

The Honorable Mayor Thomas M. Menino

State of the City Address

January 29, 2013

Prepared for Delivery

Governor Patrick, Attorney General Coakley, Treasurer Grossman, Auditor Bump, Senate President Murray, Speaker DeLeo, The Boston Delegation, Members of Congress, District Attorney Conley, members of the City Council, distinguished guests – especially our soldiers and veterans – and fellow residents.

Last year I said we would face tough times, and we have. I also said that our commitment to one another would carry us through, and it did. So I stand before you, a grateful Mayor.

I am forever grateful to my wife Angela. I ruined our trip, and she still hasn't kicked me out. She stood by me and our city like she always has.

I am grateful for my doctors, nurses, therapists, and hospital staff. They embody the words of a young president who spoke of God's work truly being our own.

I am grateful to our public servants. They didn't seek the spotlight, and they didn't miss a beat.

I'm especially grateful for all of the visitors, the prayers, and the hundreds of cards and well wishes that poured in day after day. I am just Tommy Menino from Hyde Park. I can't tell you how humbled I am and how lucky I feel. I don't need fancy words to say this to all of you: Thank you. You pulled me through.

The outpouring of concern and support was truly incredible, but the truth is those cards said more about Boston than me. They are full of pride for our city, and they should be. Because from Orient Heights to Dorchester Heights, we continue to make great strides.

Last year, Boston broke ground on \$1.6 billion worth of development. Twenty-two major projects put thousands of construction workers back on the job. Our real estate market is stronger than any place in the country.

Hundreds of companies and thousands of jobs have come to the Innovation District. PayPal is along the Greenway. Converse is coming to Lovejoy Wharf. New Balance is expanding in Brighton. Digital companies are making downtown their new home. Innovation is raising our game not just on our waterfront, but across our city.

In our neighborhoods, we are making investments to keep Boston a livable city for families. We upgraded the Shelburne Community Center in Roxbury. We broke ground on a stunning new library in East Boston with a fantastic reading porch and outdoor classroom. And we welcomed 40,000 new library cardholders this past year. In West Roxbury, work is underway to improve Billings Field, and soon we'll open Draper Pool to the park around it.

Our Neighborhood Response Teams have raised the quality of life, and our public safety strategies have reduced violent crime. Two thousand units of housing are under construction across our city.

Think about this for just a moment. Think about how much has changed: The Orchard Gardens School is a national success story. One of our school system's biggest challenges is over-enrollment. We've gone from what some have called a food backwater to a national leader on food policy and food innovation. Condos are selling out in Downtown Crossing, of all places. Our South Boston waterfront is a hotspot. There is a crane over Dudley Square. Young people are flooding, not fleeing the city. Older Bostonians are returning.

Our progress is real. Our future is bright. The state of our City is striking, sound, and strong.

Uncertainty around the globe and gridlock in Washington create real challenges. We shouldn't excuse Washington for their actions, but neither should we make them an excuse for our in-action. We shouldn't focus on the inability of others to get things right. We should do right by the abilities of people here in Boston. Our human potential is enough to power Boston's growth if we muster the courage and the creativity to unleash it. Others can help us get better, but only we can make us great.

Our most important collection of talent lies in our young people. So our first task is improving public education in our city. Our 2010 reforms created turnaround schools, launched in-district charter schools, overhauled teacher evaluation, and won new resources for our classrooms. The best way to celebrate those accomplishments is not with applause, but with an encore.

I am fighting to gain the power to extend freedoms in hiring and learning time to many more schools across the district. If a school has to fail before it gets flexibility, it's not just the school that is failing, it's us!

I am also proposing to eliminate the cap on In-district charter schools, like UP Academy. They took over the Gavin School in South Boston, taught the same kids and had great success. UP had the highest growth in math of any middle school in the state.

These changes alone would extend the school day in Boston and increase quality at dozens of schools. But taken together with a historic change in our student assignment process, they would truly take our school system – and the lives entrusted to it – to another level.

One year ago, I appointed perhaps the most impressive group of Bostonians who have ever worked on any project in our city. They met with education experts, diversity experts, and, above all, thousands of kid experts – our parents. Please join me in recognizing our External Advisory Committee on School Choice.

In the coming days, they will make their final recommendation to Superintendent Johnson and the School Committee. To those who are understandably wary of the city's history around school choice, recall the words of Representative and historian Byron Rushing. In a Roxbury auditorium last March he said, "To get this right we are not going back to anything. We are creating something new."

Let us stay focused on moving forward with that process and on improving quality in all of our schools. This year I will include in my budget new Quality Improvement Funds. They will support great teaching, leadership training, extended time, partnerships, and upgraded facilities at our schools that need higher levels of support. This will be the start of a new \$30 million investment as we continue to make all of our schools quality schools.

