

Welcome to the Capitol Theatre and good afternoon. It is my honor to continue to serve as your Mayor of the City of Wheeling, and my special privilege to deliver our State of the City address once again.

I can't start without thanking the City of Wheeling's Police and Fire Honor Guards. Thank you for presenting our colors!

I would like to recognize and thank my fellow City Council members: Vice Mayor Gene Fahey, Councilwoman Gloria Delbrugge, Councilmen Herk Henry, Donnie Atkinson, Ken Imer and David Miller; City Manager Robert Herron; City Clerk Janice Jones; City Solicitor Rose Humway-Warmuth; Finance Director Mike Klug; Economic Development Director Nancy Prager; Public Works Director Rusty Jebbia; Human Resources Director Leslie Waechter; Police Chief Shawn Schwertfeger; Fire Chief Larry Helms; and all the city staff who are here today.

I, along with City Council, appreciate your hard work and dedication to the citizens of Wheeling. These employees work very hard every day to make Wheeling a great city.

On a personal note, as always, I thank my family, especially my wife Carrie for your continuing support.

One of my favorite parts of giving this address is taking the time to recognize people who are making Wheeling a better place, year after year. I would first like to honor John Clark of IBEW. Not once have I ever heard John Clarke say anything less than, "We must do what is best for Wheeling!" I appreciate John's leadership as a Board Member at the Wheeling Chamber of Commerce, Project Best and the Board of Governors at WVNCC. He has also served on the Wheeling Planning Commission since 1999 and he holds the Distinction of being on the 3rd District International Executive Council for the IBEW. But one of the greatest accomplishments he is most proud of is: being the business manager of Local #141 for almost 18 years here in Wheeling. John will be retiring soon. Thank you, John Clarke, for all your hard work in the City of Wheeling!

For 30 years, Wheeling was the ONLY city in the United States that limited the ability of our police to patrol our city streets. Now, we have more police officers on our streets than ever before because of your vote. The data shows that OVERALL crime in our city was down this past year. However, we have seen an increase in drug activity in the valley. This is more than just a Wheeling issue; it's a national problem that is now affecting all of us. I want you to know we are committed to keeping our community safe and will work with County, State and Federal governments.

I know that we have one of the best police departments in the country. Chief Schwertfeger, to you and your officers, thank you for your department's hard work!

To Fire Chief Larry Helms, thank you for your leadership of our fire department. Last year, 3,500 people were trained in CPR, thanks to our firefighters, and children throughout Wheeling learned life-saving safety lessons by visiting our Fire Safety House. And all of that was in the time between the

6,385 calls for help in our community. We're fortunate to have top-notch safety professionals keeping our city safe every day.

On March 20, 1924, James B. Chambers, then President of The First National Bank in Elm Grove, founded The James B. Chambers Memorial Association. The Association was intended to serve the needs of the children of Elm Grove. On May 6, 1933, JB Chambers died, thus passing the on-going administration of the JB Chambers Memorial Assoc. to a governing Board of Trustees of the Foundation. In addition to a moderate amount of cash and marketable securities, the major asset of the JB Chambers Memorial was approximately 4.5 acres of land in Elm Grove where the Chambers YMCA now sits. Since then, the Foundation has served Wheeling and the legacy of Mr. Chambers well. I'm sure if he was here today he would be very proud of how the board has served his intentions by serving the youth of wheeling through the JB Chamber I-470 Ball Fields, the JB Chambers YMCA, The JB Chambers Performing Arts Center, and now the JB Chambers Recreation Park in East Wheeling to just name a few of the investments throughout the city of Wheeling. Today, we recognize JB Chamber Foundation Executive Director Emily Fisher.

You can find another one of Wheeling's gems in Elm Grove at the Kruger Street Toy and Train Museum. Under the ownership of Allan Miller, the Toy and Train Museum is a favorite children's attraction for rainy days, birthday parties, and pictures with Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. Allan has expanded his role at the Museum by going out into the community to build partnerships with local companies and increase awareness of his business. He's creating new programs and continuing to find ways to introduce people to the Toy and Train Museum. We're fortunate to have business owners like you, Allan.

