them with us kids. Now many families cannot call on trusted grandmas for help.  
To keep families in DC, we will have to attract more quality child care options.

I challenged my team to design a program to incentivize the creation of 1,300 more infant and toddler childcare opportunities across DC over the next 3 years.

Private providers tell us that the costs of meeting robust early childcare regulations are high—space and build out expenses are challenging—and training and maintaining high quality staff is increasingly difficult.

We accepted Elissa Silverman's challenge to find and make available DC government owned or controlled space a part of the MyChildcareDC pilot initiative.

I look forward to working with DC families to get these important ideas in place. Expanding access to childcare is something we can come together on and deliver for our families.

Now I know we've spent the better part of two years talking about universal paid family leave, and we share the DC Value that families should have the time they need to take care of a loved one ...

Now we may not agree on the best way to get there, but I am encouraged that our dialogue will continue.

My hope is that the path forward will not jeopardize our expanding pool of jobs or stunt the growth of our successful small businesses.

We want to make it easier for folks to follow in the entrepreneurial footsteps of people like Michael Haft and Harrison Suarez.

After serving in Afghanistan, the two Marines had an idea to open a coffee shop and roastery here in the city.

More than two years ago, they turned an old laundromat on Seventh Street into Compass Coffee ... a shop with a simple mantra: "Real Good Coffee. Made in DC."

Because as they explain it: "What we do is special and we're proud of it. We're proud to be from DC."

Michael and Harrison, where are you? ... thank you for your service ... and thank

you for creating jobs in DC.

So the theory goes—a rising tide lifts all boats. Now that may be true, but what we have seen is that some boats rise quickly and some hardly rise at all.

That's the story of DC's prosperity—the unequal distribution of benefits from a robust economy.

Our new 5-year economic development strategy takes this head-on and aims for inclusive prosperity. The strategy sets as a goal increasing the economic prosperity of African Americans in Washington, specifically by reducing double digit African American unemployment.

While the unemployment rate has declined in the District ... it is still disproportionately high among people of color and those without a high school diploma.

We see a geographic divide in our city that is greater than distance. You see unemployment in Ward 3 at 4.2% and unemployment in Ward 8 is 12.5%.

The good news is that unemployment in Ward 8 is down from 16.8% when I took office. The bad news is 12.5% is still too high, nearly 3 times what it is in Ward 3.

We can and must do better.

So when I read about statistics like this, I am reminded of what the Bible teaches us ...“faith without works is dead.” Or more colloquially... Talk is cheap. Do something.

So, unless we actively find ways to address the unique challenges that our underserved communities face, we'll never realize our true potential. Not harnessing the true talent of your entire team, is like the Wizards only putting three players on the court.

We have spent two years developing and implementing programs to help native Washingtonians and long-time residents be a part of our city's growing prosperity. We must stand together and act boldly to achieve inclusive prosperity, so we have or we will:

Expand training programs for DC residents for DC Government jobs like the LEAP program and the Fire and EMS and MPD cadet programs ... and we will require DC residency for more high salary jobs in DC government.  
Create the Green Book of Opportunities to list what goods and services DC government needs to procure, and procure them from DC-owned and DC-based businesses.

Increase HPAP's maximum loan amount for first-time home buyers to \$80,000.

Transform our TANF system to focus on getting residents back to work ... These residents are seeking a first chance, retraining, or ways out of our safety net, and we owe it to one another to get them on a pathway to the middle class.

Open the In3 Inclusive Innovation Incubator to nurture underrepresented start up companies and help them attract capital.

It's time for us to take another bold step.

And I am pleased to announce that we're partnering with UDC, WMATA, DC Water, leading infrastructure companies like Washington Gas and Pepco, labor unions, and trade associations to create the District of Columbia Infrastructure Academy.

When I was running for mayor I discussed this idea as a Public Works Academy.

We refined it and secured seed money in our recent merger settlement discussion, and now we will make the Academy a significant spoke in our portfolio of initiatives to reduce African American unemployment.

One might expect a struggling city to devote meager dollars to maintenance and infrastructure. There is no such excuse in cities thriving like ours.

I'm convinced that being born and raised here gave me a higher tolerance for bad alleys and pot holes. But 8 years of being a Ward councilmember gave me a new appreciation for tackling the city-owned infrastructure that impacts your family as soon as you leave your front door—sidewalks, lights, trees, alleys and roads. LOCAL ROADS—specifically.

