

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff
Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

Good morning. Members of Congress, the state legislature, the City Council, District Attorney Johnson, my fellow Borough Presidents, community board chairs and managers, Bronx community leaders and friends welcome to the 2007 State of the Borough Address. This is our sixth address on the State of our borough.

I'm very pleased to be here at the historic Hostos Community College. Please join me in thanking our host today, my friend and the President of Hostos, Dr. Delores Fernandez. Thank you and thanks to the entire Hostos family for working so hard to make this event possible.

Eugenio Maria de Hostos!!!! Let me tell you a little about Hostos, he lived from 1839 to 1903, was a Puerto Rican philosopher, pedagogue, writer, sociologist, journalist, abolitionist, freedom fighter, proponent of women's rights to education and until his dying day in Santiago of the Dominican Republic, a believer in education as the path to emancipation. Hostos argued that reason has no gender—he fought for Cuba, Puerto Rico, Peru, Chile, Argentina, against slavery. So if Eugenio Maria de Hostos could somehow come back and be with us today, I believe he would smile with his big 19th century mustache outstretched beyond his chiseled cheek bones and say thank you. My friends, this college was born of the spirit of Hostos. That fighting spirit was alive from its first class of 623 students in 1971, to when it was slated to be consolidated with another school during the fiscal crisis and closed, and this community said no, Hostos will live on, and it has. So here we are today, Hostos has 4800 students and partners with Columbia University in a national scholars program... the Congressman Serrano Scholars Program. That fighting spirit led the Hostos men's basketball team to be 2005 National Junior College Div III Basketball Champions—they currently rank 1st in the CUNY Men's Basketball standings. That fighting spirit led the Hostos women's basketball team to be 3-time CUNY Athletic Conference basketball title winners. This school, this community, this borough continues to defy the odds and birth champions.

And, so I chose Hostos this year, because this school, like the Bronx, has a fighting spirit and like the Bronx, has experienced enormous success in the past decade. It is this drive for excellence, this desire to be the best that is reflected in the students here at Hostos and in the residents of the Bronx.

While we can probably find and recruit the next point guard for the Knicks or NY Liberty here today, we're really here because Hostos is at the epicenter of a new wave of development. I told you last year that the Bronx was at work—that we are building a stronger Bronx and by extension a stronger City—I'm proud to say that it's not just words—we're doing it. The Bronx

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

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Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

is back.

We've seen a revitalization of small businesses along 149th St. and the groundbreaking of the new HUB retail and commercial space, the new Gateway Center at the old Bronx Terminal Market, and the new Yankee Stadium.

We're building a new Grand Concourse for the 21st Century. In fact, the Bronx is now seeing the greatest amount of growth and change since the 1920s and 30s. Hey—after all, this is the home of the Yankees, not the Red Sox.

Over the past five years, I've heard your hopes and dreams, as well as your frustrations. This has happened at hundreds of meetings and community events, as well as hearing you on Ask the Borough President on News 12 The Bronx. Please help me thank the team at News 12 The Bronx for providing such an important service for 5 years— I am more committed than ever to improving the Bronx so that we can lay the foundation for an even brighter future.

Our progress is the result of our work. I have not done any of this alone. Let me say thank you to my colleagues in government who have put time, energy and support behind their words. Our political leader, Bronx County Democratic Chairman and Assemblyman Jose Rivera, Assemblywoman Aurelia Greene, who is Chair of the Assembly delegation and all members of the Bronx Assembly delegation, the Bronx delegation of the State Senate—and by the way, let us all today congratulate the new Deputy Minority Leader of the State Senate, Bronx State Senator Jeff Klein— Council Member and Chair of the Bronx City Council delegation Maria Baez and the entire Bronx City Council delegation, and our three members of Congress, members Serrano, Crowley and Engel. Let me also take this moment to make a special recognition of one of our own who has ascended to the third most important position in our new governor's administration. She's from The Bronx, she's an exceptional leader in our community and has served us on the NYS Board of Regents and in many more ways—my good friend and the new Secretary of State of the Great State of New York, the Honorable Lorraine Cortes-Vasquez.

