



**EDWARD FITZGERALD**  
Cuyahoga County Executive

State of the County, 2012

Good afternoon. First I want to thank the City Club, our local citadel of free speech, for hosting my second State of the County address.

One year ago, I was able to report to you that the attendance at this event was more than three times that under the old county system. Today, I can report to you that the attendance here is approximately 10 times what it was under the old system. *Your* presence here today- and *everyone else* who listens to this event through other mediums, is a tangible example that the optimism which was a hallmark of the beginning of this experiment has not just survived but actually grown stronger.

We have a lot to discuss, so let me get right to it.

Much progress has been made since our transition to a new form of county government. Coming out of a period of *unprecedented* corruption, we have entered into a period of *unprecedented* openness, transparency and integrity in county government. We know that the people of this county don't have confidence in Washington or Columbus, but there is a growing confidence in the way county government is now being conducted. And if we approached this from a strictly political standpoint, it might be wise to just rest on our laurels, consolidate our achievements, and stop taking political risks.

That's exactly what I'm not going to do. The confidence and trust that we have built with the people of this region in the last year must be used for a high purpose. And so, with that in mind, I will attempt to present to you a State of the County address unlike what you have heard before.

What you will hear today will be more than a recitation of new programs and initiatives; nor will it be a simple accounting of the achievements of the past year. My goal today is to take stock of our situation, yes, but to outline a long-range, multi-year agenda for progress and transformation of this county.

Because as proud as I am of what has been achieved this year, we have only really affected the way in which government has been conducted, but we are not yet truly impacting outcomes in a more significant way- as defined by economic, educational, human service or other benchmarks.

Some local historians have identified twelve key historical events in the history of greater Cleveland. These include everything from the settling of this territory, and the establishment of the Western Reserve, to our leadership in the industrial revolution, to the establishment of our medical and cultural institutions. According to this timeline, the last significant event in our history, was the establishment of this new county government, after nearly a century of trying, and even then only after a corruption scandal which imploded the old system.

This is the only significant event in our history which is unfolding as we speak. We get to write the ending to this story- whether it's another disappointment, or the breakthrough we have been waiting for.

I have followed a three part strategy. First, I sought to restore the public's faith and trust in county government, because without public confidence, any other significant reform would be impossible. Second, I wanted to use the



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powers granted to us by the charter to do more than county government has ever done before to tackle the array of problems facing us. And third, I wanted to use the official and unofficial power of this office to truly harness the capabilities of all the myriad institutions which operate here- public, private, and non-profit, and get them working together as a unit on agreed upon goals.

Let's begin with our efforts in the past year to restore public trust and confidence. The last year can be fairly described as the year of 100 reforms. Every aspect of county government is being scrutinized, analyzed, and evaluated.

So, what are the principles which have guided our steps in this process?

We attempt to measure our program outcomes. We measure employee performance. We compare ourselves to best practices, across the state and across the country. We are always striving to engage the public, and build partnerships with the private sector. We attempt to be as open and transparent as possible, and use the latest technology to help us in that task. And we have become a non-political organization, open to all people of talent.

Our overall philosophy is that we don't want to just be an improvement over the old system, we want to create the premier county government in America.

I can report to you today that, using these principles as our guide, we have made great progress in a very short period of time. A partial list of our reforms and improvement are scrolling on the screen now, but some of the highlights include:

Adopting the strictest ethical code governing any county in Ohio;

Enforcing that ethical code by being the first county in Ohio to have an independent Inspector General;

Evaluating every county employee, and expecting their conduct to be consistent with high standards of public employment;

Relentlessly driving towards greater efficiency across a whole range of functions, including procurement, contracting, health benefits, and number of employees. To date, we have more than 300 fewer employees, net, than we did when we began.

And while other counties have been raising taxes or slashing services because of the unprecedented cuts to local government by the Kasich administration, our reforms have allowed us to actually increase our fiscal strength and pass a two year budget with no tax increases while doing more than ever before:

We've been busy consolidating and streamlining departments, and developing the county's first long-range technology strategy;

We're conducting a comprehensive "asset inventory" including all vehicles, and our many buildings;

We're committed to conducting the public's business in public, openly and transparently, especially by using technology to let sunshine in to our internal processes whenever possible.



