

Mayor G.T. Bynum's 2021 State of the City Address November 4, 2021

Thank you for that introduction and to all of you for being here today. A year ago when we held this event, we weren't even in the same room. I was speaking into a camera and you were (hopefully) watching on your computer at home or the office. A global pandemic had physically separated us, and none of us had been vaccinated.

Today, we are back together. Vaccines are free and readily available for all who are old enough to receive them. And exciting initiatives are under way across the city.

I want to thank my family for their love, support, and patience – especially my wife, Susan, and our kids Robert and Annabel. I am grateful every day for the lifelong example of my grandfather, the best mayor Tulsa ever had, and I'm looking forward to celebrating his 95th birthday in January.

I also remember a relationship that failed in the last two years. Someone I spent time with every day - usually from the moment I woke up in the morning until I went to bed at night. I went to them for guidance, I worked with them to help answer questions. I'm speaking, of course, about my Facebook comments section.

For years, media professionals and other elected officials couldn't believe how much time I spent there - not turning it over to a staffer but handling it all on my own. I thought it was a great resource - like a front porch that anyone was welcome to step onto and ask me a question or tell me what I was doing wrong.

But at some point in 2020, I threw in the towel. The comments section - as we now know, thanks to investigative journalism - had basically become a funnel of smugness, misinformation and rage. I could spend all day there trying to fix things, or I could do my job that actually impacts lives. I miss the folks with sincere questions or ideas. If you're one of them, you can shoot me an email any time at mayor@cityoftulsa.org.

I get to share a lot of exciting progress with you today, but I want to be clear at the outset that this only happens because of teams of Tulsans who are working to move our community forward. As mayor, I get to be a part of many of these teams so I know the great work they are doing and can share it with you. But there hasn't been any significant accomplishment for our city that didn't involve a lot of people.

Given this venue, though, I do want to single out one team in particular: Mike Neal and the team at the Tulsa Regional Chamber. Everyone knows about how energetic Mike is, and you see him a lot at big job announcements and the openings of new facilities. But what you don't see are the months - and usually years - of work that he and his team put into those projects behind the scenes before that photo opportunity ever comes to fruition. I am so grateful to have the best chamber in America in the city I serve. Their work makes a lot of us look pretty smart, and I want to thank all of you who support their work. The more each organization represented here today can do to support the Tulsa Regional Chamber, the more they can do to grow our regional economy. Mike, thank you!

I remember being in the emergency operations center during the 2019 Flood. Any leader in Tulsa knows you are going to have to deal with natural disasters – the most common probably being tornados. But tornados trick you. They get you accustomed to dealing with natural disasters that happen very quickly, and your job is mostly to deal with the aftermath.

But the flood event in Tulsa went on for weeks. And I remember the exhaustion at the end of that event, when Keystone Dam finally started lowering its releases to a manageable level. Our whole community

had been on alert for a few weeks, and at the City we worked around the clock to manage the response. At one point, we were delivering a briefing in the middle of the flood while tornados were hitting town.

What we did not appreciate at the time was that the 2019 Flood was just the start. I think it is important to take a moment to reflect on what Tulsans have endured over the last two years.

We dealt with a flood that was our worst since the famous Memorial Day Flood in 1984.

We dealt with the worst global pandemic since the Spanish Flu epidemic in 1918.

We dealt with the largest spike in unemployment since the Great Depression.

We dealt with the largest municipal budget reduction since the Great Recession.

We experienced civil unrest the likes of which we have not seen since the 1960s.

We endured a polar vortex which caused the worst winter storm destruction since the 2007 ice storm.

Our two largest economic sectors faced historic challenges, with oil prices dropping 306% to trade at negative \$38 a barrel and enplaned commercial aviation passengers dropping more than 90% year over year.

We overcame the worst cyber-attack on a governmental entity in Oklahoma history.

We mourned the first Tulsa Police Officer murdered since 1996.

We've experienced a century's share of calamity in two years. I remember about a month into our pandemic response, I was sitting at our kitchen table at home - what had become "the Mayor's Office" for a while - and had just concluded a Zoom call dealing with the crisis of the day when Susan walked up behind me, put her hands on my shoulders, and started laughing.

I asked her: "What's so funny? I'm dealing with the end of days here."

And she said: "You've wanted to be mayor of Tulsa since you were eight years old, and of all the times in the entire history of the city that you could have done it, THIS is when you got to do your dream job."

