



METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

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Mayor

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STATE OF METRO ADDRESS

By Mayor Karl Dean

April 26, 2011

Vice Mayor Neighbors, members of the Metro Council, the Judiciary, other elected officials and distinguished guests – good morning and thank you for joining me here at Hume-Fogg High School.

Before I begin my formal remarks, I want to take just a moment to acknowledge Hiroshi Sato, the Consul General of Japan, who is here with us today. Japan is a special friend to the city of Nashville, and Consul General Sato, we wish only the best for your people and your country during this difficult time.

You've heard me say before that while we need to work on making all of Nashville's public schools great, we already have some incredible schools in our system. Today we are in a school that has been consistently recognized as one of the best public high schools in the country.

Think about this for just a moment: Every year *Newsweek* magazine looks at the academic success of all the public high schools in the United States – over 26,000 schools. And only 6 percent or 1,600 make their list of "America's Best High Schools." Of those 1,600, last year Hume-Fogg ranked 32nd – that's 32nd in the entire country.

Here with us today is Dr. Paul Flemming, Principal of Hume-Fogg, and members of his faculty – the school's Assistant Principal Mr. Kelly Harned and Mr. Daron Bruce, Hume-Fogg's Teacher of the Year. Thank you for hosting us at your school.

What they achieve here at Hume-Fogg is a perfect example of the incredible work that goes on around our city every day by 10,000 Metro Government employees and 12,000 Metro Schools employees. And while being on a prestigious list compiled by *Newsweek* is certainly worth celebrating, for most of our employees and most of our government departments their accomplishments day after day and year after year often go without any recognition at all.

People make a city great. The people who live here and work here, and that's what I want to spend this time talking about today. You know, I've probably attended around 20 State of Metro Addresses over the years. And this is a speech that is often used to announce big new initiatives and projects, and I've done that as well. But this year, I want to do something different. I want to use this time to reflect on what this city is about, what we do well and what we need to do keep moving forward. Starting with the people who day-in and day-out make this city run, who do the

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jobs that make the quality of each of our lives better. The people you don't hear about on the 6 o'clock news, like Jerry Jones, who for 30 years was an employee of Metro Public Works.

If you've ever been to a Titans game then you've been a beneficiary of Jerry's hard work. Among many other responsibilities, Jerry handled all of the traffic preparations for Titans games since the team's arrival in Nashville. He made things outside the stadium run smoothly every season, but never once stepped inside. After battling cancer, Jerry passed away late last year. Ask anyone who worked with him and they'll tell you he left quite the void at Public Works; he's greatly missed. Jerry's wife Brenda, his son Phillip and nephew Tommy are here with us today – thank you for being here.

Our local government is filled with hard-working, passionate individuals like Jerry – people who get the job done no matter what and are committed to a life of public service. And what they accomplish individually and collectively, especially given the economic environment of the past three years, is remarkable. You've heard me say every year as we've presented the budget that we're asking our Metro departments “to do more with less.” That's the case again this year. But practically speaking, what does it mean?

For Public Works that means since 2008 their budget has been reduced by more than \$14 million, and their staff has been cut by 74 employee positions. But with less money and smaller crews, they've collected a total of 455,000 tons of trash, 94,000 tons of recycling, filled over 3,400 potholes, and repaved over 100 miles of roadway each year. They've retrofitted 85 percent of our traffic lights with energy-efficient LED bulbs, and held over 1,000 neighborhood clean ups. From managing parking meters to clearing our roads of snow to building new sidewalks – Public Works employees do the jobs we all depend on but rarely think about as we go about our every day.

Here with us in the audience we have some of Public Works' most dedicated employees, together representing 258 years of service to our city, including Mr. Clarence Shadowens, Public Works' longest-serving employee, who started his work with Metro in 1968. Thank you for being here. On behalf of the city, we appreciate what you do every day.

For the Parks Department, “doing more with less” has meant reductions in its budget without closing a single facility. In fact, with a smaller budget, Parks has expanded hours at regional community centers to accommodate our community's growing need for safe, healthy places for our seniors and children to spend their free time. Parks staff have taken on the management of more park space, as we've added 558 acres to our parks system and built eight new miles of greenways with six more being designed. Our city needs more open space, we need more places to exercise, but all of those places have to be maintained if they're going to be enjoyable for us to use.

