

Thank you, Council President. I really appreciate those kind remarks. Before I get to the first order of business today, the presentation of the Key to the City, I want to say some very important thank you's.

First and foremost, I want to introduce and thank my family members who are here – Paul, Sydney, mom and dad, sister and brother in law.

I also want to thank Council President Sterling and my other colleagues on the Fresno City Council. Would you all please stand and remain standing?

- Acting President Larry Westerlund
- Councilmember Mike Dages
- Councilmember Henry Perea represented by Fae Giffin
- Redevelopment Agency Chair and Councilmember Blong Xiong
- RDA Vice Chair and Councilmember Lee Brand, and
- Councilmember Andreas Borgeas.

I can't tell you enough how much I appreciate working with you and how much I respect your role and involvement in helping to move our city forward. Please join me in giving them a round of applause.

Finally, I would like to thank the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce for creating this forum to update the public annually on the state of the City. Thank you especially to this year's chair of the board, Debbie Hunsaker, and the Chamber CEO, Al Smith. And, thank you to the other organizations who help host this event, including the Asian Business Institute and Resource Center, the Central California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Fresno Area Hispanic Chamber, and the San Joaquin Valley Black Chamber of Commerce. Last but not least, thank you to the Mayor's Community Advisory Panel...June 16th!! Launch of Fresno Citizens Academy.

KEY TO THE CITY SECTION

Now, for our first order of business - the presentation of the Key to the City.

It is a great pleasure for me to begin a new tradition at the Mayor's State of the City address – the awarding of a Key to the City to someone who embodies the values and character of our community. This tradition will recognize the extraordinary work that is going on in our community day in and day out by our citizens.

Fresno is a city full of heroes - police officers, firefighters, teachers, entrepreneurs, and everyday people who show courage, passion and commitment to making our City a better place. So choosing one person for this award is a difficult task – one that I have not taken lightly.

Today we recognize someone who has stepped in and filled the gap when others couldn't or chose not to. This first annual recipient is someone who has performed the ultimate act of compassion and service...someone who, time after time, has opened up her home, her heart, and her resources to children in their times of need.

I think it's safe to say that many of you probably haven't heard of our recipient, but her name is Shirley Bobbitt. Shirley has been quietly and humbly serving as a foster parent in Fresno for the past 20 years. She hasn't been doing it for fame or money or recognition but only because she felt it was the right thing to do.

In turn, she has made a difference in the lives of many foster children – and, in the process, has made Fresno a better place as well.

Foster parenting is an act of true selflessness, as each child requires a significant financial and emotional investment. They need a mentor. They need support. They need love, kindness, structure - all the things that Shirley has provided to more than 100 foster children over the past two decades.

Shirley and her late husband, Bruce, answered the call to service 20 years ago after taking in their grandchildren during a time of a personal family crisis. When their grandchildren

left, they recognized that there was a great need for other children to receive comfort and support during difficult family times.

They started by serving as an “emergency home” for children who were first removed from their birth parents. The children would come at any time of the day or night – scared and confused – but Shirley and Bruce would have their sleeping bags ready and assure them that they were in a safe, caring place even though they were separated from their loved ones.

Not only were Shirley and Bruce there to comfort them on that first night, but they also were there with them as they faced their first day in a new classroom and as they began to visit with their parents through the first stages of the family reunification process.

After the unexpected loss of her husband, Shirley dedicated her home to caring for adolescent girls. She cared for as many as six at one time – which is amazing in and of itself – but it’s even more amazing when you consider that she made sure they were all involved in gym, dance classes, school functions and church activities. She drove them to and from visits with their families, medical appointments and therapy sessions. Friday nights were movie nights and all the pizza they could eat.

After many years of caring for teens, Shirley now dedicates her home to caring for developmentally delayed, special needs children.

She brings a kind and loving spirit to her work with foster children. She is guided in many ways by one of her late husband Bruce's favorite sayings, "Ye who live, live only if you enjoy life."

Shirley, thanks to you, these foster children – who have faced such adversity - will have a chance to enjoy life ... and they'll be able to have choices that seemed like faraway dreams for them at one point in their lives.

Your dedication, perseverance and strength have touched the lives of so many who will never forget what you have given them.

To Shirley's friends and family who are here today, thank you for the support and encouragement and assistance that you've given Shirley over the years.