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We are living in an era when public satisfaction with government performance is at an all-time low. There are many reasons for that level of disappointment regarding the state or federal government, but we hope that our actions in the last year have in some ways been an antidote for cynicism.

We have demonstrated that it is possible to make government smaller, more efficient, more effective, more transparent and honest, more of a merit system, and you can do it for less money. There is a very simple formula to gain the public's confidence and respect: just do what you said you were going to do, and the politics will take care of itself.

The reforms of the last year also served another purpose: they have given us a local government entity which is more suited now than at any other time in our history to accomplish great things.

Truly great metropolitan areas do not succeed because of a six-month plan, or a one-year or two-year plan. A practical, long range plan is necessary to effect real progress.

And just having a plan is not enough- it must be big and bold and broad enough, and brave enough to actually take us to where we want to be.

That is my mission here today.

I know that there are many who will reflexively believe, even without knowing the details, that any such plan will fail. And they have plenty of past disappointment they can cite which will support their negative outlook.

But, they are probably the same kind of people who never believed that we would be a world center of medicine; the same people who wouldn't believe our orchestra could tour to sold out concert halls all over the world; the same people who scoffed that our universities could achieve national renown, or that our theatre district would be the second largest in the nation.

How do they explain the new Museum of Contemporary Art, or the \$150 million expansion of the Cleveland Museum of Art, or a local food movement which is making news all over the country, or the new hotels being built, the new aquarium, the huge investment on the East Bank of the Flats?

I feel sorry for these people. I really do, because every day it gets harder for them to persist in their view that everything just keeps getting worse. Only our professional sports teams provide them with support for their depressing view of greater Cleveland. And no, I don't have a plan to address that problem.

My approach to governance is always heavily predicated upon historical review. So as we charted a course for our county, we began with a review of the historical record. Too often, people in this era look back on our history as some distant and impossible to equal golden age. Looking back to the past as our best days is possibly the primary characteristic of a failed culture.

I am not interested in reviewing our historical record as an exercise in nostalgia or wistfulness. We should look at our past for practical lessons that we can incorporate today.



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The people who settled in the Western Reserve area built a city, an economy, universities, museums, parks systems, non-profits, corporations, political movements, faith communities- which lifted millions of people into the middle class, helped energize the entire country, and gained international fame. The people who lived here – where we live - did all those things and more; and so can we.

Our forms of governance do not dictate whether we succeed. And sometimes civic success comes despite governmental leadership. But since everyone concedes that we have suffered from symptoms of economic decline, then it follows that we need local government which operates at the highest level.

A review of the historical record indicates that our economic progress and our political progress diverged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the economy continued to grow in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and with it our population, our political systems did not adapt and progress.

In some respects, the reforms of government which swept the country beginning in the progressive era were never fully realized here. And we've paid the price for that.

In fact, in many ways, our local government went backwards. When this area was first settled, partly as a consequence of the Revolutionary War, this entire area was known The Western Reserve. Over time, as our population and economy grew, we continued to fragment and subdivide. For instance, in 1860 there were 29 municipalities, but that number doubled by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

But much of the inefficiency and lack of coherent strategy inherent in this multiplication of municipalities was obscured by robust economic expansion.

So now we find ourselves entering upon a 21<sup>st</sup> century where we are competing against an array of more coordinated metropolitan areas, while struggling with economic changes which we must adapt to quickly or risk being left behind.

The stakes are so high, and the situation so rife with risk, that we need to have a comprehensive, county-wide plan, and we need it right now. It is self-evident that our current patchwork of individual kingdoms is powerless to execute any kind of coordinated strategy to compete in a global economy. It wasn't just that the wrong people were in charge of the county- no one has been in charge. So we've just been a punching bag for our more coordinated rivals across the country.

Today, I am presenting for your consideration a long range, practical plan which has an appreciation of our historical legacy, and combines it with the innovative public policy strategies.

The Western Reserve Plan includes the following twelve principles:

1. *Implementing* a practical strategy for creating a functioning, county-wide **metropolitan government**.
2. *Establishing* Greater Cleveland as a center of **entrepreneurship and job growth**.
3. *Designing* a place-based development strategy which recognizes the centrality of **downtown Cleveland** to the region as a whole.