Today we have several Parks employees with us that the director considers “unsung heroes” of his department – they're the people who maintain the grounds, clean the community centers and run the programs for at-risk youth. Thank you for being here and thank you for your service to our city.

Our Department of Metro Water Services has also had an incredible couple of years. For the first time in history, the department received a perfect score from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation on their Sanitary Survey, which is a detailed inspection of our

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entire water system. They've completed 246 stormwater projects since we created a dedicated stormwater user fee in 2009. They've completed four water main projects in the downtown area, renewing infrastructure that was over 100 years old. And they've updated all but 7,500 customers to automated water meters so our citizens have more accurate bills and fewer employees need to manually read meters.

Here with us today is a group of Metro Water employees who are responsible for all the different things that ensure clean water is available every time you turn on a faucet at your home. Thank you for being here.

Every day our employees in these three departments and many more work hard to keep this city running. They do it really well. And for the past three years, they have done just as much or more work with less money and fewer resources. But for me, the flood last May, more than any event before, brought that fact home.

This time last year, when we gathered at the Court of Flags at Riverfront Park for the State of Metro Address, the weather was sunny and warm, the sky was clear and blue, and we had no idea that in less than 48 hours rain would begin to fall in proportions not seen in this city since we started keeping records on weather. And that the fourth largest non-hurricane disaster in United State's history would put our city's strength and solidarity to a test. But the people of Nashville rose to the challenge: 20,000 volunteers filled our city's streets in the weeks and months after the flood waters receded. FEMA got here quickly and started writing checks. But it was neighbors and church members and complete strangers who rolled up their sleeves and helped our citizens start to put their lives back together. It's a story that will be told for generations, and as mayor, I've never been more proud of our city.

But before the first citizen stepped up to volunteer, our Metro employees were on hand doing what they had been trained to do in the case of such a disaster. It was in this moment that our employees who are great at accomplishing the ordinary showed us that they are capable of achieving the extraordinary. Our 911 call center handled over 17,000 emergency calls for service in just two days. Our first responders conducted 1,400 water rescues in 72 hours. Police and Public Works crews closed and guarded 115 streets.

And as we moved from response to recovery, Metro Water Service employees worked around the clock to restore the flooded K.R. Harrington Water Treatment Facility – it was back online, producing clean water after only 30 days. Public Works organized a massive flood debris removal operation, collecting over 333,000 cubic yards of flood debris from neighborhoods and streets. And our full-time flood recovery team organized a home buyout program for 305 properties most at-risk for future flooding, of which we've already purchased 57, making it the most expedited home buyout program of any other we know of in the country.

To this day, an army of nonprofit and government employees continue to work on our city's flood recovery, and their work will not stop until we get every person we possibly can back in their home.

Whether we're picking up the weekly trash or the mountains of debris from a historic flood, our citizens depend on us to keep the city running. And maintaining these vital public services, while not raising property taxes, has been the guiding principal of our budget for the past three years. We've balanced our budget during these difficult economic times by making our local

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government more efficient, leaner, and more financially sound than we were before. Yes, we've asked more of our departments because of it. But the alternative – asking our citizens to pay more in property taxes while they're struggling to make their own ends meet – would not have been the right thing to do.

This year, our approach to the budget will be the same. We will not raise property taxes, and we will look to our departments and our dedicated Metro employees to continue their great work with limited resources. It is the first time in over 20 years that our citizens will not be asked to pay more in property taxes during a first mayoral term. Given our country's still ongoing recovery from this historic recession, breaking that tradition is the right thing to do.

To reward our employees, for the second year in a row we will provide a bonus – this year of 1.5 percent. And we will maintain longevity pay for those employees who qualify to receive it. I wish we could do more, but the economy hasn't allowed it. In the coming years, as the economy starts to improve and the cost of living begins to go back up, I want our employees to know that their sacrifices and hard work will be upper most in our minds.

Our budget is also how we establish our priorities for the city – the same priorities I have talked about for three years: education, public safety and economic development. Metro Police will receive an increase in funding this year. And for the fourth year in a row, we will fully fund the budget for Metro Nashville Public Schools.

With three million additional dollars, Metro Police will open the new Madison Police Precinct and staff the new DNA crime lab under construction. We will also begin to plan for the opening of a new Midtown Hills Precinct.