All of these leaders and all of you have been enormously helpful in getting us to where we are today. Of course we are far from finished with our work. I can tell you with certitude that it is not easy...but it's a whole lot of fun. Sometimes we have our disagreements. But in the end, this isn't about our interests it's about what's best for the Bronx and the City.

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

I'm happy to declare with confidence that yes, the Bronx is back!!!. The State of our beloved Bronx is better than it was in 2002, when we started our tenure.

As we begin 2007 – by the way, we have 2 years, 10 months and 19 days remaining, but who's counting - we have made great progress in economic development and job creation, in housing production, in improving the environment, in improving health conditions, in fighting crime, and small but important gains in education.

Now that the Bronx is Back – a new chapter will be written.

Here's what it looks like. In five years, we've created more private sector jobs in the Bronx than any other borough. 10,000 new private sector jobs have been created during my administration. 30,000 people have found jobs and unemployment was cut by more than 50%...from 11.3% to 5.4%. And, 13,000 fewer people are living in poverty. Last year, the Bronx ranked 3rd in the state and 1st in the city in Personal Income Growth.

Those of you who've been following the Bronx story remember we launched the Bronx at Work and Buy Bronx/Buy New York campaigns. The message was and continues to be... "IF YOU DO BUSINESS IN THE BRONX – YOU MUST DO BUSINESS WITH THE BRONX". The chapter you've written created 1700 construction related jobs since 2002. Many businesses moved to the Bronx, we've lent \$12 million to bring in new manufacturers, we created a \$6.75 million fund to help businesses become environmentally responsible, in 2006 alone we lent \$137 million to 50 businesses that created 2200 jobs and helped another 2000 businesses cut through red tape.

As a result of major development projects like Yankee Stadium, the Gateway Center, and other projects that are on the way, the next big wave of growth is in construction, service and retail jobs. Since the historic groundbreakings last August, we've processed 1300 job applicants – these and the many more who will come will be channeled into the 8900 construction jobs and 3100 permanent jobs at these projects alone.

With the great leadership of the Bronx City Council delegation and the participation of a community based working group we crafted two historic community benefits agreements that committed at a minimum, 25% of the construction contracts and 25% of the construction

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

workforce to these projects. On the Yankee Stadium Neighborhood Redevelopment Project alone - look at this - 37% of the construction contracts have gone to Bronx businesses. And at the Gateway Center at the old Bronx Terminal Market 51% of the construction contracts have also gone to Bronx businesses.

As part of the Buy Bronx/Buy NY Campaign we've held workshops and talked to 400 businesses about procurement opportunities for major development projects.

Now the Bronx is the place for your corporate office. This has been the year of the groundbreaking, sometimes even days apart - 800 new office buildings, with an investment of nearly \$2 billion in five years. And, soon there will be 520,000 square feet of shiny new office space at the Hutchinson Metro Center. And for my friends in the trades, we will work out a deal with the developer to ensure that Bronx construction trades help build this new complex. The 170,000sf HUB Retail and Office Center that broke ground last winter, will be neighbor to a 500,000sf office, retail and housing complex right here in the South Bronx.

In order to continue to attract investment that creates jobs and opportunity we must continue an aggressive investment in infrastructure - we need to build and rebuild roads, bridges and better public transportation. Let me tell you what's happening:

We're reconstructing the Grand Concourse, thanks to the efforts of Congressman Jose Serrano who secured the federal funds.

We will build a new ramp off of the Hutchinson River Parkway, into the Bay Plaza Shopping complex, thanks to the efforts of Congressman Joe Crowley.

Improvements to are being made to Fordham Road, the Major Deegan Expressway and we've invested nearly \$900 to re-build and renovating 8 bridges throughout the borough- including every bridge that connects the Bronx to Manhattan over the Harlem River.

We took the MTA to task on the condition of the subways and are finally seeing results. In the last year 27 elevated stations were renovated. 32 more stations need to be redone - 14

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

elevated and 18 underground. I look forward to working with the new head of the MTA, Lee Sander, a good friend, to finish this very important work.

