

2018 State of the County Address
Remarks as Prepared – Orange County Mayor Teresa Jacobs
Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts
Friday, May 18, 2018

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the 2018 State of the County address!

Thank you, Rich [Maladecki] and Monica May! Thank you also to Jones High School, our Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, CeCe Teneal and the House of Blues Choir, and thank you to our Orange County Corrections and Fire Rescue Honor Guard for kicking off our program this morning!

To everyone here today, and to everyone watching via livestream ... Thank you for joining us, and for the amazing energy and support you have provided over the years.

You know, it was not quite 8 years ago when I took the oath of office and I remember reassuring myself that after many years of community involvement and 2 terms on the BCC, I was ready – or pretty close – to taking on the challenges of Mayor.

But in looking back to that day? Wow... little did I know what I was getting into. And I'm not talking about land use, budgeting or public hearings. As it turned out... I think I WAS ready for that.

No... I'm talking about the other things, like the first time somebody told me that I would be leading the Board of County Commissioners in a Karaoke competition, including a very enthusiastic Bryan Nelson in his rock and roll wig! Or that I would test-drive a helicopter-simulator, while surrounded by military personnel. That was very exciting, in fact, I set a new record when I crashed in 5 seconds flat! I was also unaware that I would operate a bulldozer for a code-enforcement operation – I think I was pretty good at that – or that I would dance in WAY too many videos to count!

Mayor Bruhn...where's Mayor Bruhn, I think we were roped you into one of those! (That man's a good sport) **[roll video]**

But seriously, I'll tell you what I DID know. From the beginning, I knew WHY I was running.

I knew that as Mayor, I wanted to create an era of robust transparency, real public engagement and unparalleled trust. I knew that I wanted to create that culture within Orange County Government. I knew that despite a recession, I wanted to create an environment in which opportunity was available to all of our residents, and where our young people, entrepreneurs and businesses of all types could flourish.

I knew that our children and families would need special support – not only to overcome the impacts of the great recession – but to deal with the significant challenges in our ever changing world.

To tackle those issues and more, I knew that we would need to create a sustainable framework to ensure that Orange County would achieve and maintain its promise as the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Thanks to your help, your energy and your contributions, those dreams are becoming a reality.

During the past eight years I've also leaned heavily on my amazing family. To my husband Bruce, my four children, Josh, Max, Lisa and Chase, and my Mom.... You've been unwavering in your support, and in providing feedback and counsel. You make me a better person and a better public servant. Thank you...I love you all.

To my second family – the awesome county staff that I'm privileged to serve with.

Ajit Lalchandani, our County Administrator... Jeff Newton, our County Attorney... our outstanding administrative leadership team, including Dr. George Ralls, Chief Drozd, Chief Riley, Eric Gassman, Chris Testerman, Randy Singh, and Jim Harrison. Thank you!

To my Chief of Staff, Graciela Noriega Jacoby... I can tell you that everything we've accomplished is a result of team work and there is no one that is more crucial to the team than Graciela and Ajit.

I'd also like to take a minute to recognize the rest of my office team, oh my gosh what a team and what a family we've become. Thank you for hard work and your tireless efforts and all please stand so I may thank you.

And above all, to our amazing Board of County Commissioners ... you've provided such phenomenal leadership and commitment. Please join me in thanking:

- Commissioner Betsy Vanderley
- Commissioner Rod Love, whom we welcomed earlier this month and

Apopka Mayor Bryan Nelson, our former district 2 Commissioner

- Commissioner Pete Clarke,
- Commissioner Jennifer Thompson,
- Commissioner Emily Bonilla, and
- Commissioner Victoria Siplin

Won't you please stand? Thank you!

Actually, I'd like to recognize all of our former county officials who are here.

There are so many distinguished public servants here this afternoon.... won't you all please stand? Thank you!

I make a point of identifying these public servants because their support has been instrumental for so many of our long-term achievements. Together with you – our community partners and advocates – it's our shared commitment to Orange County that has helped us move mountains.

And the operational platform for all that we've been able to do? It's our fiscal strength and stability, coupled with a commitment to excellence and innovation.

To reflect on that success, let's take a quick look back...

I took office on the heels of the great recession during which we lost approximately \$150 million in annual revenue. As you'll see, the compounded effect of that loss was nearly \$650 million. Following on the efforts of Mayor Crotty, I took additional steps to slash costs, reorganize our employee structure and increase efficiencies. And while the last several years we've seen healthy growth in revenues, bear in mind it was 2016 before we recovered to our pre-recession levels.

