

Gavel Exchange REMARKS

The Honorable Marilyn M. Bland
Chairperson, Prince George's County Council
Legislative Year 2009
Tuesday, December 2, 2008

(AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY)

“Change that meets our Challenges”

Good morning.

To my colleagues on the Prince George's County Council it is with great pleasure that I accept the gavel of leadership for the 2008-2009 legislative year. I am so grateful to be here today.

“To whom much is given much is *required*;” With this sentiment guiding my efforts, I accept the charge to lead *this team* of dedicated, intelligent, compassionate and resourceful advocates for Prince George's County and her citizens.

I am thankful for my faith and my family. Particularly, my mother and my children: my son Justin, who is a graduate

student at Case Western University and Tonya, who is a junior at the University of Maryland at College Park. Also, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my Mentor, the Late Honorable Isaac J. Gourdine, who told me more than 10 years ago, that dedication, hard work and *laboring for the People*, would make this day possible.

I am thankful for Mr. Dean, who's strong demeanor and temperament has taught me much about how to be an effective leader. Mr. Dean, it was a pleasure to serve as your vice-chair. All of us can attest to the fact that you keep a steady hand when handling County business and a smile even in the face of adversity.

To our County Executive, Mr. Johnson, and his staff – thank you for your leadership and I look forward to furthering the collaborative approach that has worked to the benefit of our citizens.

I must thank the staff who works *in* and *for* District nine and its constituents: Joseph Pollard, Ebonee Avery, Demetrius Robinson, Branndon Jackson, Judy Diggs, Chris Sangster, Tim Rabalais and I can not forget my Chief of Staff, Dr. David J. Billings, III. I simply do not have enough time to talk about this God sent man, who makes my office run so smoothly. I must thank our council administration, committees and support staff for their continued hard work, dedication, and sacrifice. Your contributions to this County are immeasurable and I look forward to our continued working relationship.

Last month, America cast a vote for change in electing United States Sen. Barack Obama to serve as the 44th President of the United States of America. As the electorate, we believe that President-Elect Obama stands for *CHANGE THAT MEETS OUR CHALLENGES*. What is this Change? This Change is

not about any one person, this change is a movement that encompasses civic participation, accountability and forward thinking. This change is going to require each of us to roll up our sleeves and simply do the work.

The United States is facing extremely difficult times. The economy is a National concern, and perhaps Prince George's County's greatest challenge. As we work to address this issue, I have asked Council Member Camille A. Exum to continue her role in this effort with the budget. People are losing their homes and their jobs, retirement funds are disappearing, businesses are going bankrupt, cars are being repossessed, infrastructure is deteriorating and education is becoming unaffordable and unattainable for many. Prince George's County faces additional challenges, among these are: aging school buildings that need to be replaced and repaired; engaging our youth; and domestic violence and all of its ill

effects. And like the nation, we must confront and face our challenges head on.

Yet with each challenge comes opportunity: the opportunity to become a more efficient and effective government, the opportunity to be creative, innovative and industrious as we work to meet the needs of our citizens and quite frankly doing more with less. General George S. Patton once said, “Accept the challenge so that you may feel the exhilaration of victory.” It will take hard work; yet, we as a committed County Council accept the challenge. We will be deliberate and we will make a conscience effort to legislate the Change to meet our challenges. And we will do this as a team. Andrew Carnegie once said “Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.”

My partnership and team efforts begin with my Vice-Chairman, the honorable and talented Thomas E. Dernoga. Thank you Tom for accepting the challenge to help lead again! Because of his expertise and tenacity, I am asking Mr. Dernoga to lead efforts to help find creative and new ways to partner with the State and other stakeholders as we attempt to advance the vast infrastructure needs upon which our future economic viability relies. Council Member Dernoga, and the council as a whole, will receive input from our Prince George's County Youth Commissioners, as they work along side the County Council, to advocate for the youth of this county.

The working arm of the County Council is its standing committees, because they allow special attention to designated county concerns. I have made the following committee appointments for the 2008 - 2009 Legislative Year.

Planning Zoning and Economic Development

Chairman, Samuel H. Dean and

Vice Chairman , Eric Olson

Public Safety and Fiscal Management

Chairperson, Camille A. Exum and

Vice Chairman, Tony Knotts

Transportation Housing and Environment

Chairman, Thomas E. Dernoga and

Vice Chairman, Will Campos

Health, Education and Human Services

Chairperson, Andrea Harrison and

Vice Chairperson, Ingrid Turner

This Council has everything it takes to meet and conquer these challenges. We have the experience, the innovation, the business sense, the sensitivity, the flexibility and yes, the determination.

I am humbled and excited about the opportunity and possibilities stemming from the *CHANGE THAT MEETS OUR CHALLENGES*. I urge you, the residents of this County, to join us in this effort. Together we shall not fail. “For if God be for us, who can be against us?”

Thank you and now the work begins.