This year, you will see the Market Street Plaza renovation, the Heritage Park construction on Main Street and all of Main and Market Streets paved with new handicap accessible sidewalks, creating welcoming areas for people in our downtown. These investments, along with West Virginia Northern Community College, are demonstrating continued growth and improvement in downtown Wheeling. With the conversion of the old car lots into modern new classrooms and a student union, there is no doubt that 16th and Market Street is one of the nicest intersections in our state. You have Northern's main campus building on one corner, the renovated buildings of the college on two other corners and finally, one of the state's most historically significant buildings, The West Virginia Independence Hall on the fourth corner. Thank you Dr. Martin Olshinsky for your continued dedication and vision in creating outstanding learning space in Downtown Wheeling.

A couple blocks away, you'll find another cornerstone of Wheeling – WesBanco Bank. Wheeling has been home to WesBanco since the late 19th Century, and for the past 37 years, WesBanco has been a second home for Paul Limbert. Under Mr. Limbert's leadership, WesBanco has grown through five major acquisitions and has more than doubled in total assets and banking locations. Since he was elected President & CEO in 2001, WesBanco has grown from \$2.5 billion in assets and 59 banking locations in West Virginia and Ohio to a \$6.1 billion company serving West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania through 120 locations. WesBanco has frequently been recognized for its strength and

outstanding performance and ranked as one of the most consistently profitable banks in the country during Mr. Limbert's presidency. Paul, with your retirement just around the corner, we want to thank you for your many years of service.

Also in downtown on 16th Street, Wheeling saw the renovation of another car lot. The Bob Robinson facility is now the new home of West Virginia Department of Health & Human Resources. After housing the Robinson dealership for decades, the building sat empty. But with vision and hard work, Mike Ferns was able to invest his time, energy and money and bring a very large building back to life in our downtown. Now, a year later, The Mary Margaret Laipple building has new life and new usage. Mr. Ferns, thank you for your investment in our downtown and sharing our vision for a brighter future in Wheeling.

Another important addition to downtown is Wheeling Jesuit University. The Physical Therapy Department has moved into the Stone Center and is now a major tenant, bringing students and professionals into downtown. Wheeling Jesuit, along with RED, has invested a tremendous amount of money into the New Physical Therapy program. Because of this investment, we are seeing an increase in foot traffic and the usage of parking lots. I believe there is even more opportunity for WJU to invest in downtown and I look forward to their continued success.

Currently, we are seeing an increase in private investment in personal property, as well as in the business community: there is the construction of the New Auto Zone in Elm Grove; the addition of rooms to the Hampton Inn – congratulations on being named #1 for customer service; the Linsly School addition – congratulations on celebrating 200 years of education; Kalkreuth Roofing is renovating the Kaly Center; the Carenbauer Distributing addition; the Diocese of Wheeling repurposing and renovating the former Wheeling Catholic Elementary School and the construction of the new Chancery. Technology firms like Williams Lea and Orrick are perfect examples of companies coming to Wheeling and thriving, demonstrating a positive example of successful economic development.

Sometimes, all it takes is one person to make an investment to see positive economic development. Glenn Elliott saw potential in the formerly vacant Professional Building and has worked hard for the past year to bring it back to life. He spent several months readying the first floor, which is being rented on a per-room basis and is ideal for small businesses and start-ups. By using this model, Glenn quickly leased all but one room. Glenn also plays an active role with the Ohio Valley Young Preservationists, the group that ultimately got him interested in the Professional Building in the first place. Congratulations Glenn on your success.

From global corporations to individual investors, people are showing our community that they believe in Wheeling. Wheeling has seen growth in its retail sales from many of the locally owned small businesses like Avenue Eats and Cilantro to the larger businesses like Lowes, Kroger's and the new Peebles in Warwood. With Centre Market continuing to thrive, we have seen an increase in activity and investment such as, Oliver's Pies, The Soup Shack, the Market Vines Bar & Grill and three

new bakeries. These businesses provide investment in our community and new opportunities for our citizens.

Nineteen years ago I met Terry Sterling, The Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce president. After all these years, Terry is now the longest serving president of the Wheeling Chamber. Since the chamber was incorporated in 1966, there have only been 3 presidents. Maybe it's because of his winning personality that he's lasted this long. I will surely miss his dry sense of humor and his quick wit, but honestly Terry, you have been a good friend of Wheeling and mine. Under Terry's leadership, the Chamber was a proud supporter of Home Rule, Tax Increment Financing and Medical Malpractice Reform just to name a few. Now Terry will have more time to spend with his Wife Karen, his children and their families. Terry has five grandchildren and a 6th on the way. Terry, we sincerely thank you for your dedication and hard work at the chamber and for our city.