Thanks to years of dedicated efforts, today our bond and credit ratings are routinely rated Triple-A – that says to the world that we are exemplary stewards of your tax dollars.

I talk about these numbers and ratings for an important reason...

Although we are obviously experiencing an era of economic prosperity, including job and wage growth, to me it's critical that we view our economy holistically – particularly as we may very well be facing another cut in property taxes, depending upon what voters choose to do in November.

Knowing that economies can experience volatility is the reason that I have focused so intently on boosting our fiscal management practices and improving our credit worthiness.

Other economic indicators are equally strong.

Building permits are being issued at a pace we haven't seen in years – eighty-four thousand last year, with a valuation of more than \$2.3 billion dollars.

We've come a long way since I took office when our building department had been furloughed due to lack of demand and funding. Today we are busting at the seams. We're expanding our physical and virtual opportunities for building and permitting services. Our tourism and

hospitality sectors are stronger than ever, generating \$70 billion dollars in economic impact, supporting roughly one in three jobs, and welcoming more than 72 million guests – our eighth year in a row as the number one travel destination in the United States. And, let's not forget the \$255 million dollars of Tourist Development Taxes generated last year.

Thanks to the superior customer service of our front-line workers, we've made Central Florida the envy of the global hospitality market.... Thank you to our tourism leaders!

The upshot of these and so many other strategies?

Ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to declare the state of Orange County is **STRONG**.

Also important to our citizens...? It's not just the business climate that we've worked to improve. We wanted – and needed – to improve the climate of trust, transparency and public engagement.

For me, that begins with the culture of Orange County Government, and how we treat our taxpayers, guests and customers – as well as our own staff.

Building on my 2008 Citizen Participation Bill of Rights, which guarantees that the public has the opportunity to speak at the beginning at each Board of County Commissioners meeting – we want to hear from our citizens before we engage in debate – we've worked to expand access and accountability.

We've made it easier for our residents, guests, and businesses to engage with us through our outstanding OCFL apps, with great success!

From public safety to public engagement, we have created a full suite of cutting-edge apps.

In fact, shortly after our "OCFL Alert" rollout, we were invited to Washington for a FEMA meeting hosted by President Obama.

We were the **ONLY LOCAL GOVERNMENT** in the meeting, which show-cased ground-breaking technology and emergency communications platforms.

Rafael Mena... where are you? Ladies and Gentlemen... Rafael and his team are rock stars in the IT world, and represent a level of talent that is consistent throughout our organization.

And as I think about our staff throughout Orange County, I am so proud of their professionalism and commitment to our citizens and community.

Orange County employees have what I like to call Public Service DNA. Now, it's now scientifically proven, but I am certain it exists. And we simply could not have accomplished

what we have without each and every one of you. Would every member of our Orange County family please stand to be recognized?

With a dedicated team like ours, and a community that is equally capable and compassionate, it is no wonder that we have been able to weather the storms as well as we have.

When we were faced with two years of serious hurricane threats – including the back to back Hurricanes Maria and Irma, we didn't need to ask our staff or residents for cooperation.... this community responded seamlessly and generously – a true embodiment of our “neighbors helping neighbors” spirit.

From providing assistance to Hurricane Harvey flood victims in Texas, to welcoming storm-battered evacuees from Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, our actions demonstrated our culture of compassion and collaboration!

Together we weathered these storms.

And together, our community endured a nightmare that none of us could ever have imagined, when in the early morning hours of June 12, 2016 the Pulse nightclub was attacked.

[Pulse VIDEO]

There's really no way to sum up the impact of that tragedy, or the depth of heartbreak and loss that so many have experienced – especially within our LGBTQ, LatinX and Hispanic communities.

But as overwhelming as the loss was, the response of our community was equally overwhelming. Never would I have imagined the outpouring of love and unity, or the depth of our strength and resilience.

As a community, we share a commitment to make sure the whole world never forgets our 49 Pulse angels.

Barbara [Poma]...Earl [Crittenden]...the whole team at the One Pulse Foundation – we support you and applaud your efforts to create the museum and memorial...you know you'll always have my support.

Through a partnership with the City of Orlando and United Way, we opened the Orlando United Assistance Center, at an un-used county building on Michigan Avenue. That assistance center is still open today.

I want you to know that thanks to the round-the-clock efforts of County staff and volunteers – including some very special helpers from Walt Disney World – we opened the doors to that facility within 48 hours of selecting the location...

That meant new carpet, new paint, new decorations for the family and children areas – virtually all of it donated, as well as volunteer labor.