So, Shirley, on behalf of a grateful city, I thank you for the work you've done to improve the lives of one of our community's children. Would you come forward, Shirley Bobbitt, and receive the Key to the City of Fresno?

2. "THE STATE OF THE CITY IS STRONG" SECTION

It is now my honor as the Mayor of Fresno to bring to you the 2009 State of the City Address.

Today, we celebrate the City of Fresno, and I am here with great confidence to tell you that the state of our City is strong.

Fresno is strong because our institutions are strong. Since Fresno's first Mayor, Lewis Oliver Stephens took the oath of office in 1902, 107 years ago, our city government has held strong. We stand on the shoulders of Mayor Stephens and so many others who helped to build and maintain our city and our institutions of local government.

City Hall itself is a monument watched everyday by our residents and, just as past city leaders have done, we must care for and tend to the institution. We must continue to make sure that the institution is innovating, improving itself, and evaluating its own performance everyday.

To do that, we just completed an efficiency analysis on City Hall – a bit of a check up, if you will, to find out just how this institution is faring compared to our peer cities. It was an update to an analysis done in 2003 by Mayor Autry, Peter Weber, and Tim Lynch called “Meeting the Challenge.” The report analyzed the City of Fresno's revenues and expenditures across all major city functions and compared our performance to our peer cities in California – cities like San Diego, San Jose, Long Beach, Oakland, and Sacramento to name a few.

Guess what the report found? Since the initial analysis was done six years ago, the major conclusion remains unchanged: the City of Fresno is quite efficient. In fact, our institution is doing more with less. Fresno collects less revenue per capita than our peer cities and we have the lowest per capita spending when compared to our peers.

This 100+ year old institution is doing quite well in her old age. She has been kept very lean and very trim thanks to past decision makers and employees. Now, do we need to improve our effectiveness? Do we need to improve quality in some areas of the organization and continue to push for efficiencies in others? Of course, and that's exactly what we'll be focused on at City Hall in the next year.

For example, one of the major initiatives we just launched is called PIPES. That stands for the Permit Improvement and Process Enhancement Strategy – it refers to the need to make sure that the “pipes” of our planning and development processes are free of anything that would clog up the system. We have talked for many years about the need to take apart our planning and development, utilities and public works system and put it back together again in a more streamlined, rational way. Well, we are doing just that.

It's going to take some investment in new software and our efforts must include streamlining our municipal code (which was written, by the way, in about the 1950s, and is one part of our institution that is really showing its age).

Our work on the PIPES initiative will be like a major face lift to a big part of our organization – you won't recognize her when we're finished. We're aiming for high development standards and state of the art, efficient services for the public.

Another area in which we need to re-evaluate and streamline our local institutions is in the area of public safety consolidation. This will certainly be a priority for the next year. Many have supported the notion over the years and worked to find good opportunities to save the public money and improve safety. In fact, I want to thank the Chamber for carrying the banner on this for a long time. We at the City are committed to working closely and diligently with the Sheriff's Office, the County, and all stakeholders to make sure that progress is made on this important item in this next year. There is money to be saved and the public's safety to be enhanced. We've got no choice but to pursue consolidation with all of our energy.

These are just two examples of the work that needs to be done to continue to strengthen our local institutions so that we leave them better than we found them. I am so grateful for the mayors, city council members, employees and citizens who have worked over the years to ensure that our institutions have remained strong.

107 years from now we want folks to look back on us fondly for keeping their institutions in tact and having the foresight to think of their generation often when we make decisions in our own.

In addition to the strength of our institutions, I am pleased to also report to you today that our city is strong because our employees are strong. There are a number of city employees here today. If you are a city employee, would you please stand and remain standing?

- City Manager Andy Souza, Assistant City Manager Bruce Rudd, all the folks from the City Manager's office;
- The team from the Mayor's office – headed up by Georgeanne White, my chief of staff, Kelli Furtado, Cheryl Burns, Janeen Cervantes, Mike Lukens, David Schecter, Randy Reed...
- Several of our department heads are here – Police Chief Jerry Dyer, Fire Chief Randy Bruegman...(list other dept heads)...and
- Other city employees who are here today and who play a number of different roles.

Our city is strong because of these and the other 4,000 employees at City Hall. They do an incredible job. In the last five months, I have consistently been impressed with the caliber of people who work for the City of Fresno. They have chosen jobs and careers in

public service for a reason, and the public is well served by these men and women.

