



MAYOR LEE BRAND

INAUGURATION SPEECH

JANUARY 5, 2017

Let me start by saying thank you to the many people who helped win the election. This was truly a team effort.

I have given my heart and soul to this City for the past 8 years. To be a better Mayor, I have sold my interest in my business Westco, of over 30 years, to focus 100% of my efforts to make Fresno a better place to live.

Today is special because it gives me a chance to layout my vision of our City for the next four years and to think about the long and challenging road I have travelled to get to this place, this moment in time, where I now humbly accept the honor of serving Fresno as its 22nd elected Mayor.

That journey started many years ago on in a modest two-bedroom one-bath house at 4005 E. McKenzie Street. My family support circle was close with my grandparents, aunt and uncle living across the street.

I was a problem child who did not do well in school. In 6th grade my teacher told me that I would end up in prison. I nearly fulfilled that prophesy a few years later in ninth grade.

1964 was a traumatic year for me. I was arrested at Yosemite Junior High and taken away in handcuffs. A few months later my father died in a tragic airplane crash. I never had an opportunity to redeem myself to my father.

I was haunted by his untimely death for some time until I was finally able to forgive him. My only regret is that he didn't live to see this day.

As the record shows, I took control of my life and never looked back.

This long road has spanned many miles over the past 60-plus years: through military service, college graduation, business success, and family joy. Most of my cherished memories happened right here in Fresno. The friendships I've gained, the relationships

I've built, and the children and grandchildren I've raised – these are the gifts that last a lifetime.

I want to thank my dear friend, Mayor Ashley Swearengin, for her leadership and her support. In passing the torch to our new administration, she has made the transition as smooth and as thorough as possible.

Mayor Swearengin and her staff have gone out of their way to provide the tools my team will need to be successful. I wish Ashley well in her future endeavors and thank her for her years of service to our city.

I also want to thank my colleagues on the Council for your help over the past eight years. I consider every one of you a friend. I would not have been able to pass my many initiatives without your collaboration and support. Your courage and passion have always inspired me and I look forward to working with you in the months ahead to continue to move this great city forward.

In that same spirit, I want to praise my transition team, led by H. Spees, who have given me exceptional advice I believe we dearly need to be agents of change. From business to labor to clergy to public safety, this diverse collection of life and leadership experience has blended together in a remarkable way.

And I'm pleased to announce officially today that I am changing my transition team to become a permanent Mayor's Advisory Committee that will meet on a regular basis to discuss issues and find solutions. These men and women will continue to be leaders in their own respect and a reflection of Fresno's diversity. We need their voices and wisdom to help me solve the challenges ahead of us.

Let me also express my gratitude to the voters for electing me to be your mayor. I look forward to hearing your ideas and concerns as we work to build on the momentum our city now enjoys.

That momentum can only be sustained through collaboration.

That's a word you will continue to hear in the years ahead.

Collaboration is the key to doing the hard work ahead.

Nowhere is the need for collaboration more crucial than in the area of public safety.

That's why I will create a Citizens Public Safety Advisory Council to assist the Fresno Police Department's move to community-based policing and to provide more transparency and accountability by the department to the people of Fresno.

One of my priorities is to steadily increase the number of on-duty police officers to 1,000 and continue to add firefighters and replace equipment – a plan that is based on developing sustainable funding sources.

I'm proud to have played a significant role in balancing our budget, restoring staffing levels, increasing our reserves and improving our bond ratings. Our city has benefitted from strong and consistent leadership.

We will remain strong and constant in our efforts to complete the restoration of Fresno's economy that began with the Swearingin Administration and will continue in the Brand Administration.

My Economic Expansion Act is a blue print for creating thousands of new jobs. It calls for the city to take leadership roles in mobilizing finance and venture-capital resources for businesses and supporting efforts for more vocational education that will increase and improve our workforce.

Just last month, City Hall celebrated the news that Ulta and Amazon have identified Fresno as their preferred choice for building e-commerce distribution centers which will bring 3,000 new jobs and, more importantly, new opportunity.

We must make Fresno business friendly and finish the work that has already been done to streamline the permitting and plan check process. Let's finish the job with an explanation point.

My priorities for this new administration also call for strengthening our community. We will continue Mayor Swearingin's initiatives to revitalize our downtown and our older neighborhoods.

We will beef up code enforcement to advance our campaign to clean up substandard housing and, this February, we will pass a sensible, reasonable, workable interior inspection program.

We will complete the master plan for future citywide park and trail construction and provide more green space citywide. We will continue the steady process of rebuilding our infrastructure.

The election is over. As of right now, the slate is clean. We are all in this together now. This is not labor versus management. This is not police versus citizen. This is not landlord versus tenant. This is the city of Fresno moving forward as one. And I look forward to walking down that long and challenging road together.

I have been blessed with a wonderful family, great friends, and loyal supporters

I have traveled a long road from my early days on McKenzie Street. A part of me will always be there. This road has been a physical journey and a spiritual journey.

A confluence of events bringing me together with the right people at the right time has given me inspiration and faith that I will lead the City forward.

It took every fiber of my being to step out from that small house on McKenzie Street many years ago and choose a new path. A path that would lead me right to this building, this job, this moment.

These past 8 years on the Council were, indeed, the time of my life.

I cherish every moment and I'm truly honored to have this great responsibility.

My colleagues and I are forever bound by our bond as public servants. History will judge our accomplishments.

I give you my vow that I will lead with my head but follow my heart to bring all citizens of Fresno together as one.

Thank you for giving me this incredible opportunity. God bless you and may God bless the Great City of Fresno!