

Thank you.

Bishop Daniels, Fr. Wild, Chairman Holloway, Chief Judge Sullivan, Maria Monreal-Cameron, Rhonda Begos, the members of the Army National Guard, and the members of the Rufus King High School Choir: thank you so much for your participation in this ceremony.

There are so many people to thank tonight, so I'm going to start right at the top. I want to thank God – not for a victory, but for granting me the strength and the courage to take on the duties of this job. I also want to thank God for such a wonderful family – particularly my wife Tonette and our two boys Matt and Alex – as well as my parents, my grandmother, my in-laws and many other relatives here tonight. God also blessed us with so many wonderful friends and supporters.

Also, I want to thank my office staff, my cabinet and all of the great people I work with at the county. As I stand here in the Milwaukee County War Memorial, one particular employee comes to mind. Paul Mackey is the director of the King Center. Earlier this year, he was called to duty, as his unit was deployed overseas.

Paul is one of a number of our employees who were called to serve in Afghanistan or in Iraq during the past year. Tonight, I want to pay tribute to him and to all of the other men and women from our country – and from throughout our region – who are serving in the Armed Forces. They are all in our thoughts and in our prayers for a safe return.

Two years ago, you put your trust in me and – working together – we put Milwaukee County government back on the right path. Now, you put your trust in me again, and I want you to know that I take that responsibility very seriously.

We are headed down the path to a brighter future. Those traveling with us must include all of the people of Milwaukee County. From working families to older adults, from those living in the city to those in the suburbs – regardless of race, regardless of income; we must all be headed toward a brighter future.

With that in mind, we begin on a path to bring more jobs and more people back to this great county.

- When we make county government run more efficiently and effectively, it will bring people and jobs back.
- When we improve our parks, our zoo and our other quality of life programs, it will bring people and jobs back.
- When we streamline services to assist older adults, care for people with disabilities and others in need, it will bring people and jobs back.
- When we move our transportation system and airport into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it will bring people and jobs back.
- When we work proactively to retain and grow existing businesses and attract new employers to our area, it will bring people and jobs back.

- And when we continue to forward budgets that actually cut the property tax levy, it will bring people and jobs back!

We are already preparing to submit a balanced budget in September that – once again - cuts the property tax levy. To get there, we will need to continue to re-examine county government and look to consolidate positions and programs.

Tomorrow, I begin the next phase of this work when I meet with the heads of our largest departments to review their budget and staffing goals for the remainder of this year and for the next year. We will also renew our efforts to focus on the true priorities of county government. We must not divert off onto paths that lead away from the responsibilities of our core mission.

Concurrent with our budget process will be our efforts to negotiate new employee contracts for 2005 and beyond. As I said in our State of the County address, local taxpayers must be able to afford any agreement and the contracts must include a repeal of the pension and sick leave enhancements left over from the past administration.

Overall, we are headed in the right direction. Good things are happening in Milwaukee County. Just last month, we broke the record for the most passengers – over 600,000 - out of Mitchell International Airport. Even as we put in place lower greens fees and online registration for our golf courses, revenues are up more than \$100,000 from last year.

The beautiful new Marcia P. Coggs Human Services Center opens to the public this month and features many new improvements for the public. Benefits to our veterans are up by more than 11%. Our zoo will soon open a new education center and the public museum is the only place in the entire Midwest where you can see the largest display of Egyptian artifacts ever. These are just a few of the exciting things that are happening in our county.

To make things even better for everyone in the county, however, we need to focus more of our efforts on job growth.

Last month, I joined Mayor Terry Estness of Wauwatosa in announcing the expansion of GE Healthcare into the Milwaukee County Research Park. Recently, the Wauwatosa City Council did their part by approving financing for the project. Now, I ask the county to step forward to finish the deal on this incredible opportunity to bring 2,000 jobs to Milwaukee County.

Our partners at the regional medical center are stepping forward to push more medical research and development. The cluster of medical and high tech jobs around the research park will lead to exactly what we need in Milwaukee County – more high wage jobs and more opportunities to attract young professionals.

This fits in well with all of the other things that are happening to attract more people to the area. From the renaissance on the river to exciting new projects like Pabst City and the Public Market, Milwaukee County is a great place to live, work and play.

And we need to make this a great place to get an education, too. I am committed to working with the leaders of our public, charter and private schools – all across Milwaukee County – to insure that every child and every family has a chance to head down that same path of success – a path paved by a quality education.

The development of the Park East Freeway is another project that moves us further down the path towards a brighter future. Mayor Tom Barrett and I met days after the election to talk about a number of issues and this was at the top of the list. I am excited about working with him, Common Council President Hines and the rest of the city leadership on this – and other – projects.

Next Monday, I am meeting with the other municipal leaders to talk about sites that are ripe for development in our county. Then, I'm headed to the largest gathering of retailers in the country to pitch them on all that we have to offer in Milwaukee County.

Recently, Mayor Barrett and I spoke to a group of international trade representatives. To a person, they mentioned how amazed they were at all that we have to offer. We need to do more to promote our community.

Next week, I'll announce details on our "Brag About It" campaign to draw more attention to the wonderful attractions within Milwaukee County. From our parks to the zoo, from the art museum to Miller Park, from the public museum to Miller and Harley plant tours; this is a great county.

We need to remind ourselves about all of the good things going on as we seek to take on the challenges that face us, too. We will work together with our county board and our employees to make county government even greater. And we will work with other levels of government to serve the people we all represent.

Our county is headed towards a brighter future, but the road ahead still will not be easy. Our challenges may seem overwhelming, but that only means that our opportunities will be that much more spectacular when we succeed – and we will.

The rest of the state – and indeed, the nation – are watching to see the direction we take over the next few months and years. Let this be the time that we show them – and most importantly – future generations – that this was the moment that we built the path to a brighter future for all of the people in this county.

As I like to say, it's a new day in Milwaukee County, but we're not done yet. I'm ready to get to work and I hope you are too.

Thank you and May God bless you!