



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

**Mayor Barrett State of the City Address
February 15, 2010**

Thank you, and thank you Jeff Joerres and Owen Sullivan for the kind introduction.

Manpower's international headquarters is new, but people already view this beautiful building as a downtown Milwaukee landmark.

When I look at this building, I see something more. I see jobs. Manpower is a great employer, creating opportunities and family-supporting jobs. When a company creates good jobs in Milwaukee, everyone benefits.

Manpower is more than just a company – it's a leader in the summer youth jobs program, and has a strong and influential presence in the Milwaukee 7 regional economic development effort. Manpower talent lent to civic and philanthropic efforts is good corporate citizenship. Manpower, and companies like it, shape Milwaukee's economy and our city for the better.

Milwaukee entrepreneurs founded Manpower, visionaries who saw opportunity and worked hard. That formula has created jobs throughout our history. We are grateful for those men and women who act on their vision – and I want to express particular gratitude to one of Manpower's founders, a great business and community leader in Milwaukee who passed away just four months ago, Elmer Winter.

The recession has hit us hard and we continue to feel its impacts. Through these difficult days, my priorities remain consistent and clear – create more jobs, continue to reduce crime, and prepare Milwaukee for the future.

The economic downturn has focused us on one singular goal – retaining, attracting and creating jobs.

As we are united in that vision, we are united in action. We are working together to attract new jobs, cultivate existing businesses and capitalize on Milwaukee's strengths.

When we launched the Milwaukee Seven regional economic development initiative, which I co-chair, we faced old parochial distrust, and a bit of partisan angst. To the credit of many people here today, we kept pushing ahead; understanding that government alone, business alone and communities alone will not build our sustainable future. We can cross the aisle, we can find common ground and despite setbacks, we can – we must – succeed.

In November Republic Airways chose Milwaukee in a competition over Denver and Indianapolis for a consolidation of its maintenance and call center operations; keeping eight-hundred jobs here and adding eight-hundred more.

So, why did Republic select Milwaukee? We were aggressive and proactive. Our workforce is strong, targeted tax incentives – incentives tied directly to job creation – were important, and, as Bryan Bedford, Republic CEO said Milwaukee is quote: “a great place to do business.”

And just last month, C&D Technologies received a federal Defense contract for the manufacture of large scale lithium-ion battery systems for the Army. The expansion will bring an additional one-hundred-fifty jobs to our city. My Administration has worked with C&D since 2007 to put together the financing package that helped support this expansion. That's great news for C&D and great news for Milwaukee. This is another win for the Milwaukee Seven and regional economic development.

We continue to develop the Menomonee Valley. What was just a short time ago Wisconsin's largest brownfield, a mostly abandoned and desolate landscape, is now home to thousands of new jobs. The Menomonee Valley shows how collaboration, common purpose, and investment can combine to produce results.

And speaking of new jobs in the Valley, I'm going to break with tradition here – and ask Gale Klappa, CEO of WE Energies and an M7 co-chair, to join me in making a special announcement.

In M7, we have established a new model for job creation and development in the region. I'm proud of the work we did to start M7. Thank you Jim Paetsch, Rocky Marcoux, Jim Scherer, Pat O'Brien, Pat Walsh and the entire team for your hard work.

The success of the Valley is what we want to replicate at Century City – the former Tower Automotive site. The city completed the purchase of the property in late 2009, and we are moving forward. Thank you Aldermen Willie Wade and Ashanti Hamilton for your leadership. Our vision is a high-quality industrial park, eighty-four acres where businesses will locate and create hundreds of permanent jobs. Because of our strong partnerships, I am confident that we will have successes sooner rather than later. Much sooner.

We are also building our economy with our greatest natural resource, water. Water is a resource many other communities do not have, and our existing strong contingent of water businesses, particularly water technology businesses, provides a strong foundation for growth.

We are working with partners to secure Milwaukee's position as the world water hub for economic development, education and research. We are working closely with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as it establishes the School of Freshwater Science. And we are assembling the resources – including land and incentives – that those water businesses will need to grow in Milwaukee.

For job-creating water-related businesses, Milwaukee is extending a special invitation. We have advanced our proposal to offer reduced water rates to new or existing companies that add twenty-five jobs and use significant amounts of water. We are optimistic that in the near future,

the state Public Service Commission will approve our proposal and we can begin using this economic development tool.

The challenges Milwaukee workers face are very real. I pledge to continue my vigorous, ongoing efforts to bring new jobs to our city.

Since transitioning to city governance, MAWIB, the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board, is connecting people with jobs. We have created a demand-driven, customer-responsive system that works for Milwaukee. The Workforce Investment Board reduces the barriers to employment that many in our community face including limited or poor academic background; limited work experience; or lack of a driver's license.