We didn't wait for the state or federal government.

We got right to work.

That model worked so well, it's exactly what we did to assist Hurricane Maria evacuees. In fact, before FEMA or the State of Florida could even mobilize their response, it was Orange County in partnership with United Way, the Hispanic Community, our faith leaders and countless other regional partners who stepped in to assist evacuating families from Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.

From housing to medicine, clothes and food, this community united as one. That's what good government and strong community collaboration can do.

Ladies and Gentlemen... please... if you were involved in any of these life-changing and life-saving initiatives, please stand to be recognized...

In particular, new to our community but certainly not new to our culture is United Way's President and CEO Jeff Heyward. Jeff...you really hit the ground running, thank you for your leadership.

Since the earliest days of my administration, we've never shied away from tackling the most challenging issues.

One example is how we've taken on the national opioid crisis. In 2015 I convened the Orange County Heroin Task Force bringing together community leaders and experts in the areas of health care, law enforcement, treatment, education, and prevention. That collaboration resulted in changes to our approach treatment and prevention of this deadly opioid epidemic.

Because of our efforts, I had the honor of being called to Washington to testify before both the house and senate sub committees.

One of the most tangible results of this effort is that life-saving Naloxone is now carried by ALL Orange County and City of Orlando law enforcement officers– not just our EMT or medical personnel.

Another outcome of the heroin task force is that the state has adopted our recommendation to make naloxone available without a prescription.

While the opioid epidemic has had devastating and deadly impact on communities across our nation, perhaps the most unimaginable public safety crisis we face today is the threat occurring in our most cherished institutions, our schools and places of worship.

Until recently, these were considered safe-havens, untouchable by evil.

Tragically, this morning in Texas, another school shooting occurred.

And while it's too early to fully understand what occurred or why, we do know that lives were lost and our hearts break with each family, each friend affected.

Let us pause for a moment of silence.

We know that every child, every parent, every teacher, every one of us is affected by this loss.

As school districts rush to harden their campuses and law makers grapple with how to address gun violence, we: your board of county commissioners, and your county government have taken action and will continue to take the actions we can to help mitigate the risk to our children, to our community.

In nearly every one of these school shootings, serious mental illness was involved and too often, friends or family members reached out for help, to no avail! We have to do better, and in Orange County we started implementing changes in response to Sandy Hook, the first school shooting that happened while I was mayor.

You may recall, in early 2013, as an immediate response to the Sandy Hook school shooting, we funded additional deputies for elementary schools, as a temporary enhancement to school safety.

By the summer of that year, I convened a youth mental health task force that included experts from a wide variety of disciplines, including education, treatment, law enforcement, families – the entire spectrum.

As a result of their great work, we have developed hands-on programs, intervention resources and anti-stigma campaigns. One of those programs, Wraparound Orange – our broadest response tool – has been expanded to include youth up to the age of 21.

With state grants, we've added Crisis Intervention Team Training for law enforcement officers, that is **specifically focused on responding to youth in crisis.**

And perhaps most significant, we've created a model program for children experiencing a true mental health crisis – our Children's Mobile Crisis service.

To bring home the importance of this program, let me take you back to a tragic event that occurred in early 2014.

As we all remember, our hearts were broken when Windermere Police Officer Robbie German was senselessly gunned down by two suicidal teens. Both teens then took their own lives.

In the days just prior, both teens' mothers had called law enforcement in their county, concerned about their children's state of mind, concerned they were suicidal.

From the first time I met Officer German's parents-- Tim and Debi, at their son's memorial service-- I pledged that we would change our youth mental health system, so that parents and families could seek crisis resources – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Today, families dealing with a spiraling mental health crisis can get help.

Not only does this help families, this also lifts a heavy and unreasonable burden on our law enforcement officers who now have access to qualified mental health professionals when they encounter a young person in crisis.

I also want to recognize the strength and collaboration of our local law enforcement community.

Immediately following the Parkland shooting, I reached out to Danny Banks, FDLE Special Agent in Charge to see if we had better channels of communications regarding to ensure that our local law enforcement was aware of individuals of special concern.

He had already begun the process of coordinating with the Central Florida Intelligence Exchange under the Sheriff's Office, and the Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation under Director Ron Stucker, who are all working together to ensure seamless communication of persons of special concern.

And with regard to your county commission, less than two weeks ago, we took another important public safety step by closing the notorious "gun show loophole."