DDOT estimates our main roads are in pretty good shape with only 7 percent in poor condition. We estimate that about 32 percent of our local roads get a POOR rating.

Our residential roads suffer from a lack of consistent funding and regularly scheduled maintenance.

With the budget I will present to the Council, we will fix all the roads that have a poor rating in just 5 years.

We will take lessons learned from AlleyPalooza, where we've improved more than 200 alleys in 2 years; we will be smart about coordination with planned developments and utility repairs, we will separate street and sidewalk and curb projects where it makes sense, and we will commit to using sustainable building materials and practices.

And make no mistake—we are committed to a balanced transportation network.

We've made our city safer for bikers and pedestrians with new bike lanes, upgraded traffic signals, an extension of the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail, a much-improved Metropolitan Branch Trail ... and we're getting closer to finishing the Klinge Valley Trail Project—And I'm sure I'll be there to celebrate with the Sierra Club and Mary Cheh this long promised, preservation project.

Last month, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of our streetcar ... it had its busiest month in January this year with almost 93,000 passengers ... we're expecting to reach the one million passenger mark in the next few weeks. And this year, we're making bus service easier and faster with \$2 million worth of improvements to the Metro bus line service ... and I want to send special thanks to Councilmembers Todd, Nadeau, Silverman and Evans—who pushed for new express bus service on 14th Street, which connects Wards 4, Ward 1 and Ward 2.

As we grow our economy, we want to ensure that our residents—whether you have been here for five generations or five minutes—can afford to live in Washington, DC.

We are forging a path to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. We are transforming our family homeless system and together we will end veteran homelessness. But we must do more to protect and preserve affordable housing.

I ran on the promise of committing \$100 million annually to the Housing Production Trust Fund. Our next budget will be the third one where we realize this commitment, but we're not just squirreling this money in the Fund. We are putting it to work.

For every \$100 million we invest, we are constructing and preserving more than 1,000 affordable housing units in all 8 wards.

So what I do not want lost in the numbers is that each unit that is preserved or constructed isn't a notch on my belt, it is a family or a senior who now has a safe, affordable place to live.

Today, I am committing an additional \$10 million dedicated solely to preservation in a new Housing Preservation Fund. This fund will leverage private investments yielding nearly \$40 million dollars for preservation efforts.

Because Anita Bonds will tell you: preservation means families who are here, can stay here.

I thank the Housing Preservation Strike Force for their recommendation about this fund.

To compliment the additional investment, we will also establish regulations for the District Opportunity to Purchase Act.

DOPA will give the District of Columbia government the right to purchase—again purchase, not take—units or buildings in order to preserve their affordability.

Along the way, we're continuing to fulfill our commitment to make DC more accessible for residents of every age.

Through Safe at Home, we've completed more than 334 projects that are helping seniors age in place. We've expanded transportation and know that in the years to come, there's still more to be done for senior property taxpayers and renters.

Like you, I was horrified to read residents' complaints about apartments in buildings owned by SANFORD Capital. Now, DCRA has inspected all of their buildings.

The good news is it doesn't look like any buildings have to be shuttered and people made homeless.

The bad news is there are lots of violations, years in the making that need immediate attention.

They have a choice ... FIX the violations ... FACE nearly half a million dollars in fines ... or SEE us in COURT. Lawyers in Karl Racine's office are primed and ready to go.

This year, we will strengthen DCRA's resources to address vacant nuisance properties and buildings where people live that do not meet our standards. As Mayor, I cannot promise you that bad things will not happen in our city. But I will commit to you that I lead a government that is transparent and effective in responding.

And when we do act, we do so with the best interest of residents in mind. That is why I became an ANC Commissioner, a Councilmember and now your Mayor. It is a DC value that I learned from my parents who served their neighbors and taught me that regardless of where I worked or what my title: Serve with integrity.

Your word and your good name are all that you have, so always do what you say you will do.

You've heard me say this before and I will say it again, it was our dogged commitment to two things that turned our city around—PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC SAFETY.

Last year we bid farewell to two outstanding leaders—who led an urban school district and a big city police force longer than most of the counterparts AND with much more success.