Time after time, I hear people say, "There is never anything to do in Wheeling." With Oglebay Park Resort & Spa, The Good's Zoo, Stifle Fine Arts Center, Wheeling Park, the Wheeling Nailers, events at the Capitol Theatre and WesBanco Arena, Wheeling Island Hotel, Casino, and Racetrack, Wheeling Symphony Orchestra, live local music, shopping and movies at the Highlands, numerous golf courses, our Beautiful River Front with Events and Festivals, and the summer concert series, how can anyone be bored in Wheeling? And coming soon is The Linsly Extravaganza, Johnny Mathis, another Wheeling Symphony Concert, several Broadway Shows, Rock, Roll and Doo Wop 7, He's Alive, the Toughman Contest, Professional Bull Riding, The Shrine Circus and THE DOOBIE BROTHERS. I'm here to tell you that Wheeling is alive and an exciting place to live! We have so much to be proud of and so much to do!

As a member of Wheeling's vibrant arts community, Pete Holloway has balanced his professional career in financial management with volunteering on a variety of boards and commissions that serve Wheeling. Pete is the past president of the Children's Home of Wheeling, Elmhurst, Wheeling Rotary, and has served as the first president of the City of Wheeling Arts & Cultural Commission. He's as well known and respected in the community for his nonprofit endeavors as he is for his 30-plus years with Hazlett, Burt, and Watson. Pete, your admirable leadership, your contributions to arts and culture, and your devotion to Wheeling are just a few of the reasons we want to honor you with the 3rd presentation of the Community Spirit Award.

For the last few weeks I have spent time in Charleston visiting with our legislators and discussing the issues that are important to Wheeling. One such issue is a bill that would strip any local authority the ability to limit guns on public government property. Even as a strong second amendment supporter, this greatly concerns me. For example, if this bill passes, anyone could bring a loaded semi-automatic gun or shotgun into the city/county building and we could not question them. And in its current draft, if a law enforcement officer would even ASK about the gun, it could result in a lawsuit. We are working hard to speak out on behalf of the residents of Wheeling, but I encourage you to contact our legislators if you share my concerns.

One area of the budget that continues to create financial challenges is the health care we provide. Due to National Health Care through the Affordable Care Act, it is creating a financial burden on our city. While insurance costs are increasing, the city must shift more of this unfortunate burden onto our employees. As a policy, we have always provided great health insurance, but now we are finding it more difficult to provide insurance to adequately insure our employees at a reasonable cost.

Over the years we have had great people volunteer to be on city committees and commissions. They have fulfilled a great need to make independent decisions from city council. In the coming years, we need to find additional people to fill many of the open seats on several committees and commissions throughout the city. In the meantime, council will be evaluating all commissions and committees to create change and give a fresh approach. For those who have faithfully served, we thank you.

During the service of Mayor Sparachane and past city council, they voted to be one of the original 5 Home Rule cities. It was one of the most important decisions city council has made in the last 50 years. Home rule has enabled us to think outside the box and we have made changes in the city that could have not been made without it. Since home rule, we have reduced the amount of dilapidated buildings, decreased B & O taxes, eliminated over 70 licenses in the city, and created a more fair consumption tax that enabled us to reduce taxes on job creators.

Now it's time we move into the next chapter of HOME RULE IN THIS STATE. This year, 16 new cities will be welcomed into the program. As they introduce their ideas, we will watch closely and may even adopt some of their ideas here in Wheeling. I believe Home Rule initiatives that we have implemented are only the beginning of what can be. We have to continue to think of ways to make government better and create opportunities so families and businesses will grow in our city. To reduce the burden on our citizens and continue to improve our community through Home Rule, there are still many ideas that we can implement.

Last year city council made a decision to change how we operate the Human Rights Commission in Wheeling. At the time, we were one of the only cities in the state to duplicate the State Human Rights Commission. Today, we work with the State Human Rights Commission when it is in the best interest of our citizens. And now, with the reorganization, 100% of the funding is used for better education of our citizens on various forms of discrimination. I want to commend the staff that has taken on additional responsibility for this important topic.

Last year we broke ground on a new water treatment plant. Construction is on schedule and moving along. When we decided to build a new facility, we ensured the citizens of Ohio County that they could count on clean, safe, drinking water. Over the last two months we have seen what has happened in Charleston with a chemical spill and the devastating effects it has had on their city and its people. With dangerous chemicals transported on our river, plus a gas and oil storage facility and the possibility of a new storage facility, we will use whatever means possible to insure safe, clean water. It's very important to make sure that what happened in Charleston does not happen here. We have a plan in place and we are currently reviewing to determine what we can do as a city or through

Home Rule to have inspection, bonding, and proper monitoring at the water treatment plant. So in case of an event like Charleston happens here, we are prepared with a detailed plan to ensure that any foreign liquid does not contaminate our drinking water.