As we continue to grow we will improve our commuter rail lines. We've had nine Metro North stations redone and will build new stations in Williamsbridge and Woodlawn, including the new station near the new Yankee Stadium that will be underway by 2009. I look forward to working with Assembly Members Peter Rivera, Michael Benedetto and Ruben Diaz, Jr., and our federal officials to extend commuter rail service to the east Bronx's new stations in Hunts Point, Parkchester and Co-op City.

We know that good housing that's reasonably priced is hard to come by. At least seven of ten constituent requests and complaints we get are related to housing. Since 2001 nearly 28,000 units of housing have been built. That's 28,000 units of housing and it's still not enough. This required an investment of \$2.4 billion. I have partnered with the Bronx City Council delegation and the Bloomberg administration. For our part, we have invested \$34 million in capital funds to build housing.

Five years ago we set out to increase homeownership opportunities in the borough. More than 7500 families became homeowners during that period. This is the result of an aggressive strategy that includes an annual homebuyers fair and workshops that have attracted several thousand families who learned to simply how qualify for a mortgage and finance their first home. In order to build on our recovery and sustain our growth we must hold on to the middle class. The way we do this is by providing opportunities for young families, as they enter the middle class, to own a piece of the American Dream right here. This is why we've built 1,000 residential units of co-ops and condos for young families in the past five years.

Mitchell Lama housing has made it possible for thousands of working families to find quality affordable housing. Since my first election, we created the Bronx Mitchell Lama Task Force whose mission is to preserve and retain 35,000 units of affordable housing and hold owners accountable for their developments. And we're still not done with housing, we'll continue to build.

Our effort to create a better place to live means we've taken up the fight to clean up our environment. I don't mean to give another plug to Al Gore's film, an Inconvenient Truth, which if you have not see you should, we have known anecdotally and more and more based on evidence that our planet is showing signs of warming. On our 44 square miles of God's good

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

earth called The Bronx, with a population of nearly 1.4 million, we have done what I believe this city and cities around the world should do. We've started a Green Roof Program that helps to fund the creation of green roofs—these green roofs reduce heat by 27% to help to retain heat during the winter and cool during the summer, capture and use storm water, and can serve as community gardens. We've coupled this with insisting that new development is sustainable—buildings that are built with environmentally friendly material and efficient in the use of energy, including solar panels and reuse of storm water. And, now we need to pass legislation that will give manufacturers tax breaks for making environmentally sustainable products right now in our city. While reducing our fossil fuel consumption and the pollutants in our environment, we will begin to improve conditions for future generations and still be competitive. Green can and must mean good for the environment and good for the pocket book.

I commend Mayor Bloomberg for beginning the overdue process of a 25-year plan for the future of New York. Our City must lead this nation and the world in innovation, as it does in so many other areas

Our daily living environment requires that we create parks that provide a place for exercise and recreation. As a result of a deal that was struck with the City and State, under the leadership of our state legislators and city council members, we are now investing more than \$400 million in Bronx Parks. One of the new parks that will be created is the new 24.5-acre park at the site of the old Yankee Stadium. This park will include 4 baseball fields, a soccer and football field, with lights and stands, basketball courts, a 400-meter running track, tennis courts near the river, and a multiplicity of passive multi-use areas.

Over the last 5 years we've begun the important work of improving and protecting our waterfront. From the Hudson to the Sound efforts are continuing. The cleanup and restoration of the Bronx River, ensuring access to the water alongside historically industrial sites, like the opening of Barretto Point Park in Hunts Point. Help me say thanks to the work of the 20 plus community based organizations that comprise the Bronx River Alliance. This work, coupled with green development and the introduction of hybrid electric commuter shuttles into the industrial zones in the South Bronx will set the standard for how we should manage our affairs citywide.