Kaya and Cathy—set the bar high, attracted the best teams, and drove up student enrollment and graduation rates and drove down mistrust and crime. Antwan and Peter will take DCPS and MPD to the next level.

We're focusing more on middle schools, investing in teachers and staff, and engaging parents. At MPD, we're focused on training up the next set of police leaders and new officers, and continuing to build trust among our force and our neighborhoods.

Chancellor Antwan Wilson and Acting Police Chief Peter Newsham, please stand up to be recognized. I ask you to give them the trust, the candid advice, and the elbow grease you've shared with me for the last 10 years. NOW if a 10-year focus on transforming our schools and making our force the best in the country changed our trajectory—What do we expect the next 10 years to look like?

Chancellor Wilson has embarked on a All-8 Ward listening tour. Community meetings. Student Leader meetings. Principal Meetings. Teacher Meetings ... All to help shape his thinking about our next 5-year strategic plan for DCPS. We're sharpening our focus on teaching foreign languages, creating hands-on experiences, and strengthening STEM and global education ... because we believe that the next generation of big thinking leaders, scientists, engineers, researchers, and innovators are being born right here in Washington, DC.

We're bolstering our investment in our middle schools and our high schools with stronger algebra curricula and after-school programs to ensure our students enjoy a well-rounded education.

We've expanded our incredible partnership with the Fillmore Arts Center ... today, students in every part of our city can access a high-quality arts education.

And we will put more technology in classrooms and in the hands of teachers, students and parents. Students—if you don't turn in your homework ... your mom's gonna know about it.

And none of this would be possible without our teachers—in DCPS and our public charter schools. I value their professionalism and their dedication to our children.

I am proud to recognize their good work on big stages like this, and in classrooms throughout the year.

And I will be even prouder to be the Mayor who after 6 years of trying can hammer out a new deal that continues to make them the best paid teachers in the region, AND the the most valued by their management and fellow Washingtonians.

Liz, let's keep pushing for a deal. Join me in giving our teachers a big round of applause.

Our new school buildings are things of beauty. The taxpayers of the District should be proud.

Since 2008, we've completed more than \$3.4 billion dollars of work and we have about \$1.5 billion to go.

Our current capital improvements program funds a completion of:  
All our comprehensive high schools with Coolidge starting this year.  
All of our middle schools including Jefferson and McFarland Middle schools.  
The transformation of Benjamin Banneker Academic High School and the opening of the Duke Ellington School of the Performing Arts.

This year, I am also proud to further increase the public charter school facility allotment by 2.2 percent this year, and lock that increase in for the next four years. Adding millions more to the school facilities all across the District. As well as make available more public buildings for public charter school use.

Now, the other pillar of the District's renaissance is public safety.

Last year, after a spike in homicides in 2015, I told you we would drive down crime by working together and with Safer/Stronger DC initiatives. And We did.

Many big cities can't say the same.

In 2016 alone, we saw a 10% decrease in all violent crime city-wide, with a 17% reduction in homicides and a 13% reduction in robberies.

Last year, I told you we would take over all of the DC Jail. And We did. For the first time in 20 years, there's no private entity running any part of our jail.

And soon we will replace the Jail with a facility that focuses on the type of re-entry services that make us safer.

I told you we would add more ambulances and improve the training of our first responders. And We did.

And for the first time, we are getting the right resources to the scene and we are dispatching those resources more quickly.

I told you we would double down on technology use. And We did by outfitting all of our patrol officers with body worn cameras, and hundreds of DC property owners received a rebate after installing security cameras on their residence or business.

I told you that we agreed with Councilmember McDuffie that prevention, mental health co response, and quick access to DC sponsored employment programs had to be a part of the solution. Many NEAR Act activities are underway, and now we will focus on mental health co-response.

And I told you we would combat the expected retirement bubble at MPD with strategic investments in recruitment and retention. And we have implemented successful retention programs with more on the way.

We won't compromise our standards, our vetting, or the professionalism of our force. We've come too far to risk backsliding.

Our continued recruitment programs will include more slots for DC residents in our Cadet Program.

We will recruit and retain new officers in those early years when they are more easily wooed by competing jurisdictions with additional housing help and tuition forgiveness.

We will continue our successful Senior Police Officer program for retirement eligible or newly retired officers who still have that fire in the belly to serve DC residents.

But we should not forget the best retention tool we have: Appreciation. If you see an officer—try to say thank you for your service.