I was reminded of that with each successive crisis that arose. And yet, that is what makes me so proud of Tulsa. Because in spite of crisis after crisis, Tulsa is experiencing the greatest moment of growth and transformation in my lifetime. We have not been distracted or discouraged. The cranes are in the air. Businesses are growing faster than they can find employees. Exciting new attractions are opening. And Tulsa's historic period of growth continues to roll forward. There has never been - in my lifetime, at least - a more exciting time to serve our city.

I am so thankful to go to work every day with the best public servants in America at the City of Tulsa. These are the rookie police officers who signed up to protect you when law enforcement has never been under greater scrutiny, the firefighters who responded to your medical emergency in a pandemic before we knew how COVID-19 spread or how to properly protect them from it. These are the crews that were out digging through ice to fix your water line when it was 20 degrees below zero. These are the civil servants working to translate our COVID briefings into multiple languages, balance our budget, repair our IT infrastructure, and vaccinate our other employees – all so the larger team can continue to serve

you. These are the city councilors who put service ahead of partisanship, and the Auditor who modernizes our performance management systems.

3,500 people like this come to work every day and do their jobs to make this the best city it can be for you and your family. They reflect the resilience of the citizens they serve.

In its 123 years of 24/7 operations, the City of Tulsa has never been tested like it has in the last two years. But through all of that, we never lost sight of our primary over-arching mission: to make Tulsa a globally-competitive, world-class city. That's a pretty broad goal, so we seek to achieve it through three primary areas: making Tulsa a safe city, making Tulsa a city of opportunity, and empowering this generation of Tulsans to build the city they want to leave to the next generation.

When it comes to public safety, the greatest challenge we face in Tulsa is a workforce shortage.

In the Tulsa Fire Department, we've seen the inevitable demographic results of an older department as retirements have escalated rapidly. To address this, the City of Tulsa successfully secured a \$12 million federal grant that will allow us to hire 60 new firefighters this year - closing the gap and starting the careers of a new generation of Tulsa firefighters.

Despite this temporarily reduced workforce, the Tulsa Fire Department has secured an ISO Rating of 1 - independently ranking us as one of the best cities in America for fire protection, which benefits property insurance rates throughout our community. But Chief Michael Baker and his team aren't sitting around and patting themselves on the back. Under construction right now is Tulsa's newest fire station - Station 33, in East Tulsa, which will ensure that the fastest growing part of our city continues to enjoy the highest quality of fire protection service.

In the Tulsa Police Department, we are seeing two workforce trends converge: retirements among the more senior members of the force and challenges in recruitment due to the toxic national dialogue aimed at law enforcement. This is why I am so overwhelmed with gratitude every time I see a new academy graduate from the Tulsa Police Department: these are men and women who knowingly enter a dangerous job that has never been more scrutinized, yet they do it because they want to protect you and me. They are remarkable people, from remarkable families.

But Tulsa has not been as competitive as we need to be in hiring them. Independent experts have told us we need around 950 officers. The day I was sworn in we had around 730. During my time as mayor, the City Council and I have funded the most rapid increase in hiring in Tulsa Police Department history so that even with all the retirements we've seen we are at around 830 officers today. But the pool of candidates with each of those classes has shrunk steadily, to the point that TPD hasn't been able to fill recent academy classes.

So this year, we agreed to the largest increase in starting pay in the history of the Tulsa Police Department - ranking Tulsa on par with Oklahoma City in pay we can offer new officers. This resulted in an immediate increase in applicants, and last month we accepted 35 officers into our newest academy - making it one of the largest classes we've ever had.

In spite of continued manpower shortages, the Tulsa Police Department continues to do remarkable work. Under Chief Franklin, they have expanded their community policing efforts with a Community Engagement Unit and Community Advisory Boards in each of their three divisions. And in one of the most important jobs for the Tulsa Police Department - apprehending murderers - our department ranks among the best in the nation. TPD's homicide solve rate last year was 94%. To put that in context, during the same time Chicago's was 46% and Houston's was 45%.

The Tulsa Fire Department and Tulsa Police Department are also working together to expand an important, innovative service throughout Tulsa. In my first year as mayor, thanks to a grant from the Tulsa Area United Way, we became one of the first cities in the nation to test pilot a Community Response Team. Each mobile response team consists of a police officer, a firefighter and a mental health counselor from Family and Children's Services. These teams assist people experiencing a mental health crisis, assisting them quickly in the field and connecting them with the resources they need for a healthy recovery. In the last four years, we've grown this program from its initial pilot stage to this year expanding it to five days a week - the amount recommended by program organizers as most effective. We have also embedded a counselor from Family and Children's Services' COPES program in our 9-1-1 Center, so people experiencing a mental health crisis can access immediate expert assistance on the phone before a Community Response Team arrives.