Let me talk a little about the healthcare and wellness challenge. We are known as the borough of hospitals, parks and universities. However, we also have the unfortunate distinction of having some of the worse indicators as it relates to wellness. You and I know the reasons for this are complicated and varied. This, however, does not mean that making it better is beyond

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

our reach. We've turned many areas of life around in the Bronx and I believe that working together we will turn this around. I'm happy to report that in the last 5 years 71,000 Bronx residents have enrolled in health insurance programs through aggressive outreach efforts by many of you. Please help me thank the Director of the Bronx Health Office, Dr. Jane Bedell for her stellar work in improving health outcomes in the Bronx. I'd also like to recognize someone who just two weeks ago received the highest honor any civilian can receive from the US Surgeon General. This wonderful man, who has served the South Bronx as a community physician for more than four decades received the Surgeon General's Medallion for the Urban Health Plan, a community health center he founded, now one of the nation's premier community health centers—please recognize my friend Dr. Richard Izquierdo.

I want to thank every health care worker, from hospital presidents to nurses. We're still plagued with serious health problems—HIV/AIDs, heart disease, cancer, asthma, diabetes, and obesity. Every elected official from the Bronx is involved in addressing these challenges. From our budget, we've complemented your work with \$7 million in funding to hospitals and health centers. Despite our efforts, every week nearly 100 Bronx residents learn they have cancer and up to 40 die from it. We need to redouble our efforts and my friends, continue to fight against initiatives like the proposed closing of Westchester Square Medical Center and other so called cost-cutting measures that put our community in further danger. And so I pledge to you today that I will join members of the City Council, the Chair of the Health Committee, Council Majority Leader Joel Rivera and the Bronx delegation, as well as members of the State legislature to fight these cuts as we enter this year's budget discussion. Please count on me to testify before your respected bodies and help you make the case for the people of the Bronx and the City.

If there is a war that must be declared and won it's the war against chronic disease and poor health. Here's where we really need more troops.

I want you to know my parents are here—Papi and Mami thank you. You and I owe a debt of gratitude to those who came before us and worked hard to pass on to us and their grand children a better city. Some people refer to them as seniors, but I like to refer to them as seasoned or older adults. Our small attempt to pay a debt to them has translated into \$15 million dollars for 18 housing projects to create 1,800 residential units and about \$1 million in renovations to older adult centers. Five years ago, we were funding 53 older adult programs, today we are funding 86 of those programs all around the Bronx. Let me assure you that we will continue to fight against cuts to services for older adults and will work to build more housing.

I want to especially thank those elected officials who either chair or sit on committees that

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

address these issuesâ€¦ Council Members Maria del Carmen Arroyo and James Vacca, and State Senator Ruben Diazâ€¦ thank you for your advocacy and for the resources you have fought for in the budget.

Thanks to each of my colleagues who hold special events and fund programs in your respective districts. Last year, we held the 3rd Annual Bronx Week Big Band Brunch where we hosted 800 older adultsâ€¦ let me tell you, these people know how to party and have a good time. So for Valentine's Day we're having the first ever Bronx Sweetheart Luncheon for couples who are married 50 years or more. Believe me, it will be a great party.

One of the fundamental elements necessary for our form of government and our free market to work is safety and security. Crime rates in the Bronx have plummeted to historic lows, now we must remain ready and vigilant to ensure there is no return to the days when crime swept through and destroyed many neighborhoods. Crime fighting must take the form of smart/targeted community policing, as well as providing positive options and outlets for our youth. It's no mystery that if young people's lives are filled with positive activities and challenges, they are less likely to make bad choices. And, you know, this is our problem. This means the solutions must be ours.

Part of the solution has to be using alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenses. When a kid gets involved in a petty crime we should demand a great deal of the kid and the family, let's provide options that teach responsibility. And to the parents, coddling destructive behavior under the guise of "not my kid" or the system is responsible for how my kid turns out, this is simply absolving ourselves of the awesome responsibility of raising our own children. At the same time, as we demand more of ourselves and our families we must also demand more of government and the corporate stakeholders in our village. That is to say that if you do business in our City you should invest in the future of our City. This means that getting involved in a school, giving to a fund that helps with after school programs, helps with little league, helps with a chess or music program, that it's not charity, it's our responsibility.