The Ohio River is critical, not only for drinking water, but as a source of summer entertainment and recreation. What began three years ago from an idea by Vice Mayor Gene Fahey was a spectacular celebration of our state's 150th birthday. I want to thank everyone who worked to make our celebration the highlight of WV. Thousands of people, including State Legislators and Governor Tomblin came to Wheeling to celebrate our state's birthday. In the future, our event will be looked upon for its historical significance.

It's hard to believe that there are businesses in Wheeling that are even older than the state of West Virginia itself. Centre Foundry and Machine Company in Warwood is almost 175 years old. That alone is an accomplishment worth recognizing. The impressive 100,000-square-foot facility has kept up with the latest trends and production practices in the gray iron casting industry and continues to produce quality products that are second to none. Thank you, Frank Vansyke, for being here to represent Centre Foundry. To you and all the employees, we wish you another 175 years of success! Congratulations!

This year is going to be the start of a multi-year plan to update and work on state roads and bridges. In addition to the Main & Market Street project, you will also see I-70 paving and bridge work from Downtown to the Pennsylvania state line. The Wheeling Suspension Bridge will be closed up to one year once the work begins. This project will be a total revamp with lighting, structure and painting; – also this year the State will install all new lighting on I-70 from Downtown to the Highlands. Although this will be a major inconvenience, the work needs to be done. The city will work with the businesses and the state to attempt to make the disruptions as minimal as possible.

When we speak to new residents, businesses or realtors, one of the concerns they state is lack of new housing. With the growth of companies like Williams & Lea, Orrick, new medical professionals or the Oil and Gas industries, we need new homes, condominiums and apartments built in our city. We can't grow if we cannot attract new residents to our community. While it is not the role of government to build housing, the city can assist in attracting developers to our city. Some new housing opportunities that will be under construction this year are the WODA apartments in North Wheeling and Elm Grove, a major renovation to Windsor Manor, plus other projects on the horizon.

As an example of needed housing, Wheeling Jesuit came forward with a plan to provide housing for their students due to their growth in enrollment. This spring you will see the University, with a local partner, build new graduate student housing. This investment will enable the University to continue to grow here in Wheeling.

The comprehensive plan continues to progress, with many dedicated citizens working on the future of our city. They are reviewing current zoning, current and future land uses, development

opportunities, and neighborhood characteristics, which will create a working document that will guide the city over the next 10 years.

I stated this last year: As a community moving forward, there are uncertainties at our doorstep, at both the State and National level, beyond our control. Now, for the first time, the West Virginia Legislature is attempting to balance the State Budget by taking YOUR local share of gaming dollars which is creating a problem for our city budget, making it more difficult to balance. By reducing the promised gaming dollars to our city, we would receive 50% less revenue than we did in 2009, just 5 short years ago.

We will continue to look at ways we can right-size city government. Over the past few years we have reduced the size of our work force by 8% through attrition, but unfortunately we have to continue to do more with less. We will look for ways to shrink our work force, through reviewing efficiencies of services or departments. We will not just push off the inevitable. The north east of our country continues to lose population and Wheeling is not immune from the decrease. While I do see the positives for our local economy, I'm not sure it will be enough. Over the coming weeks, we will review our revenues. We have concerns about the state taking OUR TAX dollars, the reduction in current gaming revenue, and the loss of federal and state grants. We have employee costs growing because of the Affordable Care Act, Pension costs and many other issues. The tax payers (YOU) just can't continue to bear the cost. We have committed employees and a city manager who do their best to make it all work. These serious issues, like all other tough issues this council has dealt with, need to be addressed now so they're not passed on to future generations.

In closing, through the events that have challenged us, we have seen the character that continues to deliver us. We have been tried and tested over the years, with many challenges, and we know the greatness of Wheeling.

To my fellow City Council members- we must continue to do more with less! Less federal dollars and less state dollars! We must tighten our belts to be conscientious stewards of our tax dollars.

With continued good management, we will better serve our City. This year once again, I say to our City and its people, this is our charge. Thank you and May God bless the City of Wheeling.