

Inaugural address
Mayor Edward B. Murray
Jan. 6, 2014

Thanks to all of you, today is a day of celebration.

We are here to celebrate not the political victories of individuals, but the persistent values of this city – values that transcend our divisions, bind us together, and define us as one people.

We are heirs to a great and special, progressive legacy.

I stand here today as a humble beneficiary of that legacy.

This rich tradition is one that I not only inherit as your elected mayor, it's a tradition that made my election as mayor possible in the first place.

For this, I am forever grateful to this community.

[Community]

Together, we inherit from Seattle's Native Americans and the first European American settlers, a belief that progress is achieved when Seattle acts as a community.

Seattle is a place that believes deeply in the idea that only through inclusiveness and collaboration can we solve our greatest challenges.

Seattle has always been a place where we are able to overcome our differences, see the day with a fresh pair of eyes and come together to make progress as a community.

Our diversity is our strength.

There is no challenge Seattle faces that we cannot solve when we act as a community.

[Government]

We must make the government of this City an agent for building community and finding solutions to the challenges we face.

We live in a moment in history where government and its ability to function have been called into question.

I reject that cynicism.

Government can function again, and Seattle can lead the way.

We can be a national model for a renewed respect for public service and a new appreciation for the role of government as a positive force for change in our lives.

I see government not as the problem, but government as a partner in solving the problems we face.

I see government not as the sole solution, but government as an incubator for solutions to try and experiment with.

I see government not as a place for political posturing, but a place for pragmatism. A forum not of ideology but of innovation. Where we draw strength from our diversity, not play to our deepest divisions.

Let us in the words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt engage in "bold, persistent experimentation." He said: "It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something."

[Social Justice]

Seattle is a city of great diversity, but it is also a fragmented city.

Fragmented by race, by gender, by economics, by geography and by education.

Fragmentation that has only grown worse as we continue to live through the devastation of the Great Recession.

Our moral test as a community and as a City government will be our willingness and our ability to address – and to overcome – that which fragments us.

We must be courageous enough to acknowledge that despite the huge gains we have made towards a more equitable city, there is much that still divides us and we must be brave enough to act to address those divisions.

I pledge that every department and program of this City government will challenge ourselves and the city as a whole to address the issues of race that continue to divide us.

I pledge that every department and program of this City government will challenge ourselves and the city as a whole to address the disparity in wages and job opportunities for women.

I pledge that every department and program of this City government will challenge ourselves and the City as a whole to address the issue of economic disparity in wages and in housing.

I pledge to those I have met in food bank lines, in homeless encampments, those who struggle with mental illness or addiction that we will heed the teachings from the Torah, the New Testament and the Koran, to fulfill our moral obligation to ensure that we as a community help those who live on the margins of the life of this great City.

Above all I pledge that we as a City, we as a community, will address the disparity of educational outcomes so all our children can succeed in Seattle's economy and live lives of hope and opportunity.

[Business]

Seattle is both a community AND a place of commerce.

We are known globally for our great entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation.

I pledge to seek new ways to partner with our business community, so that we remain among the most economically competitive cities in the world.

Political debate too often lends support to the false idea that creating a vibrant economy and taking care of those in need are somehow conflicting goals.

They are not – they are intertwined and interdependent.

[Public safety]

To the men and women of the Seattle Police and Fire Departments and your families and loved ones, on behalf of the people of city of Seattle, thank you for your service and sacrifice to provide for our safety and security.

Our police department must be reformed. This will require great effort. I am committed to making sure that our police department achieves the federal court's mandate and moves on.

However, that alone is not enough. The agreement with the Department of Justice must be embraced and woven into the fabric of our police force.

True policing is about building relationships with the people the department serves and developing solutions to the problems they face. True partnership is about dialogue, it is about relationships.

I pledge to make Seattle's Police Department a model of urban policing for the rest of the nation.

Crime and violence are public health issues as much as they are legal issues. In the end, public safety is not merely the domain of the Police and Fire Departments. Rather, it is a job for all of us.

[Infrastructure]

The history of the progressive movement has always included the belief that government can best facilitate the preservation of our natural beauty and the building of the infrastructure that makes us thrive.

I believe we can build a truly integrated transportation system with a world class transit system at its core.

I believe we can maintain and expand a vibrant park system, sidewalks, bike lanes, repair our crumbling streets, and rebuild our central waterfront.

[Climate change]

A progressive city must be an environmentally sustainable city – not just because our City has a moral responsibility to address the issue of climate change, but because cities are in the best position to foster significant reductions in carbon emissions – and Seattle can be a national model.

As we look at the issues of the environment and of sustainability, we must also recognize that these are social justice issues. And we must address the fact that impact of climate change is most often felt by those who can least afford it.

[Partnership]

All of this will take partnerships.

It will take cooperation between the Mayor and the City's other elected officials. To the City Council and the City Attorney, we jointly are responsible for governing this City, and I pledge to work with each of you.

To our region, I pledge that Seattle will once again become a leader – and your partner – on regional issues.

To the Governor and to the Legislature, few mayors who have held this office understand as deeply as I do the challenges you face. I pledge to renew our relationships and be a partner with you – as well as with our federal delegation.

[Closing]

Leadership is ultimately about service – service to the people of this city. Those of us who have taken the oath of office today, join our colleagues in governing this City, first and last as servants –public servants.

In the years ahead, we will experience joy and tragedy, victory and defeat, crisis and progress.

I am optimistic about our ability to face the challenges ahead.

I am hopeful and excited about the possibilities that these challenges present, because we live in a place of unmatched beauty, with the most innovative businesses on the planet, and a wealth of talented people committed to improving the lives of those around us.

In the words of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy:

“All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life time of this administration; nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.”

Thank you.