By adding more police precincts, we are not only providing additional police resources in those areas, but we are improving police protection all over the city by lessening the load on the other precincts. Since I took office, we have hired over 300 new police officers and now have the largest police force in Nashville's history. Crime has gone down for six consecutive years. Having worked as a Public Defender in Nashville for 16 years, I remember when homicide levels hit an all-time high in the late 90s with 112 in one year. Last year we saw a 25 percent drop in the homicide rate from the year before for a total of 60 – still an unacceptable level of violence in our city, but only two other years in the past 43 had lower homicide totals. We are making progress in public safety, and that's why we need to continue to invest in it. Safe streets, safe neighborhoods are fundamental to a city.

For Metro Schools, fully funding the budget this year was harder than in the last three with federal stimulus funding coming to an end. Also, enrollment in our schools is up – a good problem to have – that's not the case in most urban schools districts. For this fiscal year, we faced a choice: meet our schools' needs and continue our progress – and we are making progress in education – or cut back. The schools budget represents a \$37.5 million increase over last year.

When it comes to education, we are making an investment that affects our entire city and our city's future. To me, pulling back is not an option. So to continue to invest in our classrooms and in our teachers, we will use a portion of our rainy day fund for this year's budget. We are able to do this in good conscience because of the fiscal decisions we have made the last three years: We have grown our operating reserves – our "rainy day fund" – by being prudent and doing more

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with less during difficult times. Reserves are there for a reason. And so we have the resources we need to continue to invest in education and continue our city's progress.

When I took office, our school system had just fallen into Corrective Action for failing to meet academic standards for four straight years. I believe the general public knew that our school system had some problems, but no one knew just how deep they ran. At the end of that school year, the District failed to meet academic standards again and faced the possibility of a state takeover. It was time for reform. The status quo wasn't working. It wasn't just that we were failing standardized tests – we were failing our students and depriving them of an opportunity at success.

We got focused on the problem, and while we still have a lot of work to do, the story today about our schools is much different. Last year, every comprehensive high school saw an increase in their graduation rate. I want to recognize our Director of Schools Dr. Jesse Register and members of the School Board who are in attendance today. The innovative programs we've worked with them to put in place, such as more afterschool programs and more access to charter schools for at-risk students, will only help these trends continue.

One initiative I am extremely proud of is the creation of the Metro Student Attendance Center. Truancy is the No. 1 indicator that a student will dropout of school. It's common sense: If students are not going to school on a regular basis, they're not engaged and they're falling behind, quitting all together becomes an easier decision to make. The answer is early intervention. We can't wait for a student to miss two weeks of school before we figure out what's going wrong.

The Metro Student Attendance Center is a partnership between Metro Schools, Metro Police and Juvenile Court that intervenes when a student has as few as three unexcused absences. Or if they're caught for loitering when they should be in class, they're taken to the Attendance Center instead of Juvenile Court. The center identifies the root cause of their problem and provides services to address it. Maybe they're home taking care of a relative, or maybe they're avoiding a social problem at school. It can be as simple as a lack of transportation. But if someone doesn't provide help, if someone doesn't step in and say "we care, we want you back in school," then chances are, they're not going to go.

Since the creation of the Attendance Center, Metro has experienced a 46 percent drop in truancy district-wide. And our schools have been a key partner in this as well. Schools have gone from taking attendance less than half the time, to taking attendance over 95 percent of the time.

Something else that has been key to making progress in our schools is the involvement of our community. Making our schools better is not just a schools issue, it's a community issue – it affects all of us. And recognizing this, nonprofits, businesses, even other Metro departments have stepped up to help. With the support of our philanthropic and business community we have brought hundreds of new teachers to Nashville through Teach for America and The New Teachers Project. One program that we started here locally that is seeing great success is Limitless Libraries – a partnership between the Nashville Public Library and our schools' libraries.

It started as a pilot program two years ago and was expanded to all comprehensive high schools this year. Resources of our public library system are readily available to high school students,

allowing them to checkout any book in any public library in our city and have it delivered directly to their school. They have access to the Library's CDs, DVDs, e-books and the library materials at area colleges through an existing partnership with our Public Library – a total of 1.5 million items for reading and research were immediately put within our students' reach. Limitless Libraries also takes advantage of the expertise and procurement resources of our Public Library by updating the materials in the participating schools' libraries. Over 16,000 new items have been purchased to date. Expanding Limitless Libraries to all of our comprehensive high schools is paying off: More than 49 percent of our students now carry public library cards. Year-to-date total circulation of materials from our Public Library to our high schools is almost 24,000 items – about the same number of items checked out in a given year from the East Nashville Public Library. We have opened up an entirely new world of learning to our students through our libraries.