Examples of MAWIB's achievements this past year include a one million dollar grant for green job training and expanding diversity in the field of urban forestry. MAWIB is also partnering with many local employers to help place workers in new jobs, and is a presence throughout the community with kiosks at city libraries providing information to job seekers.

The Summer Youth Jobs program continues to expand. Last summer we had more than three-thousand high school students participate, our largest year so far. Not only does this program provide a paycheck, but it provides training and skills as kids proceed into the workforce. Equally important it shows the young people in our community that we believe in them. We as adults have a moral obligation to create hope in the lives of young people. I am immensely proud that we have provided an opportunity for young people in the City of Milwaukee.

We also need to create opportunity for adults and families facing difficulties. There are currently twelve-hundred vacant foreclosed properties in Milwaukee, and almost six-thousand open foreclosure filings.

The Milwaukee Foreclosure Partnership has become a model to address the serious impact of home foreclosures. Our initiative is comprehensive and collaborative, using a three-pronged approach of prevention, intervention and neighborhood stabilization. Maria Prioletta and Suzanne Dennik have done a great job managing this effort.

One of the very positive outcomes of the Initiative's work is the creation of a mediation program. Working with Marquette Law School, hundreds of people facing foreclosure have turned to the Initiative's mediation program – reducing the adversarial nature of a foreclosure proceeding and working to reach a sustainable conclusion for homeowners. More than sixty Milwaukee families have been able to save their homes, and over two-hundred are in the mediation process.

Because of our efforts, we also received twenty-five-million-dollars in Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds. That funding will allow us to return one-thousand foreclosed and abandoned residential units to productive use.

In 2009 we faced some daunting city budget issues: increased expectations from our citizens, falling revenues, and unexpected bills – most notably the forty-nine-million-dollar pension contribution caused by the downturn of the stock market. Imagine you are running your business, in which you had a new and unexpected line item of forty-nine-million dollars. This contribution was more than one-fifth of our entire levy. I could have taken the politically easy approach and just borrowed the money. Instead, I selected the responsible path.

We sat down with public employee unions, and through some tough negotiations, we hammered out agreements that cut costs and preserved jobs. I made some hard choices, slicing more than thirty-two-million-dollars from city government's operating budget. Yes, we've asked much more from city workers, but in the end we put the city on sound fiscal footing. Everyone in this room can be proud that the pension system is funded at over one-hundred percent and has no debt.

Thank you to Alderman Michael Murphy Chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee and Finance Committee members Bob Bauman, Nik Kovac, Joe Dudzik, Milele Coggs and the Common Council members who voted sensibly and responsibly.

I've thanked a lot of people this morning, but there's one group that I would like to single out, the people who provide our public safety.

My approach to public safety is straightforward – appoint strong leaders, hire great workers, offer clear direction, and provide sufficient resources.

We measure success by results, and, when it comes to crime the results are clear. Crime in Milwaukee is down.

Overall, crime was down seven-point-two percent in 2009. Violent crime was down nearly thirteen percent and down twenty percent over the last two years. This is great news for Milwaukee.

Police Chief Edward Flynn's formula for crime reduction combines sophisticated crime analysis, data-driven deployments, and strong partnerships with our community. And anyone who's paid attention can tell you, that formula works.

Neighborhoods are safer, creating a better business environment, so businesses can grow and create jobs.

We ask a lot of our police officers, and we can never forget the sacrifices they make. Police officer Vidal Colon was shot last April; police officer James Jekanoski was shot serving a search warrant in September.

Last June, Officers Graham Kunisch and Bryan Norberg were shot and seriously wounded on the near south side by a man armed with a handgun that he obtained illegally.

These officers nearly lost their lives when they bravely stepped forward to make Milwaukee safer.

Officers Jekanoski and Kunisch are here this morning, and I invite everyone here to join me in expressing our heartfelt gratitude.

In the most difficult circumstances, there are people in this city who step up, people like firefighters John and Joel Rechlitz and police Lieutenant Mark Wroblewski. All three were off

duty last summer when they dashed toward a burning van on the city's south side. Their efforts saved the life of four year old DJ Harper. Gentlemen, thank you for your action and for your bravery.

The men and women of the Milwaukee Fire Department and Acting Chief Mike Jones serve our community exceptionally well. Excellent response times and the lowest two-year total for fire fatalities on record are clear evidence of the performance of our firefighters.

We have an excellent fire department, and, on the rare occasion when there is an unusually large fire, we cooperate with our neighbors. Professional firefighters from nearby communities assisted Milwaukee during a large fire on the East Side last month. And the Milwaukee Fire Department assisted our neighbors last July during the huge Patrick Cudahy fire. It is a cooperative arrangement that works, protects our residents and respects our taxpayers.