And since we're talking about improving public safety and reducing crime, we need to pay our police officers fairly. We need to pay a living wage to the good men and women who put on a uniform everyday to serve and protect us. It's absolutely ludicrous that we're paying a new police officer a starting salary of \$25,000, and the same goes for firefighters. Let's raise the starting pay of police officers and firefighters to what they're worth to us. Unless we do this we will keep training police officers in our academy and shipping them off to the surrounding counties where they get paid right. Mr. Mayor, this must be addressed immediately.

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

If we pay more we will demand more. Whether its teachers or cops or anyone else who is entrusted with our children and families. We will support you, we will fight for you to be treated with respect and dignity and we expect the same. Our top cop in the Bronx gets this and works hard to help us create a safe community for our families. I want you to help me to once again publicly thank my friend and fellow Bronxite, Assistant Chief Tom Purtell. Tom thank you and all the men and women who do the job right God bless you and keep you safe I'd like to pause and take a moment to commemorate Police Officers Eric Hernandez and Eric Conception, who were both killed last year. These two deaths remind us of the great sacrifices our police officers make daily.

This past year, Sergeant Jason Manzari and Police Officer Norkiss Andino from the 49th Precinct recovered a baby that was abandoned in Pelham Parkway. The story doesn't end there, Police Officer Andino went well beyond the call of duty. After bringing the baby to Jacobi Medical Center she learned that the baby would have to be put up for adoption so she went ahead and adopted the child. You are indeed New York's finest.

Another critical part of our safety net is those who fight fires and other dangerous conditions. This past year two of our bravest lost their lives fighting a fire at a store right here on Walton Avenue. Lt. Howard Karpluk and Fire Fighter Michael Riley these are the heroes our children should look up to to their families who are here the words thank you cannot capture the magnitude of our gratitude and the depth of our sorrow. So please remember their families in your prayers and let's all thank our Bronx Fire Chief James Esposito for leading these brave men.

Our Bronx fire fighters show their heroism day in and day out. Just three weeks ago, Lt. Sean McNally and Fire Fighters Thomas O'Meara, Daniel Keating, Patrick Lenihan and John Shurina of Ladder 49 attempted to save four trapped people in a daring ladder rescue from the roof of a home. In the end the home was destroyed, but everyone was rescued and no one was hurt. You are indeed our bravest. Thank you.

I want to again this year thank two outstanding Bronx legislators, Assemblywoman Naomi Rivera and Senator Ruth Hassel-Thompson. They accepted the challenge of chairing the Bronx Legislative Task Force to Combat Domestic Violence. Assemblywoman Rivera introduced and passed legislation this year that takes away parental rights from a parent who has murdered his or her spouse. This is a smart and tough law that protects children and families congratulations. We've added a new tool to continue to address domestic violence we are now staging a traveling play in the borough with Pregones Theater, to dramatize the problem and encourage women to report abuse. I'm also glad to give special

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

recognition today to Council Member Maria Baez who secured \$1 million in the City budget last year to create the Bronx Family Justice Center. Working with our office and the Mayors Office to Combat Domestic Violence we will open this center to provide a full spectrum of services to victims and their families. Thank you to all of you and the colleagues who supported your efforts.

The persistent bad news is that poverty and all its related issues remains a problem that grips still too many in our community. You and I know that this is the result of decades of bad public policy and the absence of a sensible urban agenda for our country. We can't keep throwing money at a housing policy that concentrates poor families in massive housing projects and hopes for the best. We can't keep wishing kids into success by simply declaring that no child will be left behind. We must stop treating the poor as laboratory subjects that we tinker with in our pricey think tanks and universities. We will eradicate poverty by investing in our most important asset—our children and families.

In spite of bad public policy The Bronx has succeeded in chipping away at the cycles of poverty that plague so many American cities. Today there are 23,000 fewer people on public assistance in The Bronx than there were five years ago. With so many more people working, so many off the welfare rolls, we are moving in the right direction. You may want to tell that to the New York Times, and all the reporters that simply dwell on the negative.