In Chief Newsham's talks with the officers some commented on needing more light weight and easy to wear uniforms and gear and more attention to their locker rooms and facilities.

These investments are just small symbols of how much we value the risks they take to keep us all safe.

So we've done the things we'd said we'd do, so I know you will believe me when I ask you to do more.

Like so many of you, I was never more proud of MPD when they kept our city safe during the 2017 Inauguration and Women's March.

Literally hundreds of thousands of people safely exercised their First Amendment rights.

Some in red hats, some in pink hats, all made safer by our officers. I thank Charles Allen for rallying the Council to acknowledge MPD and all of our first responders for "Presidential Inauguration excellence in duty."

They faced challenging circumstances and as Charles' resolution reads, they "performed with great distinction."

And I'm equally proud of the brave men and women of our DC Fire and EMS Department who work alongside MPD.

To better support them and everything they do to keep us safe, we invested \$12 million into that department. This is the single largest investment in EMS reform in the city's recent history.

We can build on this progress by creating a Nurse Triage Center at the 911 Call Center. Until recently, our FEMS fleet, staffing, training and protocols have not kept up with our explosive population growth.

Chief Dean and his fantastic team have laid out a path to excellence for FEMS.

When seeking approval from the Council for more ambulances, we also promised a



closer look at how to make sure that all 911 callers actually needed an ambulance or needed the emergency room.

We know that not every call to 911 requires an ambulance.

And we know that, sometimes, callers would be better served by seeing their own physicians ... not going to the ER.

A nurse at the 911 Call Center can make sure everyone who needs an ambulance gets one, and that those who do not are referred to insurance provided transportation and community-based non-urgent care providers. Our calls to 911 are wildly out of proportion to our population, which compromises emergency services for everyone. We can't wait any longer to fix this problem.

Chief Dean also told me about an initiative that we had to start immediately if he was going to be the Fire Chief. And that is the Hands on Hearts program.

Your family member, your co-worker or your friend is likely to be the closest one to you in the case of a medical emergency.

So, to ensure that our residents are more prepared for the unthinkable, we launched Hands on Hearts to teach more Washingtonians about the basics of hands-only CPR.

More than 17,000 people have been trained.

Danette Purvis is one of them.

Last October, she enrolled in a training session. It was Danette's first time learning CPR.

And the very next day, she came to the aid of a co-worker who went into cardiac arrest.

She used her CPR training to save his life.

But Danette says she doesn't feel like much of a hero.

However, she knows if something like that happens again, in her words: "she's prepared to do even better."

Danette is here today ... Let's give her a round of applause.

Ladies and gentleman, tonight, I am pleased to report that the State of the District is strong. I know we haven't agreed on everything. I know there's so much more to do.

And we all know that our victories didn't happen overnight.

And they certainly don't come easy. Theodore Roosevelt said, "nothing in this world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty."

And because we've fought for so long to get here, I know we will work even harder to protect our prosperity and our progress.

I can say this with certainty because I've already seen it.

I've seen it in the young middle school student who just discovered her love for math and is now encouraging other students to find their passion.

I've seen it in the small business owner who is not only excited about growing her business for building her personal wealth, but is even more excited by her ability to employ people and change their lives and the opportunities available for their families.

I've seen it at Bunker Hill Elementary School with the orchestra students performing their hearts out with YO YO MA and having their minds and imaginations enlarged by the performing arts in school.

I see it in the 8 year old girls when they look at me and ask: what do you have to do to become Mayor?

I know there are so many more success stories out there ... and even more waiting to be born.

That's why in the days and weeks ahead, we must work together to ensure our city does even better and does better for all. We've celebrated so many achievements over these past two years.

But everything we are ... everything we stand for ... wouldn't be possible without our extraordinary DC government employees.

On behalf of my senior team—Beverly, Rashad, John, Mark—and my entire cabinet, I want to thank each of you for your unshakeable commitment and your enduring dedication to the residents of Washington, DC.

You make the nation's capital the truly amazing city that it is.

And to everyone here tonight and across the city, thank you again for granting us this opportunity ... for your honesty and your generosity ... your enthusiasm and your candor.

I could not be more proud to serve as your Mayor.

God bless you all. And God bless the District of Columbia.

Thank you.

***Follow @MayorBowser on Twitter. #DCValues***