



COUNCILMEMBER PHIL MENDELSON'S

# AT-LARGE UPDATE

## Phil Mendelson's Swearing-in Ceremony Speech

I want to thank Judge Gladys Kessler for administering my oath of office. She has done this each of the times I have been sworn-in. I met Judge Kessler in 1975 when she was a public interest attorney representing the tenants of McLean Gardens, fighting to maintain affordable housing west of Rock Creek Park. She has been a judge: First on Superior Court, then on the United States District Court, for over 30 years. She also serves on the District's Commission on Judicial Disabilities and Tenure. I thank Judge Kessler for her service and her commitment to the District.

I also want to acknowledge my 10-year-old daughter Addie who held the Bible while I took the oath. Addie is finishing up at John Eaton Elementary School, one of our public schools. She reminds me of one of the reasons we have government: To provide opportunity for our children and to make possible their dreams.

This is the fourth time I have stood before the public to take the oath of office, a pledge to uphold the law and to do my best to serve the people of the District. It is important to remember that the office I hold is a public trust. You trust me to do what is right, to represent, and to serve all of the people. Truly, it is an honor and a privilege. Thank you.

As I stand before you today I could reflect on the accomplishments of which I am most proud, or I could lay out my agenda, or I could speak of my vision for the District.

My six years as chairman of the Council's Judiciary Committee has narrowed my focus to matters of justice and public safety. I am proud that in collaboration with the judiciary, we have established and maintained in access to justice initiative that empowers the last, the lost, and the least by giving them access they would not otherwise have to legal representation. I am proud that working collaboratively with police and prosecutors, we have strengthened the criminal law, including protecting gun

registration in light of the Supreme Court's Heller decision, criminalizing gang membership, and adopting one of the best child trafficking laws in the nation. I am most proud of our actions regarding civil rights: Including recognizing the fundamental right of all human beings to enter committed relationships through domestic partnership or marriage. We have led the country in these matters.

These achievements required collaboration. I do not believe that "collaboration and consensus-building are way over-rated." Good government comes from an attitude that believes, fundamentally, that people are important, that accountability means transparency, that collaboration is essential, and that usually the "right" result is the one that has broad support.

It is in this context that I am optimistic about the next four years.

- I want to build on collaboration, to develop a strategy to reduce the prevalence of gun violence in our city. This will require a multitude of public safety agencies – from police to parole, from courts to corrections- to pull their oars together.
- I want to build on collaboration, to develop a strategy to reduce truancy. Truancy is an early indicator of juvenile delinquency and ultimately a career in crime. This will require the schools to work with police and the courts to identify at-risk children.
- I want to build on collaboration, to improve emergency medical services. We ought to think of EMS as pre-hospital care, not just transport, but bringing the emergency room to the sidewalk.

An important part of the public trust placed in us that government should build on its

## Constituent Services Corner

**Crime Statistics for 2007-10**  
(unofficial, based on MPD daily reports)

### Homicide

- 2007 -- 181
  - 2008 -- 186
  - 2009 -- 144
  - 2010 -- 131
- Down 27.6%

### Robbery

- 2007 -- 4430
  - 2008 -- 4415
  - 2009 -- 4394
  - 2010 -- 4017
- Down 9.3%

### Property

- 2007 -- 26,639
  - 2008 -- 27,316
  - 2009 -- 26,464
  - 2010 -- 24,400
- Down 8.4%

### ADW

- 2007 -- 3192
  - 2008 -- 2864
  - 2009 -- 2625
  - 2010 -- 2615
- Down 18.1%

### Crimes Involving Guns:

### Homicide

- 2007 -- 141
  - 2008 -- 140
  - 2009 -- 108
  - 2010 -- 98
- Down 30%

### Robbery

- 2007 -- 1668
  - 2008 -- 1480
  - 2009 -- 1641
  - 2010 -- 1308
- Down 22%

### ADW

- 2007 -- 864
  - 2008 -- 747
  - 2009 -- 682
  - 2010 -- 610
- Down 29%

**Office of Councilmember  
Phil Mendelson (At-Large)**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Suite 402

Washington, DC 20004

(202) 724-8064 (p)

(202) 724-8099 (f)

[www.dccouncil.us/mendelson](http://www.dccouncil.us/mendelson)

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**Committee on the Judiciary**

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**UPCOMING HEARINGS:**

February 4, 2011 at 12:00PM in Room 412, Public Oversight Hearing on; **Enforcement of Pedestrian Bicycle Safety**

February 7, 2011 at 11:00AM in Room 412, Public Hearing on; **Bill 19-5, Department of Forensic Sciences Act of 2011**



*All hearings will be held at the John A. Wilson Building, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, unless otherwise noted. To sign up to testify or for more information, contact the Committee at: (202) 724-7808.*

**Mendelson Speech (cont'd)**

strengths. Yet it is a temptation with every new Administration to start over. We do not need to dismantle the success; rather, we should build on them.

It is in this context that I am hopeful about education reform. It is striking that not enough has changed since my first election. In 1998, I said that improving public education "should be our greatest priority," and at my 2003 swearing-in, I said "our goal for [DCPS] is not to be like other urban system, but to be much better." Four years ago I said "We can and should be a city on a hill, for all to see and to emulate." I did not support the subsequent schools takeover because I thought the Mayor could bring focus and resources to reform without politicizing the Chancellor's office. But I do want to thank Mayor Fenty for creating the emphasis on school reform that cannot help but be continued. For the same reason that I did not support restructuring in 2007; we need to build on the achievements to date, not start over.

As I stand here today, I am not sanguine about our prospects to actually achieve full voting representation in the next Congress. Citizens of the District should have the same rights that citizens of the 50 states have. Surely we have the same responsibilities – including paying federal taxes and sacrificing our sons and daughters in war. This is the last unbreached frontier in civil rights. Our new mayor has pledged to bring a reinvigoration to the cause of voting rights. I pledge to stand with him.

I will also stand with Mayor Gray as he struggles with our government's financial situation. Fixing our finances will require sacrifice as we raise broad-based taxes and cut programs, especially social service programs. Yet, the short term pain will enable this city to step up in the future to preserve affordable housing, create jobs with a living wage, and help the needy, such as the homeless and the mentally ill.

A few minutes ago I took the oath of office with my hand on the Bible. Within that book, in the gospel of St. Matthew, it says:

*"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works..."*

The phrase "a city on a hill" was a theme of the great progressive and reform Mayor of Cleveland, Tom L. Johnson, 100 years ago. It was echoed by John F. Kennedy in 1961 when he said: "...our governments, in every branch, at every level, national, state and local, must be as a city upon a hill – constructed and inhabited by men aware of their great trust and their great responsibilities."

Today our challenge is the same; to be the best. To be a place where all of the people feel safe all of the time; a place where any child can get an excellent public education. A city where our citizens can find good paying jobs, and the homeless can find decent homes. It is our responsibility to provide opportunities and to help those in need, to help themselves. Working together we can become a model in the core functions of government: Public safety, public education, public health, and public works. We can be a city that shines, a city on a hill. Thanks you.