Let's again—
together—
not let anyone make excuses and overanalyze the problems we face—
let's continue to find solutions that work.

So what we need to do is invest in our children and families. As most of you have heard me say, I believe our most important responsibility as Americans is the education of our children. Let me put this into context. Education does not begin at 8am and end at 3pm. Education is a 24/7 proposition. This means that every one of us is responsible for the education of our children in our communities. This means that whether you're a teacher, a preacher, a merchant, a train operator, a police officer, a doctor—whatever you do—you are in the education system. So that, we have to conceive of the education continuum as one that is seamless and endless. This work then requires a different approach. You know, I'm tired of hearing the public arguments about resources and contracts without the commitment of heart. I believe that to do this right we cannot watch the clock. I believe we must keep the doors of the schoolhouse open before 8 and well after 3 and on the weekends. I believe that we need to incorporate civics, and, social and personal responsibility into the curriculum. I believe no cost is too great for rigorous academics, supported by organized sports, arts and culture, and a fully functioning school library. This will require sacrifice—
not complaining that it's not our job

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

description and is not included in our contract. Our contract is a moral and social contract with the future of this republic. If this is going to work we must set aside the immediate for the larger gain.

We know that our youngsters will do well, or not, depending on how much we support them. We've invested \$20 million in building and renovating youth centers since 2002. In the time we have left we will get started building a new Y in Co-op City, a new West Bronx Boys and Girls Club on University Avenue, youth programs and schools at the Kingsbridge Armory, a new Mount Hope Youth Center, a new youth center in Parkchester, and new centers in Morrisania and Pelham Parkway.

Our commitment to the schools is real and serious. With my colleagues and with the advice and advocacy of school leaders in our community we've provided \$13 million dollars for school improvements, like the 50 portable science labs in 50 schools around the Bronx and 100 new schools where attendance and graduation rates are higher than ever before. Working with Cablevision we've provided free high-speed internet to 200 Bronx schools, and fought a tough fight, led by Council Member Arroyo and colleagues in her district to ensure that a planned new school campus would be designed and built correctly on an environmentally sensitive site.

This year we will launch an Education Task Force, not to publish studies or reports but to build connections for schools with philanthropy, with business and any partner willing to help. Beginning this year we will work with Randi Weingarten and the UFT in a partnership with the Council for Unity to address gang violence in every Bronx neighborhood. If we can prepare them early then we can send them off to college or work prepared to succeed.

As many of you know, the current five-year capital plan calls for the addition of 17,000 new school seats in The Bronx. This is the crux of my message for this year: We can build another 20,000 seats, we can place a computer on every child's lap, we can shrink class size, and we can try new brands of social engineering techniques that the next generation of academics suggests will turn things around but none of this will make a difference without leadership. I believe the only way to address the crisis of 3 out of 4 Bronx eighth graders not reading at grade level, 3 out of 4 eighth graders not performing math at grade level and the same proportion not graduating with a regents diploma is by providing leadership. Well, let me tell you what brand of leadership I'm talking about. It's the kind of leadership that understands the neighborhood because it's immersed in neighborhood life. It's the kind of leadership that arrives at school early, leaves late, visits parents at home if necessary, supports good teachers but demands as much, works and plays with the kids on evenings and weekends, creates a high expectations environment, respects the community it serves, and loves the children not

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

offering up paternalistic, self-aggrandizing pity—but a genuine love for the kids. Well, just last week, such an education leader was featured in a NY Daily News story. In three years he and his team of teachers who were more than willing to buy in to a new way of doing things turned a failing school around. Here's what he said: "The idea is to address the home-school connection, to show [parents] that they are welcome here"—"Come in the morning, come in the afternoon, just come sometime." Well, last March, the school was removed from the state's list of failing schools, and the percentage of 5th graders able to perform math at grade level jumped from just 8.2% in 2003 to nearly 54% last year.

