

**The Honorable Thomas M. Menino**

**State of the City Address**

**January 15, 2008**

*Prepared for delivery*

Senator Kerry, Governor Patrick, Secretary Galvin, Attorney General Coakley, Treasurer Cahill, Auditor DeNucci, Senate President Murray, Speaker DiMasi, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens. Thank you all for joining me tonight here at Boston's historic Strand Theatre!

My greatest thanks go to my family, and especially to my wife, Angela. You are my inspiration, day in and day out, as I work to lead our great city.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the men and women of America's armed forces, especially those who hail from Boston, who are serving our country in Iraq, Afghanistan and throughout the world. We are grateful for their sacrifice, and we look forward to having all of them home soon.

Thank you to the Boston City Council, for your hard work throughout the year – including your support for the renovation of the Strand Theatre.

Special thanks to Councilor Tobin and the members of our Poet Laureate Task Force. Our City's first Poet Laureate is with us tonight – Sam Cornish.

Also with us tonight is our favorite, undefeated football team, our Super Bowl Champions, the Brighton High Bengals! A few years ago, Brighton High could barely put eleven players on the field. Now, you young men have shown the whole city that by working hard and working together, we can reach the highest levels of success.

That is true in sports, in school, and throughout city life.

Indeed, Boston is bursting with excitement, investment, and potential.

While the national economic climate remains uncertain, we have prepared ourselves to weather the storms of economic change. From stemming the rise of foreclosures, to our exceptional bond rating – Boston remains ahead of other cities across the country.

Boston is a world leader in life sciences and healthcare, and we have led the charge to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities. Our colleges and universities mold the world's future leaders, and our financial services firms make us a global center for wealth management.

We have decreased violent crime, and we have increased our population.

We have lowered residential property taxes, and we have raised the quality of our schools.

We have narrowed the achievement gap, and we have expanded the range of parks, museums, and theaters that energize our city.

My fellow citizens, the state of our city is stronger than ever!

Boston is rich in resources, and every day this city creates more opportunity, more jobs, and more revenues – not just for the people of Boston – but for the entire Commonwealth of Massachusetts. But the City is still shackled by state laws that prevent us from diversifying our revenues. We must give this capital city the tools to do more for Massachusetts residents. I want to thank Governor Patrick for joining me in the fight to free cities and towns from our dangerous over-dependence on the property tax.

Tonight's invocation was given by Martin Luther King, III, who joined me this afternoon to announce plans to create Boston's newest piece of public art – a wonderful statue of his parents. Thank you, Mr. King, for joining us tonight, and for your commitment to the ideals that your father and mother championed.

Now, we all know that I am not quite the gifted public speaker that Doctor King was, but I share, with every ounce of who I am, the conviction that he captured so simply, when he said, "Life's most urgent question is: What are you doing for others?"

Tonight I want to talk to you about what our City is doing to support you in your family life, in your education, and in your work.

This year, we cut your property taxes, putting more money into the pockets of hard-working homeowners. I want to thank Senate President Murray and Speaker DiMasi, for your help on that issue.

As always, we plowed your streets, collected your trash, and looked after your parks and open spaces.

But I want to talk about more than these basic services. I want to talk about the greatest resource our city has – the people of Boston. From Millennium Park to Moakley Park, and from Adams Village to Maverick Square, the people of Boston power our city forward.

We have many examples of the benefits that we create when citizens work hand-in-hand with government.

Look at what we are doing in our fight to ensure public safety. This issue is an absolute priority of my administration.

With the help of our legislative leaders, we have put more police on the street than at any time since 2002. Commissioner Davis has deployed officers in Safe Street Teams, walking the blocks that most need police presence. We have increased the number of police detectives by 25 percent to investigate and solve crime.

All of this is important, but must be matched with a collaborative effort to engage citizens in the push to make neighborhoods safer. That's why I went out with teams of City staff to take services right into our communities.

We knocked on 2200 doors in ten BHA developments to educate families about youth recreation programs. That's every home in these developments with a child between eight and fourteen years old.

Then, we knocked on another 2100 doors – that’s every single residence in the four areas of our city most impacted by crime.

Because we know that attention to details – from fixing street lights to planting trees – helps to strengthen communities and improve safety.

This kind of aggressive approach is what today’s challenges demand – an absolute refusal to sit back and wait for solutions to appear.

Just look at the results. I am proud to say that in 2007, we reduced violent crime by 9 percent. We reduced homicides by 11 percent; and we reduced shootings by 14 percent.

I want to thank the men and women of the Boston Police Department, and all of the residents who are active in our neighborhoods, for making our city safer every day.

We will continue this comprehensive approach in the years ahead. Commissioner Davis has promised me that this year, we will reduce violent crime by another 10 percent.

Our public safety team is suffering, however, because of problems that persist in our fire department. I am astounded by the union leaders’ unwillingness to eliminate substance abuse and unethical personnel practices.

With every charge that comes up, the union leaders respond with defensiveness and denial. For some reason, they refuse to be part of the solution – and that’s a shame. It’s such a disservice to the honorable men and women in that department.

These union leaders do not seem to realize what everyone in this city knows – that it is not right to ask for pay raises as a reward for putting a stop to these abuses of the public trust.

I can tell you right now – I am one hundred percent opposed to any contract that does not include random drug and alcohol testing.

We have so many positive things happening in our city. Every day, I am out in the

neighborhoods. I cut ribbons for senior housing, and I drop in on neighborhood businesses. I see so many people who fill me with faith in the future of our city.

But for me, this year, my most inspiring moments came during my visits to Camp Harbor View. This is a remarkable story about the public and private sector joining together so that kids from every neighborhood in Boston could have the best summer of their lives.