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4. *Aligning* and coordinating both public and private resources around our most pressing **human service needs**.
5. *Identifying* **education**, from early childhood forward, as the central factor in individual and community success.
6. *Embracing* a **health and wellness** culture which mirrors the excellence of our major medical institutions.
7. *Incorporating* **economic inclusion** as a guiding principle in our economic development strategy.
8. *Branding* our metropolitan area as an **international city** which harnesses the energy of our **younger generations**.
9. *Adopting* a collaborative approach to the **foreclosure crisis**- from prevention to restoration.
10. *Honoring* the service of our **veterans** by giving them priority in hiring, training and education.
11. *Protecting* our county by leading a county-wide **public safety** initiative.
12. *Creating* a culture within county government which implements on a continual basis nationally recognized **good government** practices and innovations.

#### **Regional strategies/services/metro government**

It's time to be brutally honest about the discussion which has been taking place regarding the possibility that we will regionalize our services, our governments, or both. First, the discussion has been going on for almost 100 years. And that says it all.

Although there have been examples of progress, and for the first time the county has assisted in those discussions, we are not on a trajectory to any serious form of shared services, strategies, or consolidated government. We just aren't, and it's time to stop pretending that we are. When this concept was first seriously proposed in the first half of the twentieth century, some of its proponents knew that time was of the essence. At that time, about 80% of the population of the county was contained in the City of Cleveland, and they feared that as population inevitably migrated outwards, it would make it more and more difficult to create a regional approach to government. They were right, and that's exactly what happened.

So for 100 years, we have had an interesting philosophical discussion which gets us almost nowhere we haven't already been. The comparison of us to what other metropolitan areas have done are, frankly, usually ill-informed. There is no place in the country which has our level of fragmentation, with home rule powers for cities, which has just spontaneously combined in any meaningful way. Cities and counties, such as Indianapolis, that have merged usually consist of a central city surrounded by undeveloped and unincorporated areas.

But there is a way to get there. And we can do it without forcing anything on any city.

Cities perform a myriad of services, ranging from street repair to garbage pickup to public safety. And in this county, in general, those functions are performed by 59 different communities, with all of the attendant inefficiencies you can imagine.



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Under my plan, each year, the county would seek to provide an additional municipal service, available to these cities on a contract basis, if they so choose. Each year, the county can expand its menu of services, until someday a comprehensive set of municipal services can be provided by the county.

This concept is simple, and it is proven. It has already worked in this county for things such as many of our social services, or the services provided by the county Board of Health.

It is also revolutionary. Because for the first time cities will not have a monopoly on providing local services. It actually introduces a competitive dynamic for the first time in local government. It will be up to us to provide the service effectively and economically; the cities retain all of their rights and privileges. If they are not convinced that we can perform as advertised, they can do things as they are now. But the option will always be there. And over time, for the first time, we will have the prospect of finally becoming a cohesive metropolitan area. It is also our only real chance to reduce the size and cost of local government in a dramatic way.

We are already laying the groundwork for this revolutionary service delivery method. Just last week, my Chief Information Officer met with Parma city officials about coordinating IT services. Throughout the year, we will continue to develop our capacity to add municipal services to our capabilities.

And no one should doubt that this is ultimately in our community's best interest. If we heard that one of the consolidated metropolitan areas we compete with was subdividing into 59 parts, would anyone actually believe they were becoming stronger? Our cities have home rule powers, and nothing in my plan abridges those rights. But cities and citizens will now have a choice as to what services they want to do locally, and what services they want to do regionally. A 100 year circular conversation will be coming to an end, with the result being a real, practical option which will help us compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Making Greater Cleveland a Center of Entrepreneurship**

I am frequently asked the question "how are we going to bring back the Fortune 500 companies which used to exist here?" It's a good question. But it's the wrong question. Of course we would always hope to attract large headquarters to our county. But those Fortune 500 companies weren't located here because we tempted them to come here from other parts of the country. They started here. We want to retain the businesses we have, but we also must become a county which supports expansion and creation of small and medium sized businesses which will become the Fortune 500 companies of tomorrow.

And with the help of our County Council, we have begun to do that, in a way that no county in Ohio is doing, and in a way that almost no other county in America can match. Just last week, the County Council approved legislation authorizing a \$100 million economic development fund, and just days later, our major financial institutions agreed to match those funds with an additional \$100 million for small business expansion.