We did this through the unanimous passage of an ordinance that requires criminal background checks, and a 3-day waiting period for everyone who purchases a firearm at a gun show, flea market or firearms exhibit- a requirement that otherwise only applied if you are purchasing a firearm from a licensed gun dealer.

Public safety will no doubt continue to be a challenge and a top priority. but let's not forget what sets us apart in addressing tough issues like these...

It's our ability to collaborate, to set aside partisan politics, egos and any other barriers to ensuring that the safety and welfare of our citizens and residents always comes first.

We're using that same collaborative approach towards other challenges such as affordable housing. And that's exactly how we're approaching affordable housing.

Of course, we're not alone in this – the lack of affordable housing is a national issue.

To make real and sustainable progress, we brought all the key regional players together – including planners, technical advisors, builders, and developers – to offer recommendations for a regional, collaborative approach to affordable housing.

We'll be rolling out our Affordable Housing Executive Summary and Recommendations that will serve as the blueprint for central Florida and may well serve as a guide for other communities.

In addition to housing to help low-income families and individuals succeed, we've focused an entire range of strategic resources on our proud communities in need of more support.

From the wonderful new Holden Heights Community Center –a bustling hub of family and educational activity – to places like Evans High School in Pine Hills, which has become a true neighborhood and family gathering center, thanks to Orange County Public Schools and with support from our Neighborhood Improvement district and other community Partners– real change and real opportunity is underway.

And every one of these initiatives has succeeded because of the vision and commitment of our board of county commissioners, our staff, our partners and YOU.

Speaking of partners, we couldn't have accomplished all that we have without the incredible commitment of our advisory and volunteers boards.

Please... won't all of our ADVISORY board members and volunteers stand?

And I want to give a special shout out to Lisa Franchini, and the entire animal services advisory board, staff and volunteers, and Paul Wean, who not only serves on the advisory board but founded Pawsitive.

Over the past 5 years, working together, we've increased our annual adoption rate by more than 90 percent!

That's an incredible testimony to the passion and hard work of our animal services staff, partners and volunteers.

In addition to tremendous community leadership, we've been blessed with energetic, dedicated public sector servants, including our treasured first responders.

While we're in the comfort and safety of our homes, it's our firefighters, our EMT's, our officers and deputies who are on the job – and often in harms' way.

So when we talk about Orange County as the best place to live, work and raise a family, let us never forget the tremendous sacrifice and dedication of all of our first responders

And above all, let us always remember and honor those we have lost in the line of duty.

Tragically in just the 8 years that I've served as Mayor we've lost too many of our law enforcement heroes in Central Florida.

Please... join me in a moment of silence to recognize those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Thank you, and god speed.

When we talk about community engagement, community servants and everyday heroes, here in Orange County that's a bigger club than you might think.

Whether it's time for our annual holiday toy drive, or our Adopt a Fire Station initiative, the people of orange county are generous and thoughtful in their efforts to give.

It just seems to be part of our community's DNA.

In fact, through my office of Public Engagement and Community Affairs, we've been privileged to work with leaders from all sectors and walks of life, including the thousands of high school students who've attended our annual Youth Leadership Conferences.

Let me tell you.... These young people of astonishing insight are determined and they're engaged.

This next generation of leaders is going to make a difference!

So to all the parents and teachers, neighbors, coaches and mentors who've guided their journey, thank you!

Today I am proud to announce that, in their hands, the State of Orange County's future is bright.

And it's not just our young people... we've benefitted from the engagement and passion of so many others, including our foster grandparents program.

It's heartwarming to see the deep bonds that form on both sides of these relationships.

Among the most measurable and lasting outcomes is the community, economic, and cultural developments that have occurred!

Join me for a quick look at some of the awesome milestones we've ACCOMPLISHED.

[ROLL ACCOLADES VIDEO]

Wow! Thank you, Orange County! That's truly an awesome story of hard work and achievement!

We've also worked tirelessly to nurture an environment that supports innovation and creativity – not just in how we operate as a government, but in the communities we're creating for the future.

And perhaps- nowhere is this more evident than in communities like Horizon West – an example of visionary planning, and a great place to live.

This is a complete community approach.

You know it as communities where you can live, work and play,

where kids can walk to school,

where parks and trails are a centerpiece - not an afterthought,

and where work centers are integrated into the community.

Horizon West has its own downtown core brimming with economic opportunity.

Just as Lake Nona's Medical City stands as a shining example of award-winning planning and livability on the East side of Orange County, Horizon West will serve as a highly desirable live-work-and-play community on the West.

And let's not forget another key driver of our economy and awesome quality of life: health, wellness and education.