Of course, you can't talk about public safety during a pandemic without profound gratitude for the team at the Tulsa Health Department and the health care professionals working throughout our community to save lives. We are living through the greatest public health emergency in our city's history, and these selfless heroes have guided our response every step of the way. They have deployed a vaccine to all who want it, and they have cared for those most severely afflicted by COVID-19. All of this has come at a great personal toll for them that can never be properly compensated, but we can show our thanks by doing our part to prevent the worst effects of the virus through vaccination.

If you work in Tulsa's health care industry - and you can interpret that as loosely as you want - but if you have been working in health care in Tulsa over the last two years would you please stand up so the rest of us can show you our thanks? Thank you so much.

In particular, I want to single out the Director of the Tulsa Health Department, Dr. Bruce Dart. We have been so fortunate to have local, independent guidance during this pandemic that is free of political influence. The Tulsa Health Department has its own board and its own revenue source, which has freed Dr. Dart to focus solely on what will keep our community safe. And he has used a lifetime of experience and education, to devote seemingly all his waking hours over the last 21 months to advising our community on what we can do to protect ourselves and our families. In exchange for this selfless service, he's been ridiculed by self-appointed experts with no public health education, had his life threatened, and had dead animals dumped in his yard by cowards. Yet none of this has distracted him. He continues to work every day, seeking the latest data and research, answering every call and participating in every meeting. Bruce Dart is the savior of an incalculable number of lives because of his tireless work, and I hope one day our community can properly thank him. Dr. Dart, thank you.

And while we're talking about public safety, there's been a lot of discussion lately about last year's 5-4 Supreme Court decision in the *McGirt* case. Given the magnitude of this decision and the impact it has on the everyday lives of so many people, it should be no surprise that tempers have flared. We have officials in both the state government and tribal governments who feel a deep responsibility to the people they serve - and they've been asked to sort through a fundamental question of how those governments interact, a question that will impact the lives of Oklahomans for centuries into the future.

And in Tulsa, we must work with all of them. Our City does not have the luxury of attacking one side or the other because they are all our long term partners. They are our friends. I have great respect for the Governor, the Attorney General, and the Chiefs who lead the Cherokee, Muscogee, and Osage Nations. They have all been incredibly important collaborators with our City, and they will continue to be in the future. Leaders can have principled disagreements and still work together for the common good, and I hope that will continue to be the case here.

The second component in our strategy for Tulsa to compete as a world-class city is that we must be recognized as a city of opportunity for everyone. Now, more so than at any time in human history, people have mobility to move where opportunity awaits. For most of us in this room, we are in Tulsa because we can see opportunity for ourselves and our families in this community. But that isn't the case for everyone. We seek to change to that.

At the City of Tulsa, we established our community's first comprehensive strategy to address racial disparities - the Resilient Tulsa Strategy. But I've been at City Hall long enough to know we are great at developing plans and then putting them on a shelf. So we created a team - the Mayor's Office of Resilience and Equity - tasked with coming to work every day to implement that plan. And to track our progress, we are one of the only major cities in America to self-fund an annual independent audit of inequality in our city - the Tulsa Equality Indicators.

Although it seems like a lifetime ago, I first ran for Mayor in 2016 for two main reasons: I thought we were under-achieving as a city, and I was horrified by the life expectancy disparity between North Tulsa and the rest of the city. The initiatives I just mentioned were designed to address that disparity, and if I'm being honest, I will admit that one of my greatest frustrations in this job has been the slow pace of improvement in that disparity. But as a North Tulsa pastor once told me: "You can't expect these problems to build up for a century, and then you come in as mayor and flip a switch and they all go away." The reality is that this work must be sustained and committed for years if we are going to realize a Tulsa where every kid has an equal opportunity for success.

So we have to build systems now that will carry out that work over the years ahead. This leads me to one of the most important economic development initiatives in our city's history: the creation of the Tulsa Authority for Economic Opportunity.