In addition to making these funds available to create real jobs, our anti-poaching and business attraction agreement, already signed by 20 cities, with more on the way, is providing a level of coherent economic strategy that we have never had before.



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By making capital available and finally competing against the world instead of against ourselves, we are on our way to making this a major destination for business formation and expansion in the United States.

### **Cleveland is our capitol city**

No major metropolitan area can thrive without a vibrant urban core. There are those who just don't understand that no matter where you live in Cuyahoga County, what happens in Cleveland matters. To use an old historical term, Cleveland is the county seat, it truly is the capitol of the county, and all of the suburbs are connected to it economically and culturally. It is a mutual relationship- Cleveland can and does help the surrounding suburbs, and the surrounding suburbs help Cleveland. And we've tried to strengthen that bond by working closely with Mayor Jackson and Cleveland City Council.

Part of our economic strategy must be to focus on Cleveland in particular, to provide resources to help it continue to grow. I anticipate that much of the \$100 million fund will be spent on businesses located in the neighborhoods of Cleveland, or with businesses employing the residents of Cleveland, and that will be a help. There is an enormous amount of capital being invested in downtown Cleveland- from the Medical Mart and Convention Center, to the East Bank of the Flats, to the casino, to the renaissance around Cleveland State University all the way to West 25<sup>th</sup> street.

But once those major projects are complete, we must be ready to begin the next phase of development, to keep the momentum going, and to tie together all of these new assets. It is imperative to create the capacity now to fund a place-based economic strategy which recognizes how crucial this area is not just for Cleveland but for the entire region. That is why today I am proposing that the county dedicate the entire proceeds of the county's share of casino revenues to assisting developments and improvements in the area from West 25<sup>th</sup> street to the Cleveland State Campus, and from the water's edge to the Inner Belt.

Part of our fiscal strategy was to avoid budgeting any of these revenues, so they are entirely available for this purpose. They could be used for stand-alone county projects, or in tandem with private or other public entities. We could use the revenues on a cash basis, or possibly as a revenue stream for a bonded development fund which could exceed \$100 million.

When the voters approved the casino project, I believe it was their hope that the casinos would create economic opportunities. I can think of no better use for our share of these revenues than to demonstrate our commitment to our capitol city of Cleveland and create jobs for our residents at the same time. If we have the political will to dedicate funds in this manner, there is no reason why we cannot create a world-class downtown environment which will match the other world-class assets we already enjoy.

### **Coordination and innovation in human services**

Each year, Cuyahoga County spends over half a billion dollars on human services. These services provide a vital lifeline for seniors, infants, families in trouble, the unemployed, the uninsured, the neglected, the isolated and the ignored. This March, Issue 15, the renewal levy for our human services, is on the ballot; it is not a tax increase, it is essential to maintain these basic services, and I hope you will join me in supporting it.



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Other major metropolitan areas, across the country and across the world, have reaffirmed their commitment to providing human services by seeking to align and coordinate the policy goals and spending priorities of governmental and non-profit agencies. By convening all of the major human service providers all across the county in a disciplined, productive planning process we can do the following:

1. Establish the consumer as the centerpiece for our human services strategy;
2. Develop shared goals for improvements in human services;
3. Agree on methods to track progress on achieving those goals;
4. Align the strategies of our many agencies and institutions for the maximum positive effect on our quality of life.

In addition to this first of its kind in this county process, we need to be just as innovative in the field of human services as we have been in economic development. To this end, we have begun an exploration, in partnership with the George Gund Foundation, of a “pay for success” formula which stresses early intervention in some of our most pressing social problems.

For instance, just in the juvenile justice system, we know that 56% of youths 10 to 17 who are referred to juvenile court will return on a new referral before they turn 18. And we also know that there are intervention programs which can cut this recidivism dramatically. By targeting our programs on the front end, we can help improve more lives and save money at the same time by avoiding the costs of long-term involvement. You can pay now, or you can pay later, or you can invest now and pay a lot less later.

This concept has been used successfully in the United Kingdom, and is now in the early stages of development in Boston and New York. It represents a fusion of compassion and practicality, and it is the kind of innovation we must be open to in this county.