Once again, from east to west to downtown, we're exploding with opportunity.

I can't wait to see what the next chapter brings for medical city, our hospital systems and wellness clusters, Valencia, Rollins, and UCF – Dr. Whittaker, I just have one thing to say: charge on!

We've also worked tirelessly to nurture an environment that supports good jobs, because hand in hand with crucial factors like housing, health and education, good jobs are foundational to the strength of our families.

While the private sector creates jobs, it IS the job of government to create a welcoming environment, and to help provide the tools for success.

I'm so proud that by working together, we're seeing measurable, sustainable outcomes:

Since the height of the recession we've experienced a dramatic decline in Orange County's unemployment rate, dropping from 10.7% when I took office to a current rate of 3.2%.

During that same period Orange County has added 160,000 new jobs, and won 50 new projects.

Within our treasured but hard-hit agricultural industries, we're hopeful that recently announced disaster assistance will help our citrus farmers recover from last year's wildfires, as well as the hit they took from Hurricane Irma. Research continues into strengthening our citrus stock, as we continue to support our founding pioneers, our farmers. They're a crucial part of our Central Florida legacy and our future.

In follow up to our region's branding campaign, we're transforming how the worldwide marketplace views Central Florida.

A key goal of the campaign was to tell our story effectively and persuasively, so we would make the short list of site selectors, economic development professionals and corporate relocation managers.

The results have been impressive and meaningful, with 490 leads generated, 134 prospect visits and 217 business retention and expansion visits. We've attended or hosted 174 business development missions. And a key metric in this digital age, we've garnered more than 2 billion media hits.

Without question, today we are making the short list!

Tim Giuliani! Thank you for your continued leadership of those efforts, and welcome back to Orlando.

We've also launched some local economic initiatives, including

our Economic Summits,

our Modeling Simulation and Training Blue Ribbon Task Force,

our Simulation Summits and related Tech Match,

the Central Florida International Trade Office, ,

and our Business Assistance for Neighborhood Corridors program.

And when it comes to quality of life, and the tremendous investments we've been able to make – many of them a direct result of our tourism economy – we're in a pretty special place.

Just think of what we've achieved:

- The acclaimed Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, Phase 1 AND Phase 2, as well as the Seneff Arts Plaza
- Camping World Stadium – essentially rebuilt from the ground up
- And the incredible Amway center

With these venues we've welcomed a world of fans, athletes and performers, including:

- The NFL ProBowl
- The NBA All-Star Game
- We've celebrated soccer in so many ways, from COPA to Orlando City Soccer and the PRIDE,
- Wrestlemania is in a category of its own,
- And of course, we're honored to welcome so many landmark economic development projects from Amazon to ADP, KPMG to Lockheed Martin, VOXX and many more.

Please... won't all of our hard-working job creators and partners stand to be recognized.

And accompanying our robust economy, how about the extraordinary transformation that is taking place on our roads.

Over the next five years, the region will invest nearly \$12 billion dollars in Central Florida's massive transportation system with improvements on the I-4 Ultimate and Beyond, the opening of SunRail phase 2, expansion of the Orlando International Airport and, through the Expressway Authority, the completion of the Wekiva Parkway.

Not only are we in the midst of massive regional transportation improvements, within the next five years, through Orange County's \$200 million dollar INVEST program, more than 200 miles of key local roads will be constructed, improved, widened or rebuilt.

Equally important?

Pedestrian and bicycle safety.

As the best community in which to live, work and raise a family, and as we prepare for Florida's Coast-to-Coast bike trail, we're working hard to change our approach to sharing the road. and that change starts by designing our roadways with the goal of increasing pedestrian and bike safety. But while safety improvements are vital, more important than any physical change we can make is changing how we think, act and react when sharing the road, all of us drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians.

And to ensure that our tremendous progress continues, we've initiated a comprehensive sustainability plan, Our Home for Life.

Our home for life provides a road map for a more prosperous, resilient, and diverse economy: healthy natural resources, a thriving, creative and innovative environment.

Above all, our sustainability plans supports a community culture that is uniquely ours, that cares for those in need. A culture that celebrates diversity as our greatest strength, where optimism, hope and kindness prevail. A community where our citizens today, tomorrow and for generations to come will fondly and proudly call Orange County their home.

In reflecting on this amazing era of recovery, discovery and transformation, I believe we have truly become the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Working with each of you, and with so many others throughout Central Florida and our state, has been the honor and privilege of a lifetime.

May God Bless each of you, and all those who stand in support of Orange County.