Please join me in giving them a round of applause and thanking them for their service to our community.

Fresno is also strong because we are a City that is taking action. As the Depression was slowly ending and at the beginning of his first year in office in 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said: “This nation asks for action, and action now....we must act, and act quickly.” So, too, is Fresno acting right now. I want to give you some of the highlights of the work and accomplishments at the City over the last year and also give you a glimpse of the things we’re taking on in this next year. Keep in mind that I’m going to try to be brief and am definitely short changing a lot of the work that’s going on.

Let’s start with public safety. I’d first like to say what a privilege it is to serve as Mayor in a city where Jerry Dyer and Randy Bruegman serve as the police and fire chiefs. As you all know, the chiefs are incredibly talented and committed leaders who direct departments filled with equally as talented and committed police officers and firefighters. The chiefs and their departments have my complete support.

- Our **police department** has made good progress this year in fostering partnerships across the city with non-profits, neighborhood associations, and other public agencies in order to prevent and suppress crime. As is the case in other cities across the state, our violent crime rates have seen an uptick in recent months,

though they are still at a level that's 32% below where they were in 2001 and the department is working hard to keep the violent crime rate under control. Murder rates have decreased 30% in the city this year, and we're also seeing positive trends in the traffic safety arena with fatal collisions down by 33%.

But the Police Department is not just about numbers and statistics. Let me tell you the work of Sgt. Brenda Troubaugh. I first met Sgt. Troubaugh at a board meeting of the Fresno Police Activities League (or Fresno PAL). I was impressed by her dedication to reaching at-risk youth. I then got a glimpse of her work first hand at the Chief's Gang Summit last year where a few of the youth boxers displayed their skills they had learned in the PAL program. These little guys were incredible. They were only maybe 8 or 9 years old, but they were focused, well trained, and these children had had remarkable turn arounds in their school work. Their attendance and their grades were up. The words, "fire in the belly" come to mind when you think of Sgt. Troubaugh. She is driven to positively impact the lives of our children in the City of Fresno. Says Sgt. Troubaugh, "If I see just one kid turn around, that makes all of my efforts worth it." A little known fact - At one time, Sgt. Troubaugh held the record in the World Police and Fire Games in five sports – triple jump, long jump, javelin, shot put and the discus. Sgt. Troubaugh is but one of the incredible people who serve our City everyday in the Fresno Police Department.

- **Fire** – The Fresno Fire Department continued to serve the Fresno Area this last year with its usual standard of excellence. This past year, our Fire Department was successful in responding to almost 38,000 calls for service with almost 2,300 of them being fire calls.
- Our department took on and completed major construction and renovation projects for our local fire stations, and Fresno Fire is taking the lead on developing a badly needed Regional Fire Training Center. The Center would serve the Central San Joaquin Valley with state-of-the-art training space and equipment. Fresno Fire continues to set a high standard for the fire fighting profession in the San Joaquin Valley and in California. The Department gives Fresnans reasons to be proud everyday. Thank you to Chief Bruegman and to Fresno Fire.

PARCS – The City’s PARCS department continues to show their strength and their enthusiasm for improving the quality of life in Fresno. Led by Randy Cooper, the PARCS department is in hot pursuit of making Fresno the Action Sports Capital of the West, and we’re well on our way to living up to that. We’ve got nearly a dozen venues, including the Woodward Bike Complex that just hosted state and national competitions; the Ark Vert Ramp which is the largest public vert ramp on the West Coast (how many of you know what a vert ramp is? Anyone been on one?); and 4 modular ramp parks and 3 concrete parks, with a fourth (the historic Vagabond Pool) breaking ground this fall.

On top of that, the Department takes care of 70 parks, including three regional parks. During a time when many local and state jurisdictions are struggling to maintain their open space, I'm pleased to say that in Fresno in this next year, our parks will be open and they will be well maintained despite the economy.

Once our budget is adopted, I'll be working with Randy and his team on plans for renovating and improving our community and recreation centers. The City has major physical assets all over this community that can really help drive revitalization in Fresno's urban core. We've got to make sure we're leveraging those resources in the best possible way for our neighborhoods and that will be a big focus this year.