### **The Urgency of Education**

There was a time when the demand for unskilled labor was so great, that even a lack of education was not a barrier to the middle class. Those days are over. In blunt terms, if you do not receive a quality education, you will spend the rest of your life in poverty.

Our county charter requires us to devise a scholarship program to increase educational attainment, and the County Council has been studying various approaches and drafting proposals to fulfill this mandate. But the scale and scope of the challenge is daunting.

Over 37% of our county’s schools are on academic watch or academic emergency. Only 71% of our students graduate from high school, and only 27% of our residents possess a college degree.

In case you were wondering what the economic impact is of those kind of numbers, the current unemployment rate for Americans with a bachelor’s degree or higher is about 4%, while the unemployment rate for high school dropouts is about 14%. That is the equivalent of a permanent economic recession for those individuals.



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And we know that poverty effects education achievement; it is not a coincidence that 22% of the children in this county live in poverty, and we also have the largest graduation rate gap in the nation between our urban and suburban school districts. (38% v. 80%)

County government does not have all the resources necessary to tackle this enormous challenge. But we are beginning to help- for the first time in the county's history.

1. We commissioned a study with New York University to develop a strategy to link human services to our 38 school districts.
2. We partnered with PNC Bank, the Cleveland Foundation, the Gund Foundation, and others, and added four additional Universal Pre-Kindergarten sites to the county.
3. Our economic development strategies recognize just how essential worker education and training really is, and we have supported an employer based model which is now being copied around the country.
4. And working with County Council, we have reserved several million dollars for a Higher Education and Workforce Readiness Scholarship Program. We are also pleased to be a part of the Education Compact, which was initiated by Mayor Jackson, and includes all of our local colleges and universities.

There is simply no possibility of a functioning economy, or even a functioning democracy, without a culture that reinforces learning at every stage of life. Working together with the County Council, I'm confident that we will contribute to that this year.

### **Creating a health and wellness culture**

One of the great ironies of our community is that people travel from all over the world to be treated in our medical facilities, but the sophistication of the care we can provide is not matched by the actual health of the residents themselves.

And for some indecipherable reason, there are people in the United States who have attempted to make public health campaigns a political issue. If you smoke, or if you eat too much, you place a burden on our health care system, on our health insurance system, on your personal finances, and the quality and length of your life is negatively impacted. That's not a political issue, that's a public health issue.

To address this concern, last year we launched the Cuyahoga Health Alliance, a collaborative effort between the county, all of our major health providers, and many of our local cities. In just a few weeks, we will launch our pilot health and wellness initiative with at least 9 participating cities. These cities will work as a team with local health care providers to design wellness education programs and activities that make sense for their city.

And as in everything else we do, we will attempt to chart our progress in this effort, so that we can track the rate the effectiveness of this coordinated strategy to make Cuyahoga County one of the healthiest counties in the United States.



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### **Economic inclusion**

Greater Cleveland has gone through its share of recessions and expansions as the national economy has boomed and declined. But for too many of our residents, there seems to be a permanent lockout from true inclusion in our local economy. We are on the cusp of a historic wave of public and private projects. But in the past, the county has only responded to the reality of economic exclusion by sporadic and ad hoc responses.

To address this problem, later this month I will convene an Economic Inclusion Task Force, which will be tasked with devising a strategy to insure that as we continue to add to our list of major projects, the economic benefits that flow from those projects will actually reach those who need work the most. Economic inclusion cannot be based on privilege, or nepotism, or cronyism. As we grow out of the recession, I am confident that the over 60 distinguished citizens who have volunteered to serve on the Economic Inclusion Task Force will develop a fair and workable strategy to insure that economic opportunity is open to every resident, especially those who have historically been excluded.

### **Engaging the world/young people**

In an increasingly connected global economy, we cannot close ourselves off from the rest of the world. And historically, Cleveland embraced its identity as a diverse city made up of people from all different continents and cultures. America has always been conflicted about immigrants. We claim to embrace the identity of a nation of immigrants, but some of us, after a generation or two in this country, conveniently forget that and drift into xenophobia.

Immigrants were a key component of Cleveland's success in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20 centuries. Yet today, just 6.5% of Cuyahoga County is foreign born. That's half the national average. Studies have shown conclusively that immigrants boost local tax revenue, in part because of their higher than average rate of starting new businesses. And immigration increases our intellectual capital as well; the 12% of foreign-born residents represent 50% of our nation's science PhDs.

