

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I WANT TO THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING HERE THIS AFTERNOON FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT I'M MAKING TODAY.

THE CITY OF COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA MEANS SO MUCH TO ME, MY FAMILY, MY FRIENDS, AND TO MY COLLEAGUES ON CITY COUNCIL.

IT'S WHERE I WENT TO SCHOOL. IT'S WHERE I MET MY LOVELY WIFE LAURA. AND, IT'S WHERE WE DECIDED TO STAY AND RAISE OUR PRECIOUS CHILDREN.

IT'S WHERE I OPENED MY FIRST BUSINESS, AND OTHERS THAT FOLLOWED. AND, IT'S WHERE I MADE THE DECISION A LITTLE MORE THAN SEVEN AND A HALF YEARS AGO, THAT I WANTED TO GIVE BACK AND HELP THE CITY THAT I HAVE MADE MY HOME AN EVEN BETTER PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND RAISE A FAMILY.

WHEN I MADE THE DECISION TO FIRST RUN FOR CITY COUNCIL IN 2004, THERE WERE A LOT OF CHALLENGES AND THREATS FACING OUR CAPITAL CITY, ITS RESIDENTS AND OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE. IT WAS A TIME THAT REQUIRED NEW LEADERSHIP AND A NEW VOICE TO HELP GUIDE A PATH FOR OUR WONDERFUL CITY DURING AN EVER-CHANGING ENVIRONMENT AROUND IT.

THAT MESSAGE WAS HEARD LOUD AND CLEAR AND I WAS TRULY HUMBLLED BY THE OUT-POURING OF SUPPORT WHEN I WAS FIRST ELECTED BY VOTERS WITH ABOUT 55 PERCENT OF THE OVERALL VOTE. HOWEVER, I WAS EVEN MORE HUMBLLED WHEN VOTERS CAME BACK FOUR YEARS LATER TO RE-ELECT ME IN 2008 WITH THE SAME PERCENTAGE OF SUPPORT.

IN THE SEVEN YEARS I HAVE SERVED ON CITY COUNCIL, REPRESENTING THIS AT-LARGE DISTRICT, I HAVE TRIED VERY HARD AND THINK I HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESS TO BE A VOICE FOR EVERYONE. WE HAVE MADE SOME GREAT CHANGES TO IMPROVE OUR CITY SERVICES AND I HAVE NO REGRETS.

BUT, GETTING BACK TO THAT FIRST CAMPAIGN FOR CITY COUNCIL IN 2004, I MADE A CAMPAIGN PROMISE TO VOTERS THAT IF I WERE ELECTED – I WASN'T RUNNING TO HELP MY OWN POLITICAL FUTURE. I RAN BECAUSE I WANTED TO HELP THE CITY OF COLUMBIA BECOME ONE OF THE BEST PLACES TO LIVE, WORK AND RAISE A FAMILY. AND, I MADE THE PLEDGE BACK THEN I WOULD ONLY SERVE TWO TERMS IN OFFICE IF I WERE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE ELECTED.

**THAT'S WHY I AM BEFORE YOU TODAY -- TO ANNOUNCE THAT I WILL NOT BE OFFERING MYSELF UP FOR RE-ELECTION WHEN MY TERM CONCLUDES IN 2012.**

THIS SEAT IS NOT MY SEAT... THIS SEAT BELONGS TO EVERYONE IN COLUMBIA. AND I BELIEVE THAT HAVING

DIFFERENT VOICES AT THE TABLE IS A GOOD THING. IT KEEPS THE DEBATE FRESH, AND ALLOWS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR OTHERS TO PARTICIPATE AND TO CONTRIBUTE IN MAKING OUR CITY GREAT.

WHEN YOU LOOK AT EVERYTHING HERE, WE TRULY ARE ONE COLUMBIA. IT'S NOT US VERSUS THEM – WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER AND EVERYONE HERE SHOULD HAVE ONE GOAL – MAKING COLUMBIA THE BEST CAPITAL CITY IT CAN BE.