In 2013, we will also make Boston the premier city for working women.

I am surrounded by strong women, starting with Angela, Susan, Lisa, and my granddaughters. My cabinet includes many remarkable women. Some I have known for years. Others have joined us more recently. (I didn't find any of them in binders.) This year we elected our first woman United States senator.

To outshine all cities we must unlock the potential of all of our women. Women make up more than half of Boston's residents, but less than a third of our business owners. We can do better. Recent college graduates are earning less than their male classmates in the same jobs and with the same degrees. We can do better than that. And when mothers pursue their careers, many struggle to find affordable, quality childcare. We can certainly do better.

Tonight, I'm announcing a set of actions to support Boston's women.

First, I am launching "Women on Main", a new networking forum for our women-owned businesses in Boston's vibrant Main Streets districts. We will also use the new Boston Innovation Center to open up new fields to more women and better connect them to one another.

We must also make it easier to find quality child care. I will launch a \$1 million Capital Resources for Educators fund. It will offer low interest loans for safe, quality environments for our children.

This year, we're going to be the very first municipality to help young women negotiate for fair pay.

Finally, I'm proud to say that we will create our first-ever Women's Workforce Council. I will invite business owners, executives, and young leaders to help me advocate with the women of our city. Among other steps, we will make Boston the first city in the country to achieve pay equity for women!

The most powerful way to unleash a person's talent is to prepare them for a job. We have many programs and places that do this work, but we can do more. I believe Boston's Centers for Youth and Families can be the key. We will help update our neighbors' skills and our community centers, too.

As a first step, I am pleased to announce a pilot with Harvard, MIT, and edX that will bring free courses to community centers. Open, online learning has made the whole world a classroom, and we should give our residents front row seats. They would get more than access to knowledge and skills; they would get time with faculty and job trainers.

Imagine a day when our community centers are little campuses in their own neighborhoods, full of vibrant groups of neighbors, exchanging ideas and making progress together. This initiative is a first, important step in that direction. We must connect adults in our neighborhoods with the opportunities of the knowledge economy.

The most tragic loss of human potential is when it is lost to violence. Sandy Hook is now seared into our memory. So are Woolson Street and Harlem Street. Wayne LaPierre and the NRA say more guns are the answer. That is crazy! Every victim of gun violence and their families know that's crazy. Gabriel Clarke's mother, Shirley, is with us tonight. She knows that's crazy. After her son was shot, she called for peace. And LaPierre goes on T.V. after Sandy Hook and called for more guns? Any member of Congress who doesn't vote for gun reforms is saying that she was wrong and he was right. We can't let that happen.

Mayor Bloomberg and I will keep working with almost one thousand mayors and over one million Americans. Life-saving solutions, which have long been within our reach, are now within our grasp. Stand with us on guns and say enough is enough.

We also have to say enough is enough in our own neighborhoods. Two weeks ago Boston Police joined federal and state partners to sweep 27 criminals off the streets of the Bowdoin-Geneva community. The cooperation of these public safety officials is matched only by the commitment of the good people who live in that neighborhood. I am pleased to announce tonight that the task force will extend its work for the rest of the year. Those who bring guns and drugs into our neighborhoods should know we will bring you to justice.

Our comprehensive prevention strategies are working. Homicides are down in Boston, again. Violent crime and property crime are down 28 percent over the last 7 years. We will continue this progress with a focus on quality of life issues. They can seem small, but I know they make a big difference to your sense of safety and security. We will keep a strong presence in our neighborhoods, with 68 new recruits joining the force this year. I want to thank the Boston Police, and everybody who hits the street every day: our social workers, our trauma counselors, and our violence intervention personnel.

We have all of these things to do for each other this year and more.

We'll work with partners to support teens with autism in summer jobs, and we'll expand our inclusive after school programs. We'll adapt to meet the needs of a growing population of seniors – projected to be 100 thousand by 2017. We'll launch a new effort to make dozens more city services “same day services.” We'll update our climate work to reflect the threats we face from storms like Sandy. We'll make available one million square feet of city-owned property for development into homes for middle class families.

The point is this: if we help our neighbors learn more, produce more, and succeed more, we will do more to help Boston than anyone can do for us.

This is the era of the city, and we live in the city of the era. The thing that makes cities great, and ours the greatest, is people; that diverse, skilled, crowd of talent. So, I have never in 20 years been more optimistic about our future. All it would take to lead in the next decade and the decades after that is to help each other reach our full human potential.

If all this sounds too difficult, I can say to you with complete confidence that it's not. Just pull for each other as much as you pulled for me.

Thank you and God bless our great city.