So today I want to recognize Paul Cannon's leadership and can-do attitude. Paul is the principal of PS140. I'm glad to tell that I commit \$100,000 to fund a laptop computer for every 3rd, 4th and 5th grader at PS140. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a testament to every teacher, administrator, and parent who has stepped up for their children. We need to reward success and hard work.

If we do this right, every college president who is here will be ready to receive and prepare the next generation of leaders at their college campuses. Then the \$2.2 million dollars that my office contributed last year for science and technology at Bronx colleges will be a drop in the bucket, compared to your invaluable contribution of leadership.

Our office will continue to do what we do every day—help the residents of the Bronx solve their problems. We did this 1600 times this year. We will continue to do the best job we can, working with our community boards and their managers to make this borough and this city better. We will repair the step streets; clean up graffiti; spruce up commercial strips; help the disabled to find jobs and housing, ensure the safety and placement of foster children, and we'll continue to hold town hall meetings—like the one we just held in Parkchester several weeks ago. To serve Bronx veterans I will turn part of my office into a "One Stop Veterans Referral Service". Latisha Lemott, of my staff, she's an army veteran, will head this initiative. Help me recognize the Bronx Veterans Advisory Council and the members of the Bronx's own 773rd Transportation Company who are currently on active duty—they've served in Operation Iraqi Freedom. We will work tirelessly to serve the Bronx.

Now let me close with this:

With the 2 years, 10 months and 19 days we have left, thanks to term limits this is what we will do to complete our work and hand over to the next generation a better Bronx.

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

We will build the Children's Museum of the Bronx—a board is being formed, elected officials and community leaders support it, the CMOM is involved, and philanthropies are lining up—

We will build a Hotel and Conference/Convention Center—

We will work to convince City Hall and the Police Department that instead of building a jail in the South Bronx, at Oak Point, we should build the new police academy here and leverage the existing businesses in the area by building a state of the art recycling business that will serve as a place of science, innovation and career opportunities.

We will build a Hip-Hop Museum where West 149th Street meets the Bronx River, and attract tourists who are increasingly interested in this global phenomenon called hip-hip. Cleveland has the Museum of Rock & n Roll, the Bronx will have the Museum of Hip-Hop—.why not?

We will rebuild the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market. This market feeds 22 million people every day, employs 10,000 people, and generates \$2 billion in fruit and vegetable sales every year. For this we will need the commitment of every level of government, especially City Hall. We must do this, and with your help we will.

We will create second chance schools—for those 16 to 24 year olds who have dropped out of school and are getting in trouble. They need a second chance—finish basic education and get the skills they need to move into higher education or a job—and a little tough love.

We will put plans in place for the Bronx Center for the Arts—a performing arts center that will house, the Bronx Opera Company, the Bronx Symphony Orchestra, the Bronx Dance Theatre, a Bronx Ballet and other performing arts groups.

And, let's get ready to play host to the 2008 MLB All-Star Game that will be played at Yankee Stadium. Every restaurant and cultural institution will be part of a national marketing campaign to host this special event in The Bronx.

Bronx Borough President 2007 State of the Borough Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Monday, February 19, 2007 12:00 AM

We've got our work cut out for us and little time remaining. As you know, after I'm done serving as borough president, I will continue serving our city in one capacity or another. So, over the next few years, in addition to all the good work we will continue to accomplish here, you will hear me chime in with more regularity on the issues that affect every borough of the greatest city in the world. The city that gave my family a very special opportunity. So I'll be talking about the need to keep our finances in order and pay as we go, and not give our generations' burden to future generations. I will be talking more about the fact that we cannot continue to have this imbalance with the State and Federal governments, where we send them almost \$22 billion more than we get back every year. I'm going to talk about our need to continue to be a city of opportunity where people from all parts of the country and the world come seeking opportunity and a better life and they can find it. I'm going to tell the Bronx story.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Every one in the Bronx should stand up and take a bow. The Bronx is Back!!!!!!!

Thank you very much and God Bless You.

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