SO, I WANT TO THANK THE CITIZENS OF COLUMBIA FOR SO MUCH. I FEEL LIKE I HAVE MADE NEARLY A HUNDRED THOUSAND NEW FRIENDS DURING MY SERVICE TO OUR CITY. I THANK YOU FOR ELECTING ME TWICE TO REPRESENT YOU AND I HOPE I HAVE DONE YOU PROUD. I ALSO WANT TO CONGRATULATE YOU FOR BEING SO ACTIVE AND ENGAGED IN YOUR COMMUNITY – WHETHER YOU'RE A NEIGHBORHOOD PRESIDENT, OR A VOLUNTEER FOR A NON-PROFIT, OR JUST JOE SIX-PACK – IN MY SEVEN YEARS ON COUNCIL, I HAVE LEARNED EVEN MORE HOW RESIDENTS CARE ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY AND THEIR FELLOW MAN. AND, I THANK YOU.

TO MY FAMILY – WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS HOW MUCH I HAVE APPRECIATED YOUR SUPPORT AND HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU FOR BEING THERE FOR ME.

TO THE CITY MANAGERS, DEPARTMENT HEADS, PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS, AND ALL EMPLOYEES OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA, I

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE TO COLUMBIA. YOU ARE ON THE FRONT LINES EVERYDAY HELPING MAKE LIFE BETTER FOR RESIDENTS HERE AND I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MUCH I HAVE APPRECIATED YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR CITY.

TO MY COLLEAGUES ON CITY COUNCIL, PAST AND PRESENT, I THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE TO OUR CITY AND I THANK YOU FOR PUTTING UP WITH ME. I KNOW I HAVEN'T BEEN THE EASIEST PERSON TO WORK WITH – NOR THE MOST DIFFICULT EITHER – BUT IN THE END, WE ARE ALL HERE TO MAKE COLUMBIA THE BEST IT CAN BE.

I ALSO WANT TO THANK THE TWO MAYORS I HAVE WORKED WITH – STEVE BENJAMIN AND BOB COBLE. I THINK WE HAVE DONE A GREAT JOB IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS TO FIX AND EXECUTING SOLUTIONS TO MAKE OUR CITY MORE SOLVENT AND MORE OPEN FOR ALL PEOPLE TO CALL THIS WONDERFUL CITY HOME.

FOR ME, I WILL BE AND INTEND TO ACTIVELY SERVE OUT MY LAST YEAR ON COUNCIL AND I HOPE TO STILL CHAIR THE CITY'S BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE – WE HAVE MADE A LOT OF PROGRESS IN GETTING OUR CITY'S FINANCES BACK IN ORDER. I ALSO WANT TO CONTINUE THE WORK THAT HAS BEGUN ON OUR INSURANCE AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS, CONTINUE THE PROGRESS WE ARE MAKING IN NORTH COLUMBIA AND STAY ACTIVE BRINGING IN MORE RETAIL

INVESTMENTS LIKE THE ONE JUST ANNOUNCED LAST WEEK WITH WHOLE FOODS MARKET COMING TO THE INTERSECTION OF DEVINE STREETS AND FORT JACKSON BOULEVARD.

AND OVER THE LAST SEVEN YEARS, I AM VERY PROUD OF THE WORK I HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO ELIMINATE WASTEFUL SPENDING, GET OUR BUDGET AND FISCAL POLICIES BACK IN ORDER, AND LOWERING THE AMOUNT WE HAVE TRANSFERRED OUT OF SEWER AND WATER SO WE CAN USE THOSE FUNDS IN REPAIRING OUR AGING INFRASTRUCTURE.

FOR ME, I WILL BE DEDICATING MORE TIME TO MY FAMILY AND MY BUSINESS -- WASTE 2 ENERGY. I WILL STILL BE INVOLVED IN CIVIC MATTERS, AND I PROMISE YOU MY VOICE WILL BE HEARD AS I WILL STILL BE ENGAGED IN MY CITY AND COMMUNITY.

SO, AGAIN THANK YOU TO ALL RESIDENTS HERE IN COLUMBIA, MY SUPPORTERS, MY COLLEAGUES AND ALL MY FRIENDS OF FAMILY. THIS HAS BEEN SUCH AN ENRICHING EXPERIENCE AND I APPRECIATE EVERYONE'S CONTRIBUTIONS.

I'LL NOW TAKE ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE....