



Reelection Announcement Speech

June 12, 2017

Columbia, MD

Thank you for coming out on this very hot evening. It's great to see so many of you here today.

Four years ago, almost to the day, I stood here in this very spot and announced my decision to run for Howard County Executive and asked for your support.

While not many thought that we would be successful, you were there with me. I cannot express how honored, privileged and excited I am, every day, to be the County Executive of the best County in the United States.

Four years ago, I pledged that I would bring a common sense, fiscally responsible, bipartisan and innovative approach to government. I said that my administration would work hard every day to make sure we put people first, not politics. I knew back then that if we put our differences aside and work together collaboratively we could do great things for Howard County.

And that approach started with my senior staff. My Chief of Staff, Diane Wilson has a long history of working in Republican administrations and my Deputy Chief of Staff, Jahantab Siddiqui has a long history of working in Democratic administrations. And, I asked Lonnie Robbins, the Chief Administrative Officer for the prior administration to stay on because it brought continuity and frankly, he does a terrific job.

I also started a new practice of having monthly meetings with each of the County Council members to discuss whatever they would like, with no agenda. Collaboration isn't about symbolism, it's about constantly reaching out to others to understand their priorities.

And so together, we set out some simple priorities for my administration:

- Keeping our schools, libraries and community college among the best in the nation;
- Growing our economy through innovation and economic development;

- Providing comprehensive, effective services to our community;
- Making government more responsive, efficient and accessible;
- And pressing the fast forward button on projects that we've talked about for many years by cutting through the red tape and getting to work.

We've rolled up our sleeves since Day 1 to continue pursuing our goals. We put an emphasis on fiscal responsibility and, right off the bat, had to eliminate a \$16 million deficit.

We were able to manage the emergency costs of the Ellicott City flood without raising taxes or cutting services. We've kept our AAA bond rating three years in a row and have exceeded the state's Maintenance of Effort requirements for school funding. We've done all that without raising taxes. In fact, we've created or expanded 7 tax credits since I became County Executive, putting money back in your pockets.

I kept my pledge to be accessible and transparent. I have held at least four town hall meetings each year since taking office. Something that, unfortunately, few elected officials do. We have also worked to ensure that a cross-section of Howard County residents are able to serve on Boards, Commissions and Task Forces. My goal has always been to make sure that everyone has a seat at the table.

Friends, I am committed to improving the quality of life that we enjoy in Howard County. Improving our quality of life requires prioritizing economic growth. Through our economic development efforts:

- Howard County employers have added nearly 3,000 jobs since I took office;
- Working with community partners, we made sure that the redevelopment of Downtown Columbia will be manageable and sustainable and will include 900 affordable units;
- Our administration is transforming the Columbia Gateway area into an Innovation District to support growing industries and start-ups;
- We're investing in our aging neighborhoods through efforts like RENEW Howard and supporting the redevelopment of the Long Reach Village Center.

At the same time, we've taken out the red tape from government by pressing fast forward on projects that have stalled for many years. These projects include:

- Helping to establish the Non-Profit Collaborative which has been discussed for 20 years (had the grand opening on Friday);
- Catching up on a 10-year road-resurfacing backlog;
- Improving the pedestrian crossing across Route 29 known as Bridge Columbia;
- Working with the State Highway Administration to move forward with the expansion of Route 32;
- Purchasing a site for the 13th High School;
- Replacing the aging, inadequate Circuit Courthouse; and
- Preserving the Harriet Tubman School, to become an African American educational and cultural center.

We have also worked with the Howard County Public School System and the Arc of Howard County on Project Search, an effort to help individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities find employment. After the first three years, 28 of the 36 students have found paid employment in both the public and private sector.

The Elkridge Fire Station and the Elkridge Library and 50+ Center are currently under construction. We have also helped construct the Science, Engineering and Technology Building at Howard Community College with the renovation of the Nursing Building planned for next year.

I am very proud of what we've accomplished together. And I am very excited about what lies ahead. There's more to be done to not just build on our success, but also launch new initiatives. These include:

- Strengthening our "No Wrong Door" approach to serve residents by creating the Community Resources Campus;
- Expanding mental health and substance abuse treatment services (including establishing a Detox and Rehabilitation Center);
- Improving accessibility for housing for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities; and
- Launching our 24/7 initiatives to address barriers to student success.

More work lies ahead for us as we:

- Develop a Route 1 Action Plan;
- Improve transportation and transit options;
- Review and rewrite our development regulations;
- Construct a 3rd police station;
- Rebuild Ellicott City; and
- Just last week, we announced plans for a Veterans Monument to be erected just beyond the fountain here at the Columbia Lakefront to honor the men/women who have served and the families who have also sacrificed.

Howard County regularly makes "Top 10" and "Best of" lists – from our schools and libraries to our businesses and neighborhoods. Last fall, I stood right over there near the Rouse brothers' statue as Columbia – was named the best place to live in America. All that doesn't happen by accident. It requires careful decision-making, collaboration, and a common-sense approach that is focused on doing what is best for the people of our County.

It requires that we listen and sometimes, make hard decisions. In my first term, I vetoed legislation that I thought was not good for Howard County residents: such as the sugary drinks ban, the sanctuary county legislation and, most recently, a bill to use taxpayer dollars to fund political campaigns.

At the same time, we've worked across the aisle to reach compromise on other issues. And when some discord and distrust got in the way, I encouraged dialogue and civility to demonstrate that in this community, we look out for each other, protect each other, respect each other. We don't ignore problems, we try to solve them.

That is what happened with the terrible Ellicott City flood where we worked in a bipartisan manner with all levels of government to ensure that the residents, businesses and property owners had the resources they needed. That is what happened when it became apparent that our Sheriff was abusing his office.

We led a bipartisan effort to pressure him to resign and now, we have a true public servant leading our Sheriff's office, Sheriff Bill McMahon. That is what happened when each of our three budgets were approved unanimously by the County Council. And that is what happened when bigotry and hate speech started to expand in Howard County: we established our #OneHoward initiative to promote our community's commitment to fairness and equality and to encourage positive dialogue and respectful behavior. As your signs say, for me it is always about people, not politics.

That is why I am standing here today to ask for your support, as I formally declare, that I am seeking re-election to be your County Executive for another four years. Once again, I will need your help. And so will Governor Hogan. And so will these fine candidates with us here today. And we all know that there will be an effort by those who oppose us to tie us to what is going on in Washington right now.

We don't need or want Washington-styled politics in Howard County. We want results, not the discord and dysfunction in Washington. Unfortunately, the politics of negativity are used when people don't have anything positive to say about their candidacy. It didn't work in 2014, and it will not work in 2018! For me, it's all about Howard County values. And I know that we in Howard County value Real Results.

I pledge to you that I will continue to work hard to maintain our strong education system, to help create and retain jobs, to improve health, human and public safety services, and yes, push the fast-forward button so that we no longer wait 20 years to address the challenges of today.

After the devastating and tragic flood in Ellicott City on July 30, 2016, I got to see, up close, an amazing story of strength and resilience. I saw our 911 dispatchers and first responders perform courageously; I saw our county employees spend hours upon hours of time assisting residents and business owners and helping repair our infrastructure; I saw our community come together like never before to assist friends, neighbors and strangers.

I spent the first few weeks in jeans and a t-shirt. I travelled up and down Main Street every day making sure that folks had what they needed. It is amazing how much you can learn if you just close your mouth and listen. They let us know how we could help, whether it was keeping the road closed a little longer to relocating dumpsters.

It was an experience that I will never forget. Over the past ten months, the residents, business owners and property owners of Old Ellicott City have taught me the meaning of resiliency. They inspired not just our community, but also the entire world, with their refusal to allow that terrible flood to break them. And, now, Old Ellicott City is being rebuilt stronger than before and it will continue to thrive for future generations.

That is why I love Howard County. And that is why all of us love Howard County. A little over two years ago, you put your faith in me and asked me to lead this county. You challenged me to make sense of government and to work in a bipartisan way. I have taken that challenge head on. And while we have made progress, there is still more work to do.

And so today, I ask you to join with me, once again, as we fight for Howard County's families, Howard County's businesses and Howard County's future!

Thank you!