Protecting Our Natural Resources – A number of city departments have launched major efforts to protect our environment and our natural resources. As you know, because of our unique topography and climate, we've got some real environmental challenges in Fresno, but we also have a real opportunity to turn that around. It's not too late. We can reverse the course. We can become a leading city in the U.S. for our efforts to clean up our environment and we can create economic opportunity in the process. And that's exactly where we're headed. For example:

- **The #1 recycling city in the country** - a 71% diversion rate? That's a tremendous accomplishment considering that we were at just 35% in 2001 on the verge of major state sanctions.

- **We've got major solar installations in Fresno and even more on the way.** In some cases, our solar installations are the biggest of their kind in the U.S. like out at the airport.
- **We've got the largest alternative fuel and low emission vehicle fleet in the San Joaquin Valley.** By the end of next year our entire fleet of garbage trucks – all 145 of them - will be converted. And, you'll also see the addition of 20 new natural gas replacement buses and 1 electric bus arriving in our FAX fleet this next year.
- **Big initiatives in the works for this next year that will add to these efforts to protect our natural resources -** The City of Fresno's General Services Department is developing a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) production facility at our regional waste water treatment facility that would serve our own fleet but also others on the West Coast.

We are also launching Sustainable Fresno – a multi-year effort to address how we grow as city and region and to put new practices and policies in place to ensure we are conserving land, water and energy as we grow.

- The water issue really begs for an additional comment. You have my commitment that we will do everything possible to conserve water in Fresno. In fact, 26,000 water meters will be installed this next year, which is the biggest step in our long term plan to conserve water. But in addition to those efforts, we have got to push

for a comprehensive water infrastructure plan for the San Joaquin Valley and for the state. Upcoming legislation.

Economy, Jobs, Housing and Homelessness – Let’s talk about some positive things going on in our local economy and things being accomplished to address issues of housing and homelessness. First, would you like a little good news about the economy? This just in from the Fresno Board of Realtors. I’ll spare you the details, but let me say that based on median home prices, the number of properties being sold, and the amount of housing inventory we have right now, it appears that the “bottoming out” of our local economy is “flattening out.” We know that we are a long way from being out of the woods on this recession, but these numbers are a welcome sign.

Here’s what the City of Fresno has been doing to help bolster our local economy and local businesses while we endure this economic downturn.

First, thanks to the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, the City has some resources to bring to the table to help address foreclosures in our market. In June, we will present to the Council a plan to invest almost \$11 million for the rehabilitation of 375 housing units that have been foreclosed upon, which will be a big boost to some of our distressed neighborhoods.

Secondly, you've heard me talk a lot about the importance of supporting the growth of our local businesses and how that really needs to be our primary strategy for job creation. Well, that's what the team at City Hall has been doing, and it's paying off. The Council adopted in March an ordinance to give preference to locally owned, small businesses when purchasing goods and services. Since the ordinance was adopted, the City has awarded 240 purchase orders in local contracts valued at almost \$21 million – that's just in the last two months.

I want to take just a moment to tell you about a local business that is having tremendous success despite the recession. It's **Apple Valley Farms**. **Apple Valley Farms** is currently working in custom processing of fine meat products. They are the major distributor of "Apple chicken Sausage" – made right here in Fresno. They are looking to expand into manufacturing, and have a number of projects in the works that will add anywhere between 30-100 new employees in the next 1-2 years. The company had 30 employees in 2005- and hit 130 employees within the last 3 months. Their clients include U.S. Foodservice, Sysco, and Food For Less- and they have new contracts with Sam's Club and are now distributing to Mexico. Apple Valley Farms recently teamed up with Chef Cary- a world renowned chef. Apple Valley products have been featured in Bon

Appétit, Gourmet, Food and Wine, New Times Magazines. Bob Coyle – please stand and be recognized.

Homelessness – I would like to say just a few words about the efforts to address chronic homeless in Fresno. The City, the County of Fresno and a host of partner agencies and non-profits have embraced the 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness. Even though there is still a long way to go, there have been important accomplishments in recent months that you should know about. Greg Barfield, the City’s Homeless Prevention and Policy Manager, has been on the job just slightly longer than I have – since the last week in December 2008. In a very short period of time, he has worked with Julie Hornback at the County and our partners on two very important areas involving the chronically homeless: Motel Drive and the H Street and south of Ventura area encampments.