For decades, it has been acknowledged that the City's economic development tools were siloed and inefficient. We had the Mayor's Office of Economic Development to help manage projects, the Tulsa Industrial Authority to assist with financing, the Tulsa Parking Authority to manage parking facilities, the Tulsa Development Authority to incentivize construction in underserved areas, and an Economic Development Commission made up of great business leaders that was powerless to follow through on most of their guidance. Each of these entities had their own boards of directors and own staff. Communication between them was sporadic and unreliable, and they almost never worked together on projects. For someone looking to invest in Tulsa, they needed a sherpa to walk them through all of these different entities if they wanted to maximize support for their project.

Not anymore. This year, we merged all of these entities into one new authority: the Tulsa Authority for Economic Opportunity. The Tulsa Authority for Economic Opportunity will dramatically enhance ease of investment for those who want to help grow our city. It will be more efficient and more effective and will unleash the substantial resources the City has to offer the private sector.

But what makes the Tulsa Authority for Economic Opportunity unique is its purpose. It seeks to use economic development to advance equality of opportunity in all parts of our city. Even though, in partnership with the Tulsa Regional Chamber, we have enjoyed historic achievements in economic development over the last five years - landing the two largest new employers in Tulsa history, the single largest economic development investment in Tulsa history, and over one billion dollars in private sector investment into North Tulsa - we aren't doing these for the sake of economic development alone. We are using these achievements to make Tulsa a city where equality of opportunity is not just an aspiration but a reality.

Having a local economic development authority with this kind of mission is unique in America, and as a result the Tulsa Authority for Economic Opportunity has already garnered national interest and been held up as a model for others. I am incredibly grateful for the work of Kian Kamas and her team, as well as board members of the new organization and its predecessors, all of whom have worked tirelessly to bring about what I expect will be - in retrospect a few decades from now - viewed as one of the most transformative enterprises in Tulsa's history.

While the eyes of the world have been on Tulsa during the centennial of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, we began this work as a city long before that attention shifted to us and we will continue it long after that attention has moved on. We are committed to the work of shedding light on our painful past and promoting reconciliation and healing for the long-term, including the search for the graves of victims from the Race Massacre. After extensive historical research and scanning, we conducted an excavation this past summer in Oaklawn Cemetery in search of evidence of a mass grave. Our technical experts will report their findings and recommend next steps in the months ahead. This project will take years to do the right way, but we are committed to following the truth where it leads us. I am incredibly grateful for the citizen volunteers and technical experts from around the country who have assisted this project as we seek the truth for our neighbors who were murdered in 1921.

And when we talk about people who view Tulsa as a place of opportunity, I get to meet a new group of them every month since we started hosting citizenship ceremonies at City Hall. This is part of what we call the New Tulsans Initiative - a program to make sure Tulsa is living up to the faith that our immigrant community has placed in this city. We realized there were thousands of Tulsans going through the citizenship process, and we wanted them to know how grateful our community is that they chose Tulsa. So, we started hosting these ceremonies. Every month, I attend them and I meet people who have risked all they have to leave their homeland and come here - because they view Tulsa and Oklahoma and the United States as beacons of freedom and opportunity - not just for them, but for future generations of their family. It just fills you with so much pride in our country, our state and our city. During the first wave of the pandemic, we couldn't hold one inside so we held our largest one yet at the Admiral Twin Drive-In - it was incredible!

This year we also launched another important initiative to make Tulsa a city of opportunity for everyone, and this is one where I'm going to ask the help of every organization in this room today. Tulsa cannot rightly call itself a city of opportunity for everyone so long as women earn 84 cents to every dollar earned by men for comparable work. To address this, the Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women created the Mayor's Pay Equity Pledge to highlight Tulsa employers who are committed to closing this gap.

Companies and organizations that take the Mayor's Pay Equity Pledge agree to three things:

1. They will ban questions about previous salary history to candidates for hire or promotion. Studies show that women are routinely disadvantaged by this practice.
2. They commit to diversity, equity, and inclusion training for personnel responsible for recruiting, hiring, onboarding and promoting.
3. They review employee pay to ensure compliance with the Equal Pay Act. This one is particularly important, as we are asking employers to do what you are already supposed to be doing under federal law.

At the City of Tulsa, we can speak to the value of this program from experience. We are a large, public organization with employees operating within a civil service system and strict labor contracts. This is not a venue ripe for intentional discrimination. But when we conducted a self-audit, we found around \$400,000 in pay disparities within our own organization - disparities which arose bit by bit here and there over the years completely unintentionally but with real consequences for women working at the

City. Thanks to a swift budget amendment from the City Council, we were able to correct this and make sure our employees are receiving equal pay for equal work. And now we go through a self-audit annually to prevent any recurrence.

