

Michael's Candidacy Announcement Speech July 22, 2006

Good morning, Parkside! And, good morning Philadelphia!

Thank you Parkside community, my friends, family, elected officials, ward leaders, my 52nd Ward Chairman- Steve Jones, committee people, block captains, and community leaders. Thank you Lucinda for your hard work and for being a civic and political leader. Thank you Diane for opening your home to me and a few of my close friends; and Reverend Campbell, thank you for your leadership in the religious community and your strong, stand up support for me and for your very kind words.

It's so good to be out here today. I've come here to deliver a very special message, but also to ask for your support in a very special endeavor.

Over 20 years ago, I got involved in politics, and I've loved every moment- working to help people in different neighborhoods, learning the keys to a strong community, taking the time to listen because every voice should be heard.

I've been asked, why are you having this event in Parkside? Well, Parkside represents a real Philadelphia neighborhood- a community of hope, challenges, and revitalization. Look around you. There are so many positive things going on in this neighborhood: Fairmount Park across the street; The Mann Music Center; Memorial Hall which will become the Please Touch Museum, the Microsoft School of the Future; the West Parkside Industrial Park; the Discovery Charter School; In the fall, a new shopping center around the corner will break ground; These beautiful homes right behind me.

This is a great neighborhood, with great people. I have had an incredible opportunity to be involved in the development of ALL of these exciting community projects during my 15 years of public service, along with my great staff, who deserve so much of the credit.

There's something very special about public service. There is a special feeling you get every day when you know you've helped someone. I've enjoyed my time in City Council. But in the last few years, as I took on more challenges and provided leadership on tough issues, I started to think hard about my future and my service. And finally, after much thought, I came to one conclusion- in order to make real change, in order to move this City in the right direction, in order to provide strong, determined, principled leadership for the whole City, it was time for me to make a decision. The same decision that Mayor Goode, Mayor Rendell and Mayor Street all had to make at some point in their careers – they had to resign their city position to seek higher office.

Well, I've made a decision about my career. And, let there be no confusion, no mystery, and no speculation.

I am saying it loud and clear. Today, I am now a candidate for Mayor of the great city of Philadelphia.

People have asked me why are you running for Mayor? The answer is pretty simple: I love public service and the people of this City; This city has given me so much and I have so much more to give back to you; I'm ready to do the job, and there is no one more qualified to lead this City into a bright future.

I'm ready to lead right now. I don't need on-the-job training. I don't need a big research committee to tell me what the City's problems are. I don't need high priced, hired guns to advise me on how to best serve our citizens. I already know how we can make Philadelphia safe- in ALL neighborhoods- for everyone. I already know how we can deliver high quality service in a more effective manner. I already know how we can create jobs in our neighborhoods and Center City. I already know how we can provide a superior education for every one of our children.

I know how to do these things because I've been doing these things for 15 years- every day, right here in Philadelphia, getting the job done for you.

As your Mayor, there are 3 key areas that I will make top priorities in my administration.

1) Public safety- we need more police and a more strategic deployment of our officers; we need to better utilize technology in fighting crime; and we're going to aggressively take illegal weapons out of the hands of criminals. We don't need the State to send in the National Guard to make us safe, but we do need our State legislators to pass tough gun restrictions in Pennsylvania. What we do need is the United States Congress to make Homeland Security as much of a priority in Philadelphia as they do in Iraq and Afganistan. If the United States Government has the technology to pinpoint the location of military weapons, then why can't we use that same technology to find our own local weapons of mass destruction- handguns- right on the streets of Philadelphia.

2) Education- our children need smaller class sizes; we need more city funding to support after school programs; our parents must play a more active role in their children's education; and I will set high standards to significantly decrease the 9th grade dropout rate, increase the high school graduation rate, and raise the college degree attainment rate for Philadelphia residents.

3) Jobs- we must lower the tax burden for our residents, workers, and business owners to make Philadelphia more competitive; we also need to target and attract new business sectors to this city; we need to assist in creating neighborhood businesses- owned by local residents; and we need to increase entrepreneurial opportunities for young people.

When these 3 components of our government are working together, this city will take off- our population will grow, our jobs will increase, our streets will be safer, and this city will be a better place for all of us.

Why do I work on these issues with such passion? Well let me share some of my lifestory with you. I grew up at 55th and Larchwood in West Philadelphia. I am a son, a brother, a husband, and a father. I learned many lessons from my parents, my grandmother, my sister, my wife and my children. I've carried these lessons with me, my entire life. My mother taught me the meaning of hard work, the importance of finishing what you start, and to be kind to everyone. My father taught me to never accept "no" for an answer and to be my own man- to think for myself. I will never forget how my parents sacrificed and worked hard to send my sister and I to good schools to get a good education. Thank you Mom and Dad. My Sister Renee taught me what it meant to be responsible for a younger sibling and the leadership role of an older brother. And Grandmom, Edythe, she told me to get as much education as I could because no one could ever take that away from me. My wife Lisa taught me the real value of family and friends, and Christian and Olivia have taught me about hope- the promise of a better tomorrow.

I believe in hope. It's hope that gets me up everyday and keeps me enthusiastic about new challenges. It's hope that tells me that every one of us can make today better than yesterday, as we prepare for a brighter tomorrow. It's hope that drives us to believe that we can all make a difference in the lives of others.

Years ago, before he was President, Bill Clinton talked about a place where he grew up - a place called Hope. It was a place where people worked together, struggled together, had fun together. And after telling us about all of the problems and challenges that he would face as President trying to lead this country, he said that he still believed in a place called Hope.

Well I'm here today to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, like President Clinton, I believe in a place called Hope, but I also believe in a place called Parkside. I believe in a city called Philadelphia. And I believe that you are looking for a different kind of leader for this city. A leader who will work hard for you every day. A leader who will restore integrity to our government and make you proud to be a Philadelphian. A leader who will stand up for what's right no matter what. A leader who will do the right thing for the right reasons. A leader who will unite people across neighborhoods and across this city. A leader who will work with everyone across racial, ethnic and language barriers. A leader who will bring our region together and work across political party lines. If you are looking for that kind of leader- stop looking. I'm standing right here in front of you- and I'm ready, willing and able, to lead this city in a new direction. Join me in this journey of hope for our city's future. I ask for your support to be the next Mayor of the City of Philadelphia. Thank you and God bless all of you.