You all have probably heard the news coverage of the Storyland Motel and the heroic efforts by so many to work with the property owners and the 39 families who lived in the motel. As of this week, 33 of the families have been housed in permanent housing throughout the city in rental homes and apartments.

We all learned a lot in the process and will apply those lessons learned in addressing other substandard properties in the Motel Row area and across the city. There are so many reasons why this is important not the least of which are major health and safety issues for the children and families living in these properties. But, furthermore, what does it say about our community if we allow these kinds of conditions to exist? We've got to work with property owners and get these properties cleaned up...and the encampments.

You'll be pleased to know that the City, County and our partners are working diligently on the encampment issue. We are now in the H Street homeless encampments and the smaller tent encampments in the area south of Ventura. We have provided assessments and are using those to begin providing case management services to the people living there. In the next 6 weeks, we expect the two encampments on H Street to be closed and those persons moved to housing throughout the City.

Downtown and the Urban Core – Last, but certainly not least, let's talk about the efforts to revitalize downtown and our urban core and the accomplishments there so far. But first, I want to talk about why this is so important (in case you need to be persuaded).

A city's calling card is its downtown. A revitalized downtown and urban core is what gives that city its uniqueness and its most distinguishable features. Without a revitalized downtown and urban core, we miss out on the opportunity to attract back and retain our best and brightest who often leave the area for big cities with urban amenities, not to mention the fact that we miss the opportunity to positively impact the lives of the families and children who live in our city's center. I don't know about you, but I'm not willing to let another generation go by without addressing this. We simply must do it.

We spent the last decade in Fresno turning our attention back to our urban core. Mayor Autry was most powerful and effective in calling out the Tale of Two Cities that has existed in Fresno, drawing the public's attention back to the heart of Fresno, and sparking the rebirth of this area, and now it's time to keep our nose to the grindstone and spend the next decade doing the difficult and tedious work of revitalization.

We've got to remove decades of confusing planning requirements through the development and adoption of specific land use plans. That work will begin in July as soon as our budget is adopted.

There's lots more to report on in terms of recent activities and successes that are already happening in Downtown but I just don't have the time to list them. But I do want to make sure that you all have a personal invitation to attend the first ever Rev Fest in downtown Fresno this weekend...and join us again next weekend for the HyeFest. These festivals are just the start of re-creating Downtown Fresno as our entertainment district.

Some people are still saying we are *going* to revitalize downtown. I correct them and say, downtown *is* revitalizing. The process is started. Some will notice it before others, but it is underway. We will continue it, and we will get the job done.

The state of our city is strong because our institutions and our employees are strong...because we're a city committed to action...and I'm pleased to report that the City of Fresno is strong because our financial position is strong. Considering the volatility of this economy, the depth and likely length of this recession, and the impact it has had on other local jurisdictions across California and the nation, there is relative stability in Fresno's financial picture.

Last week I submitted a balanced budget for Council consideration. It includes a number of very difficult decisions, but it's a strong budget because it's built on the principles of (1) protecting core services for the public, (2) fiscal prudence, and (3) making the tough choices now to create savings as quickly as possible. We made the tough choices in proposing the budget because the public expects no less, and we owe that to them. We are financially stable at this point and will continue to be if we operate according to these principles.

Perhaps most importantly, I know Fresno is strong because of the people of our community and their remarkable stories, stories like the one you heard just moments ago from Shirley Bobbitt. And stories from people like **Rosario Sanchez**, the principal at Lincoln Elementary, which is located just west of downtown. Ms. Sanchez is an incredible example of what can happen when the right people and the right resources are put together at the right time. Ms. Sanchez and her staff have boosted student achievement at Lincoln in a very short period of time. She has led the school to significant academic improvement, giving hope to the students, staff, and families. **Last week's release of the Academic Performance Index showed Lincoln with an outstanding jump from a 1 to a 7 when compared to other schools in California with similar demographics.** And, just last year, Lincoln Elementary School was one of only two elementary schools in Fresno Unified School District that posted school-wide gains of more than 8% in both English Language Arts and mathematics. Her compassion and understanding of the economic and social challenges that her students and families face make her a highly effective leader. And quite fittingly, she is a finalist for the Fresno County Administrator of the Year. Rosario represents what it will take in Fresno Unified School District to get the breakthrough results that our students and our community deserve.