I am so thankful for the nearly 40 Tulsa organizations who have taken this pledge in its first year! You have registered yourselves as employers of choice in Tulsa at a time when the competition for employees is intense. I encourage every organization represented here today to take this pledge. Please just email resilient@cityoftulsa.org

The third component of making Tulsa a world-class city is that we are building the city we want to leave to future generations. Right now, Tulsa is going through the third wave of growth in the history of our city.

Every time I walk into my office, the view out the window is dominated by two cranes as part of the Santa Fe Square construction project. For someone who has done as much for Tulsa as Elliot Nelson, it is exciting to see his long-time dream coming to life in this expansive mixed-use development in the Blue Dome District.

After sitting underutilized for years, projects like the historic renovation of the Sinclair Building are moving forward thanks to the support of programs like our Downtown Development and Redevelopment Fund – in total, between recently completed, in-progress and planned projects, this program is supporting \$161 million in new investment Downtown.

American Airlines is moving forward with a modernization of their Tulsa base - the largest commercial aviation maintenance base in the world - with a \$550 million investment that will secure Tulsa as the center of excellence for decades to come.

Navistar, which operates one of the largest school bus manufacturing facilities in the world right here in Tulsa, is investing millions into their Tulsa plant following a renewed agreement with the City of Tulsa - providing safe rides to school for kids across America and employing over a thousand of our neighbors in the Tulsa Metro.

Four years ago, Amazon had no physical footprint in Tulsa. As of today, they have completed their third facility in our city in three years - speeding delivery to customers and employing even more people.

In North Tulsa, we broke ground on a transformative new mixed-use development along 36th Street North led by Tulsa developer Antoine Harris. This new project will include a hotel and retail and has some of the most breathtaking views of the city skyline that you will see anywhere.

For years, North Tulsa residents have been underserved when it comes to grocery store access. This year alone, we have opened the Oasis Fresh Market on North Peoria and we just announced Tulsa's second Costco is on its way to the rapidly developing 169 Corridor in Northeast Tulsa.

Speaking of grocery stores, Downtown will be getting another as well - on the ground floor of the exciting new mixed-use development set to begin construction next year on what was historically the Tulsa Performing Arts Center parking lot. This development will include apartments, retail and ample parking for both residents and PAC patrons alike.

Serving as a connecting point between the Greenwood and Arts Districts, Devon Energy (formerly WPX) is nearing completion of a landmark \$100 million tower and actively leasing what is undoubtedly some of the most beautiful office space in Tulsa.

As we work to add the critical services necessary for vibrant neighborhoods, we're also pushing to ensure we maintain and increase the availability of quality, affordable housing. Through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, in the last 10 months alone, we will have partnered with developers and agencies to create 80 new affordable housing units, support another 80 families in North Tulsa to become homebuyers, and help at least 450 individuals and families maintain or gain access to affordable housing through innovative new landlord and rental assistance programs.

We've also announced significant investments in Tulsa's entrepreneurial ecosystem. 36 Degrees North opened one of the largest tech-focused incubators in the country on the 5th Floor of City Hall - serving high-growth, tech-enabled startups with access to in-house programming, venture capital partners, one-on-one mentorship and tax benefits upon completion of their yearlong program. The startups in this 40,000 square foot space are going to change the future of Tulsa, and they are truly bringing "a new kind of energy" to City Hall. As a sign of the demand for this type of space, the occupancy in this incubator is currently at 76% - while nationally, incubators of this type average 30% occupancy in their first year.

We also announced the creation of the Greenwood Entrepreneurship Incubator at Moton, housed in the historic former Moton Hospital at Pine and Greenwood. The City of Tulsa has seeded funding for the physical transformation of the building and a 15-week TEDC accelerator course in which entrepreneur cohorts will develop their ideas into businesses.

And when it comes to public infrastructure, we have some of the most transformative projects in Tulsa history under construction right now.

USA BMX's World Headquarters and the Hardesty National BMX Stadium are set to open early next year, attracting hundreds of thousands to the Greenwood District and making Tulsa the home of an Olympic sport.

Just a few short weeks ago, we broke ground on the \$200 million Veterans Hospital in Tulsa, a transformational public-private partnership between the Veterans Administration, OSU Medical Center, the City of Tulsa, Tulsa County, the State of Oklahoma and Tulsa's philanthropic community to build out a campus that will increase access to quality care for the thousands of veterans in Northeast Oklahoma - and to establish what will truly be a world-class medical district in Downtown Tulsa.