Nashville has an incredibly generous community, and that generosity has supported not only new innovative programs in our schools, but historically it has supported our Public Library – making it one of the best in the country. In fact, our Nashville Public Library was honored this past year with the 2010 National Medal for Museum and Library Services, the highest honor awarded to American libraries. Donna Nicely, the Director of our Public Library, who is here with us today, went to the White House in December to receive the award.

In this same spirit of generosity that has helped to make our Public Library so great, I am pleased to announce today that Mr. John Ingram, a great community advocate and businessman in our city, is making it possible for us to expand the Limitless Libraries program beyond our high schools and into every middle school in our public school system. His commitment to this program will also allow us to renovate one of our high school libraries this year and one of our middle school libraries next year to provide our students with a space for research and reading that is equivalent to the quality of materials that is now within their reach.

While on the topic of reading, one of my favorite authors, John Irving, had a line in one of his books, *Hotel New Hampshire*, where a wrestling coach was telling his students that to be good at wrestling “you have to get obsessed, and you have to stay obsessed.” That's what we have to do with education. We have to get obsessed, and we have to stay obsessed. We have to be obsessed with keeping attendance and reducing truancy. We have to be obsessed with getting our kids to graduation, not just so they can walk across the stage and out the door, but so they can walk into the world prepared to succeed in college and career. And we have to be obsessed with finding innovative ways to make every part of our education system better than it was before.

You've heard me say many times that education, public safety and economic development “are all connected.” Our workforce is where education and economic development intersect. Having good schools not only prepares our students to be future employers and employees, but good schools attract professionals to our city both as employers and employees.

I recently visited the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union here in Nashville, which has an apprenticeship program for recent high school graduates interested in becoming electricians. The head of the program, Elbert Carter, shared some unpleasant news while I was there: 90 percent of the students that come to him out of our public schools need additional math and science classes to reach competency before they are ready to join the program. This is unacceptable, and it's why we can't take our focus off of education.

Not only do our students need to be better prepared when they leave our schools, but we need to do a better job of connecting them to further education opportunities. When you compare Nashville's key economic indicators to our peer cities', we stack up and often surpass them in many areas – per capita income growth, cost of living, diversity of economy. But despite the fact that the Nashville region is home to 23 institutions of higher learning, we lag behind peer communities in terms of the proportion of residents who hold an associate's degree or higher.

More cities are waking up to the fact that if more of their population is not college educated, they're not going to be able to recruit jobs. Here in Nashville we need to double the number of college-educated individuals. Not only to recruit new businesses, but to supply our existing businesses with educated workers, so they will stay here and continue to grow here.

That's why investing in opportunities to send more of our students to college, like the one we made this past year to help Nashville State Community College expand into Antioch, are so important. With Nashville State's new campus more of our students will receive two-year degrees and certifications in various trades, and more students will complete basic course work that will allow them to transfer to four-year colleges for bachelor's degrees and beyond. And more high school students will be able to participate in dual enrollment courses, which will introduce them to college while still in high school. And we know that when a student is exposed to a positive experience like dual enrollment they are more likely to stay in school, succeed and go on to attend college after high school.

Once our students have received a quality education in our city, we want them to stay here to work and to raise a family. Just as good schools attract new jobs, having good-paying, quality jobs attract and retain people. Growing cities are thriving cities. That's why we can't take our focus off of economic development.

This year, with support from the Metro Council, we streamlined our city's ability to recruit economic development projects by creating a toolkit that allows us to offer incentive grants within specific guidelines. It's about being competitive. If we're not willing to help companies bring large numbers of jobs here, then other cities will be. Nashville competes for jobs with similar-sized cities nationwide. So we have to be willing to bring economic development tools to the table.

We're having success: In mid-December we announced in partnership with the state that Asurion, a Nashville-based technology company, is adding 500 new jobs by expanding it's headquarters here in Nashville – although they could choose to locate anywhere in the world. When the company first moved to Middle Tennessee from California in 2003 it planned to create 600 jobs – that number has ballooned to 1,800. And so we have good reason to believe Asurion will not only meet but exceed its job growth projections. This is the kind of news we need more of, and my office is focused on it every day.

Jobs are key. But we are living in a day and age where people choose where they're going to live based on more than just a job. In fact, research shows that many young people graduate from college, decide where they're going to live and then begin looking for a job. So what guides their decision when they're picking a city? In short, it's quality of life. It's the buzz a city has. It's things like being home to an NHL hockey team that just won a playoff series for the first time. I want to acknowledge Tom Cigarran, chairman of the Predators' organization, and Jeff Cogan, CEO – thank you both for being here.

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Here in Nashville we have so much going in the right direction – music, healthcare, tourism, our universities. All of these things make us an attractive place to be. Nashville is the healthcare capital of the world. It's an incredible story of entrepreneurial success. And creative business minds who want to work in healthcare stay here and come here for that synergy.

It's the same for music. Songwriters and musicians from all over the world come here to Nashville, Tennessee to write, arrange and perform their music because we're a center for creativity. *Rolling Stone* magazine recently wrote about Nashville for having the "Best Music Scene."

That's not something to take for granted. As a city, we have to stay focused on these assets and continue to invest in them.

And we have to invest in quality of life. People want to live in a city that's healthy, that's clean, that's walkable and bikable, and that's full of places they can exercise and enjoy fresh air.

That includes having park space and open space and planning for our future needs in those areas just as we plan for development. The landscape of Middle Tennessee is truly something special. And because we're a growing city, if we don't plan to protect it, it's something that won't be here for future generations to enjoy.

Earlier this month we announced a major step forward in our city's efforts to become "the greenest city in the Southeast." In partnership with The Land Trust for Tennessee, we unveiled Nashville's first comprehensive open space plan that calls for the conservation of 22,000 acres over the next 25 years by both the public and private sectors. This includes adding 3,000 acres of new public park space in the next 10 years.

Having plenty of park space and greenways is also directly related to our city's health. And this is an area where we need to do better. Our state is ranked second (tied with Alabama) as the most obese state in the country. Tennessee also has the nation's fourth-highest rate of overweight youths. Here in Nashville, the adult obesity rate is at 30 percent. This has reached the level of a crisis. And it's not about how people look in their clothes. It's not about being able to brag about our rankings. It's about people's lives. Obesity is a major health risk factor linked to cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. In fact, according to the American Heart Association, obese individuals have an incredible 104 percent increase in the risk of developing heart failure than non-overweight adults. Our children's health is so at risk that this is perhaps the first generation expected to live shorter lives than their parents.

But what can a city do to turn the tide on such a complicated problem? We can create communities that make living a healthy lifestyle the easy choice. And we're doing that in partnership with the Metro Public Health Department using a \$7.5 million federal grant from the Communities Putting Prevention to Work program.

We're working to make healthy food items available all over the city. We're working with Metro Schools to improve the breakfast and lunch that's provided to our kids everyday. We launched a bike share program that will be expanded this year with more than 200 bicycles. We are working with schools, churches, and neighborhood associations to establish more community gardens throughout the city.

And I'm using the bully pulpit of my office to bring a greater level of attention to the need for all of us to get active and to eat better. This spring I launched a citywide health challenge called "Walk 100 miles with the Mayor." We're asking all Nashvillians to walk 100 miles between now and July 9th. Nearly 3,000 people have already signed up and walked more than 30,000 miles.

Whether we're walking for better health, rallying behind our public schools, or helping a neighbor whose home was flooded last May – what makes Nashville such an incredible city is our people.

We're a city filled with people who care, people who want to see us continue our progress in areas where we're already successful and tackle those challenges that still stand in our way. We're a city on the rise. We're a city that if we stay focused on the things that matter most – education, public safety, and economic development – we'll own the future.

My job as mayor is to keep us on that track. To see that we, as a government, continue to make decisions which are in the best interest of all our citizens. To invest in the areas that need investing and to encourage innovative public / private partnerships that allow us to do more than we could ever do alone.

It's a privilege to serve in this position. I love my job, and I love this city. I am proud of what we have accomplished together over the past four years, and I look forward to having the opportunity to serve four more. Thank you very much.

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