And then there are stories like that of Curtis Lee, a Cesar Chavez Adult School success story. Curtis was born into a family of farm workers. His family traveled all the

way to Oregon and back looking for work when he was younger. He did not regularly attend school until age 12 when he went to live with his mother in Calwa.

At that point, Curtis had fallen significantly behind. Curtis admits to surrounding himself with bad influences. By age 15, he first began spending time in juvenile hall and eventually ended up in state prison on several occasions. However, he began to turn his life around in 2008 when he was mandated by the court to attend the West Care recovery program. That began a process in Curtis' life of shedding alcohol and drug addiction and overcoming the fear of going back to school.

One of his instructors at West Care encouraged Curtis to attend the Cesar Chavez Adult School. Overcoming the fear of walking into the building the first day to talk to an enrollment counselor was a huge challenge, but Curtis knew that he had to conquer that fear. So he did.

He completed his GED with a lot of encouragement, support, and pushing from the instructors at the Adult School. Curtis says he now has the self esteem to continue with school. He is enrolled at Fresno City College and will attend classes there in the fall.

Curtis carries an important message for others who are struggling with the same issues he had to overcome – he tells them to never give up, don't live in the past. Curtis says, "No matter what happened in the past, do not let it dictate your future."

6. CLOSING

Those are really wise words, Curtis, not just for the individual...but for our entire city. “No matter what’s happened in the past, Fresno, let’s not let it dictate our future.” You see, I am keenly aware that many, many people have worked for a long time – in some cases, a lifetime – to build a better Fresno. Yet, in the past, sometimes our efforts have felt as if we’ve come up short. We’ve allowed those shortcomings to be defined as failures, and then we let those past failures hang around our neck like a big, thick noose threatening to strangle anyone who dares suggest, like Curtis Lee says, that our past does not dictate our future. I want to suggest a different way of thinking today. All of the past efforts to build a better Fresno...the past efforts to revitalize our downtown, repair our older neighborhoods, deal with poverty, crime, etc...all of those efforts – whether you think they were successful or not – have served a purpose. Those efforts have brought us to where we are today – a city on the verge of breaking through. Just imagine how soldiers of old charged the gates of a huge fortress. They used a huge battering ram. Did they run up to the gates and just give it one little shove to breakthrough the gates? Of course not. They would beat on the gates, they would wail on them, battering them as many times as it would take to bust through the gates.

Well, that’s what I think of when I consider what it takes to see Fresno break through. You see, folks in our community have been battering on those gates for a long time – as much as 30 years. The bad news is that some of you are really tired because you’ve been

at it for a long time...believing, hoping, challenging, praying, volunteering...but the good news is we're almost through the gates. And, ours is the generation that will see the breakthrough for this City.

I want to leave you with this thought: it's different this time. "Oh, we've been to State of the City addresses before...people always say such triumphant things...but nothing ever changes." No, it's different this time.

"We've talked about downtown...we've talked about consolidation...we've talked about poverty and homelessness before...and we still have these problems." No, it's different this time.

I challenge you - arrest those thoughts. Apprehend them. Bind them up and kick them out of your minds and your hearts because, I'm telling you that it's different this time.

We have the political will – not just at the City, but across this area. People are in place across this region with the skill, the know how, and the tenacity to do what it takes to see Fresno break through. We have the resources we need. It may seem like we don't have enough, but we do. If we use what we've got strategically and wisely, we have the resources we need. We can do this. Whether it's the work going on in our schools, redeveloping downtown, rebuilding dilapidated neighborhoods, working with at-risk youth, dealing with gangs...it's different this time. The efforts of the past matter – even when things didn't go as well as we wanted them to go – they still counted. They

counted as a whack against those gates that have been locked for a long time. And now, the locks are breaking, and the gates are creaking. They're starting to give. And, very soon, we're going to see them swing wide open. And, we're going to see our city, Fresno, go from being the city that's been overlooked...forgotten...to being the greatest comeback story of cities in modern history. Others across the country will talk about our success as if it happened overnight...but you and I will know that it's been a long fight with many people taking their turn at the battering ram...pushing and fighting and working to make things better for the people who live here.

This is what I hold onto, and what I ask you to hold onto as well, because there is still a lot to do. Hold onto this - when that moment comes, when the gates finally relent and fly open for our city, it's going to be worth it.

So, let's keep fighting. Let's keep believing. Let's keep pushing...because our city, Fresno, is worth it.