After nearly 70 years of incremental work, the Gilcrease Expressway loop will be completed next year thanks to a groundbreaking public-private partnership - opening up areas of our city for development that were previously not easily accessible for significant traffic.

We are building a lake in the Arkansas River that will transform the way Tulsans use our greatest natural asset for recreation. Instead of everyone getting super excited for the one day a year we can use the river for the Raft Race, we will have a lake adjacent to the greatest city park in America - the Gathering Place - that people can access and enjoy throughout the year. Both the dam that creates the lake and the new pedestrian bridge - the first of its kind in the United States, that will be more than twice the width of the previous bridge and will arc out over the lake for stunning views of the natural surroundings - are on pace for completion in 2023.

And I want to congratulate every Tulsan in this room, because you own the greatest collection of American art and history outside of that owned by the federal government. The Thomas Gilcrease Museum is home to Native American art and artifacts, Benjamin Franklin's copy of the Declaration of Independence, and even Bob Dylan's archive. And for years, this world-class collection has been housed

in an antiquated, inefficient, leaky building. Not anymore. This generation of Tulsans is going to build a new museum worthy of that great collection, and it is set for completion in 2024.

At the City of Tulsa, one of the ways we are facilitating all of this growth is through continuous improvement in the way we process the permits necessary for projects to move forward. As many of you will recall, when I started as mayor we didn't even know how long it took the City to process a permit. No one was tracking it. So, we installed a tracking system and found that it took an average of five weeks just to review a permit application. Thanks to the support of our development community and the City Council, we brought fees in line with the cost of delivering high quality service and in one year we moved that average review time from five weeks to five days.

But our team hasn't been satisfied with that and has continued to implement improvements that have resulted in Tulsa being ranked as the 9th best city in America - and the best in Oklahoma - for ease of doing business by the Center for the Study of Economic Liberty. I am grateful for the hard work of our Development Services team to achieve this turnaround, and I know they won't be satisfied.

I also want to thank our Tulsa City Council. Many of the major cities around America are using funds from the American Rescue Plan Act to cover budget deficits they racked up in the outset of the pandemic. In Tulsa, our Administration worked with the City Council to make significant budget reductions on the front end - freezing hiring, furloughing employees, and altogether reducing spending to prepare for a worst-case scenario. Because we kept our budget balanced, we don't need a federal rescue and can instead focus that federal funding on needed improvements like the replacement of broken-down fire trucks, body cameras for police officers, improvements to the operations of our municipal court, and - hopefully - a partnership with other governments to fund the replacement of the air traffic control tower at Tulsa International Airport.

I get asked all the time: why does Tulsa have so much momentum right now? I can tell you what I hear from one business leader after another who is comparing Tulsa to other prospective places for investment: they tell me it seems like Tulsa is one city where everyone is rowing in the same direction - that we are working together to move our city forward rather than getting distracted by infighting - and they want to invest in a place focused on progress.

This is not for lack of opportunities to backslide! Every day each of us faces social media algorithms designed to promote outrage rather than understanding, people and even bots who seek power by pitting us against one another, an outrage industrial complex that raises money and creates jobs for the parasites who live off of it by demonizing "them" - whoever that might conveniently be.

Not a month goes by that someone or some group doesn't tell me "If you believe this or do this, then we won't work with you." I contrast this with what I learned from my old boss, Senator Don Nickles. Senator Nickles once told me why he never personally attacked other senators in debates. He said: "I disagree with them today on this issue, but I need to work with them on a different issue tomorrow - and if I attack their character, if I question their motives, I will only hurt my own ability to be effective and get things done for the people who sent me here." He was right.

Every day, each of us gets to decide if we are going to join in those fights or if we're going to keep finding ways to overcome the base level instincts of fear, outrage and retribution to instead find ways to work together and move Tulsa forward. Thankfully, person by person, our city generally chooses the high road. And this has created tremendous positive momentum that will benefit every person in our region.

What we are really trying to do in Tulsa is build a citadel against the toxic sources of division that have contaminated public life at so many other levels throughout our country. The story of our city is that we

can do more - to overcome both natural and man-made disasters, to make our city safer, to create opportunity for all, to build the city we truly want Tulsa to be - when we are working together. This does not mean we have to or will always agree. It means that in this city, facts from all sides are welcome and democracy, not outrage, provides us a path forward.

So, I want thank everyone who is doing your part to build that kind of Tulsa. Because of you, the state of our city is strong.

Thank you.