We can't afford to miss out on that opportunity. The county must strongly support the efforts of the Global Cleveland Initiative, and all its partners, and ensure that we are a welcoming place and an international destination.

And, relatedly, we must brand ourselves as a place where the younger generation is welcomed and included. Every time that we lose a young professional to another part of the country, they take with them 120% of their salary in actual economic value. To assist the community in attracting and retaining young people, we've engaged with the young professional organizations repeatedly over the last year. And I can tell you- these organizations are vibrant, growing, and they are changing the perception of this whole area. We just launched a "Next Generation Council," one of the first in the Midwest, to encourage greater inclusion and participation by our young people in our civic affairs, and to truly make them feel that they are stakeholders in our future.

### **Foreclosure strategy**



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As we are all aware - years of foreclosure auctions in greater Cleveland have left behind more than 11,000 abandoned properties. And the problem is not restricted to the urban core- today, the suburbs have nearly twice as many properties at foreclosure auction than Cleveland.

Nationwide, tireless federal, state and neighborhood advocates are fighting for more resources to combat the housing blight and demolish more properties. Cuyahoga County will continue in this fight.

But so far, the county's role has been primarily in dealing with the *aftermath* of neighborhood destruction.

In 2012, Cuyahoga County is going to launch a strategy that attempts to keep people in their homes whenever possible. I will propose a pilot program to buy properties before families are evicted, and sell those properties to responsible owners with reliable income, at their adjusted market value. A successful pilot—as demonstrated in Boston—will show that keeping people in place protects property values and neighborhood strength, while avoiding the physical and financial ruin brought by abandoned homes.

We will complement this strategy, *and* efforts at increasing appropriate demolition, by offering services to make it easy for neighbors to buy those clean parcels where a neighbor's house once stood and partner with the county's broad neighborhood development infrastructure to increase the number of qualified homebuyers and responsible tenants.

### **Honoring our veterans**

Our nation has an unfortunate history of expecting sacrifice by our veterans, but too often overlooking them when they return home. It is simply unacceptable that our returning young veterans- returning with skills, experience and discipline- have twice- TWICE- the unemployment of those who have not answered the call to serve.

I am proposing a Cuyahoga County version of the GI Bill, funded in part by our \$100 million Fund, the county will collaborate with city and county Workforce Investment Board and some of the county's largest employers to catapult veterans to the front of the line with programs tailored to translate the skills they acquired serving our country to those needed to fill our county's workforce needs.

We have already begun conversations with our local health care institutions to link their employment needs with veterans who have had medical training, and our Sheriff's office is working on a similar approach with the Army PaYs program. Similarly, I believe that part of our education funding should be reserved specifically so that veterans can continue to improve their skills and ease their re-integration into civilian life. If there are any veterans in the audience today, please stand to be recognized.

We cannot control where and when we go to war, but we can commit to building a support system that as much as any in the country, honors our veterans not just with ceremonies and medals, but with jobs and education.

### **Keeping our county safe**



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Just as it is illogical to have an economic development strategy which is subdivided into 59 parts, it is just as impractical to have a public safety strategy which is not coordinated county-wide. Our Sheriff's office will be taking a more active role in assisting local law enforcement agencies than ever before.

Our recently released 911 strategy will help local departments pool their resources, and our resources will provide vastly improved technology, leading directly to lives saved.

Meanwhile, this spring, our community policing impact units will be deployed on temporary assignments throughout the county, working in concert with local police officers. Just as in the economic realm, the level of safety in one community is inextricably linked to that in other communities. Our strategy recognizes the fact that since criminal activity does not limit itself based on city boundaries, our response to it cannot do so either.

### **County government 2.0**

The more than 100 reforms I referenced earlier are important, but we will have been writing in sand if we don't create a culture within county government which is singularly focused on excellence, merit, integrity, transparency, customer service, efficiency, and innovation. Our reforms must be durable, they must outlast any one administration, or we risk losing everything we've worked so hard to achieve over the last year.

We have already tried to institutionalize reform internally at the county through our performance based review process, called CountyStat. But more is required.