I want to thank all of you who made this possible, especially Jack Connors and John Fish. Seeing your spirit of common commitment – and I see it every day – fills me with the energy to lead Boston forward.

Another place where I see a common commitment reshaping our city is in the area of environmental sustainability. I've been focused on this issue since 2000, when I joined mayors from around the world to show leadership on climate change. I have found that people citywide understand that sustainability is about making Boston's future even brighter than its present.

Now, I am announcing that Boston will introduce single stream recycling. The City will provide larger bins, so you don't have to sort paper from plastic. This meets people's desire to conserve resources, and it saves the City money by decreasing the amount of solid waste that we generate.

We have tested this program in Jamaica Plain and Roslindale, and recycling increased 53 percent. We really are turning Beantown into Greentown!

Another way that we are working to reduce our carbon footprint is by transforming Boston into a bike-friendly city.

Last fall, I kicked off the City's annual Hub on Wheels event, joining 3,000 people for a bike ride across our city. Now, we are going to improve Boston's cycling infrastructure, starting with new bike lanes on Commonwealth Avenue, between Kenmore Square and the BU Bridge. This is one of the busiest cycling corridors in Boston, with thousands of people commuting by bike every

day.

With your support, Boston is showing the world what it means to be a 21st Century City.

This matters most for the children of Boston – like the Boston Public School students who stood on this stage earlier this evening. These students come from every corner of the world. In their native languages, they welcomed the crowd to tonight’s event. Then, in English, they led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

I am moved by these kids and humbled by our responsibility to them, and I have a vision for how Boston can do more to live up to that responsibility.

When I first took office, we all worked together and created the Boston Miracle. That’s what people called the results of our nationally recognized community policing initiative.

Today, we are going to create the next Boston Miracle – and this one will come from our new commitment to Community Learning.

Imagine: if rather than enrolling your child in a single school, you enrolled your child in a set of institutions – a public school, a neighborhood branch library, and your local community center.

Imagine if these facilities, their programming, and their personnel were all aligned, so that curriculum and after-school programming could be seamlessly delivered from morning to evening.

Imagine if your children had not just a teacher or two to push their progress, but a whole network of caring adults at a series of sites throughout your neighborhood.

This is Community Learning.

Tonight, I am announcing that I will invest one million dollars to align these institutions.

With this commitment, we will begin to transform this vision of Community Learning into a reality of neighborhood life – a citywide approach that unlocks the vast potential of Boston’s children.

Our first step will be to improve our community centers. This year, we will add new arts

programming and extend the hours of operation. We can make more of these assets, and do more for Boston's future.

That's what we have done with our public schools, where City government and residents are working together to introduce change and propel progress.

Unfortunately, like urban school districts all across America, we do have a problem with high school students dropping out. We must do more for these kids.

Later this month, our new School Superintendent, Dr. Carol Johnson, will talk in more detail about how we're going to use every resource we have to re-engage these kids. I look forward to working with her to take on this challenge. We need to help these kids become part of Boston's public education success story.

In 2006, after five years as a finalist, the Boston Public Schools received the Broad Prize, as America's best urban school system. Now, US News & World Report has ranked the best public high schools in America.

Nine of Boston's public high schools received national recognition, and Boston Latin School was cited as the best school in Massachusetts, and number 19 in the nation.

Because we have created more high-performing schools throughout the city, we now have the opportunity to increase our investment in classroom quality by revisiting our school transportation plan.

Right now, we're spending tens of millions a year on yellow school buses, a portion of that is for our students with special needs and we will continue to provide this level of service for those families. But we can save significant money on the majority of transportation costs which currently total about 40 million dollars. If we do nothing, this number will reach 60 million dollars within five years. This is crazy. I will not allow us to pour dollar after dollar into gas tanks, when we could invest more of that money into our classrooms. I know this is a very sensitive issue, but strong

leadership is all about facing facts and providing a plan to push forward.

Here are the facts:

Number one: We now have more high-performing schools in our city than in the past.

Number two: We know that parents in every part of our city want and deserve choice.

Number three: We cannot continue to spend more and more money on transportation at the expense of education.

I have asked the School Committee and Superintendent Johnson to review the school transportation plan and recommend the necessary changes. I guarantee you that we absolutely will continue to provide choice, but I believe that we can rethink our school assignment zones, continue providing children in every neighborhood with access to high-performing schools, and save up to ten million dollars of transportation costs.

I pledge to you that every dollar we save will be reinvested in the quality of our classroom education for all children, in all neighborhoods.

Now, I will raise the bar even higher, because people need to know that we are committed not just to improvement, but to excellence.

I am calling on Superintendent Johnson to double the number of Advanced Placement Classes in the next five years.

In the same time frame, I have asked her to further challenge our most ambitious students by establishing International Baccalaureate programs at two of our non-exam schools. This program's rigorous standards command respect all over the world, and its graduates gain access to a whole range of international opportunities, in college and beyond. These diplomas are rare.

We will offer our most diligent public school students this gold standard of education because I believe that Boston must prepare our best and brightest to lead us in the increasingly global economy.



Working together, we are making city life more meaningful and more rewarding. Together, we will strengthen this city's framework for achievement, and its network of opportunities. And together, we will expand Boston's prominence on the global stage.

I ask all of you to join me in this process. You are the key to a future both more brilliant, and more inclusive, than anything we have ever known.

Together, we possess the power to drive this city to new heights – for ourselves, and for all who are around us.

Look around at our city, and you will see how this sense of common commitment can change a school, a block, a neighborhood.

You will see that this spirit has the power to shape us, and we in turn can take it upon ourselves to transform our entire city.

This is the greatness to which we aspire.

I am committed to this goal, and I ask for your commitment as well.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

God bless the great City of Boston.