Like all departments, the Department of Public Works has had to adjust to budget cuts. Our plow team tackled last week's snow head-on and delivered. Thank you Commissioner Jeff Mantes and your team for a job well done. I love well-plowed streets!

Our library system plays an important role in our community for education, job searches, and culture. Budget cuts have certainly affected the operations of our city libraries, but we must remember that libraries are a vital resource that bring us together. Thank you Paula Kiely and all library staff for your dedication to making our city a better place.

2009 brought an unprecedented challenge with the outbreak of the H1N1 virus. Last spring, our Health Department recorded more than thirty-two-hundred confirmed cases. More than twenty-five-thousand H1N1 vaccinations were administered here.

When H1N1 strikes, African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians are significantly more likely to be hospitalized in our area. That disparity has prioritized our Health Department's immunization efforts. Even though we are in a lull, new infections of H1N1 remain possible and we need to be prepared and protected.

Our Health Department is focusing on preventable infant deaths too. We can protect infants by reinforcing and repeating an important fact: a baby alongside a sleeping adult can be a deadly-dangerous situation. The message needs to be heard loud and clear – for infants, the safest place for them to sleep is in their own crib.

We have focused a great deal of attention on our public schools over the last year. I continue to believe that a clear line of accountability – connecting to a singular, accountable leader – is the right thing to do to help to improve Milwaukee Public Schools.

I have engaged in a vigorous debate on this topic, and recognize that this has been a tough fight and has put me at odds with many of my friends. For those of us who have fought for reform, the easiest thing in the world for us to do would have been to walk away. But that would have been wrong.

The policy debate had to happen and needs to continue. I am not walking away from the kids in MPS. And I want to thank Senator Lena Taylor and Representative Pedro Colon for their leadership on this issue; and I would also like to thank Common Council President Willie Hines for his very public commitment to reform.

There are great teachers and great schools within MPS, but we need more great schools. Too many children will leave Milwaukee schools without the basic knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life. For each dropout, it is a personal tragedy – a life-long likelihood of poverty and unfulfilled ambition.

All of us must take an active part in the education of children. Let me give you an example of someone who is doing it right.

Milwaukee Housing Authority's Education Initiative seeks to improve school attendance and educational outcomes for children who live in the city's scattered site housing and Highland Homes. The initiative offers after-school help for students, and works with parents to encourage greater participation in their children's education.

Most of last year's graduates went on to college. This year, all but one of the twenty-four high school seniors enrolled in the program are on track to graduate, and we are working on that one.

This initiative grew from the efforts of Milwaukee Housing Authority's Executive Director Tony Perez and the person who single-handedly implemented the program, Darrell Finch. Their efforts are clearly paying off and we thank them.

I am also committed to confronting environmental and energy challenges. We can do this – protecting our resources while promoting economic growth.

Later this year, the Milwaukee Energy Efficiency Initiative will begin. This program will offer Milwaukee homeowners the ability to finance and complete energy efficient retrofits for their properties. This program is a trifecta winner – creating long-lasting family-supporting green jobs; improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock; and reducing energy costs.

We are successfully reducing the amount of energy used in city buildings, and we are transitioning our city fleet to include biodiesel, hybrid and flex-fuel vehicles. The reduction in our energy output and use of renewable sources of energy improves the quality of our air, and provides significant cost savings to taxpayers.

Finally, in a few weeks all of us will receive our 2010 Census form. Participation in the Census is important for Milwaukee. A complete and accurate count will provide Milwaukee with a fair share of federal and state funding, and will ensure that we have our voices heard in Washington, D.C. and in Madison. Sharon Robinson has done excellent work with community partners to ensure that we have a complete census count in 2010.

Let's face it; in 2000 the federal census did not go as well as the city had hoped. We knew there were many more people living here – people who simply were not counted. We challenged that census count, making our case with data on housing growth, utility connections, and building permits. We won, proving Milwaukee's official population is over six-hundred-thousand. Remember, that's not a battle we should have to fight; let's get the census count right the first time in 2010.

Amid the economic challenges, the day-to-day issues, and the political conflicts, one can lose sight of how hard people are working to provide for their families and keep our neighborhoods safe.

It is the collective efforts of hard working Milwaukeeans that will chart our successes one year from now – five years from now – a generation into our future. It is the strength of entrepreneurship and our commitment to partner and invest that will produce more jobs and provide more opportunities for our families, for our children.

Whether it's a fire fighter pulling someone from a burning car; a police officer putting his life on the line to protect us; teachers educating kids in our most impoverished neighborhoods; or, business men and women investing in our community, we have the resolve to get us through the tough times and to build on our future.

I see it every single day. It's humbling and invigorating. It is that great spirit of commitment to Milwaukee that keeps us moving forward. I thank all of you for what you do to make our great city even greater.

Thank you.