First, although we are projecting further efficiencies will be achieved this year, we must go beyond traditional methods to truly achieve the optimum level of lean operations. What is required is not just economizing, or reducing bloated staffing, but a comprehensive work-flow analysis, a process which analyzes how all necessary tasks are integrated system wide, analyzes manual processes to detect redundancies, and effectively integrates technology to drive even further efficiencies.

As some of you know, this process is called an ERP, or Enterprise Resource Plan, and it is a recognized best practice which has been used by most major corporations, and much more rarely by large government institutions. It is a massive undertaking, but we will be assisted in this process by the fact that last year we recruited the county's first Chief Information Office, and first Fiscal Officer, both of whom have private and public sector expertise in this field.

But still more assistance is needed for this painstaking review and analysis. And so, as we have so many times in the last year, we asked the private sector if they could loan us the expertise to assist us in this undertaking. I am pleased to announce that Eaton Corporation has agreed, on a pro bono basis, to be our partner in this project, and have already begun to lend us their considerable expertise in this field.

But even more is necessary if we are to consistently, year in and year out, push this bureaucracy to be unbureaucratic, to reinvent itself and to embody an innovation spirit. That is why I am proposing the creation of a Center of Excellence in Local Government, a joint undertaking among the county, our local universities, and our charitable foundations. This Center for Excellence would rigorously research best practices for local government across the state and country, but it would be more than a think tank. It would also measure the performance of our



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local government against those benchmarks, on a continual basis. It would provide an outside, unbiased analysis of exactly how well we are actually progressing along our Western Reserve Plan, and it will provide the intellectual basis for our goal of actually becoming the premier county government in the country.

Based on my preliminary conversations with foundations and universities, I am confident it will get underway this year, and its establishment will help guarantee that spirit that animated the Year of 100 Reforms and the Western Reserve Plan will be extended for many administrations to come.

### **Conclusion:**

I realize that these are not objectives that can be accomplished in one year, or even by one administration. If this Western Reserve Plan is to mean something, it will be because those of you listening to this speech decide to involve yourselves in this civic discourse. I don't mean to imply that you haven't been already, because many in this audience have dedicated their lives to public service. But I'm asking you to fully support, engage, and participate in this process. That's the only way it's really going to happen.

If you go to the website, [www.westernreserveplan.org](http://www.westernreserveplan.org), you can register and become part of this undertaking. This is just our attempt at a comprehensive civic strategy. I couldn't cover everything in one speech, and we're very open to suggestions for additions or alterations.

It would be a mistake to believe that this reform effort- those reforms already achieved, and those I am proposing- will be universally acclaimed.

Although I have reason to believe that the great majority of county residents approve of the reforms implemented in the last year or so, the changes we have brought aren't popular with everyone.

There are actually those who prefer the old system to the new system. Even at a time when the corruption trial going on in Akron is providing a daily reminder of exactly how dysfunctional the old system was, *even now*, some people are nostalgic for the way it used to be. History is full of examples of reform movements that died after the initial outrage over a scandal cooled. All of us- everyone here- must be on guard against complacency, and the desire by a self-interested few to return to the way things were.

So whenever, and wherever there is an attempt to return to the old ways, I am going to do everything in my power to prevent that, and I hope everyone here will join me in that resolve, because we can never, never, ever go back to the way things used to be.

Sometimes people remark to me that I have been lucky to have had such a unique opportunity to assist in the creation of this county government. And I do feel fortunate and grateful to have had this vantage point, and I know my colleagues on County Council feel the same way. But it's not just our opportunity, it's your opportunity. There has never been a time before in the county's modern history where an informed and engaged citizen can participate so fully in this re-launch of our governance structure. Those elected have a duty, yes, but so does everyone here. I know that you are engaged in civic organizations, your faith communities, your businesses- but if you could just dedicate a small portion of your time and talent to supporting these efforts, it will make a relapse into the old ways impossible.



**EDWARD FITZGERALD**  
Cuyahoga County Executive

We have this very brief moment to do as much as we can, as fast as we can. We have to run as fast and as far as we can while the wind is still with us. I think you will find, if you continue to run this race with us, that our momentum will keep building, and we will outpace the cynics, outrun the status quo, outlast the old guard, and prove once again that Greater Cleveland, as we have for two centuries, can compete and win across the country and across the world.

Thank you for your support and attendance here today.