



**Mayor Muriel Bowser  
Inauguration Remarks As Delivered  
January 2, 2023**

Well, good morning, DC.

I want to thank you, Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby, I want to thank you for swearing me in today – and swearing me in the first time in 2007.

Congresswoman Norton, Chairman Mendelson, Attorney General Schwalb, members of the Council, family and friends from all 8 wards, friends from around the region and indeed from around our world, good morning.

I am Muriel Bowser. I am Joan and Joe Bowser’s daughter. I am Miranda Bowser’s mother. I am an ANC commissioner, a ward Councilmember, and I am your Mayor.

I am standing here today, honored to have taken this oath of office for the third time.

And what is it they say about third times – they’re a charm.

But truly, a third time and a third term is a special opportunity because we have a mandate. We have a mandate from the people to be bold, to think big, to push the envelope, and above all else, to win for Washington, DC.

Now is the time to be bold and to set a course to win the tough fights ahead.

Since the last time we were here in 2019, a lot has happened.

Our lives were upended by a pandemic that isolated us from our friends and family, shut down our schools, and created new levels of uncertainty that we've never experienced before – about our health, our lives, and our future.

In the midst of the COVID pandemic, a racial reckoning brought protests and demonstrations to our streets. Americans of all backgrounds and beliefs took to the streets to demand accountability and justice. Black Americans demanded that our humanity be recognized and that Black Lives Matter be more than a mantra but a collective commitment to justice. Here in DC, we embraced that movement, we made a mural and turned it into a monument.

We stood shoulder to shoulder in defense of our values, and during one of the most dangerous attacks on American democracy, it was DC that took back the Capitol and ensured our democracy prevailed.

From the pandemic, to protests, to an insurrection, we've stood together.

We made it through together.

And now on the other side, I greet you today with more optimism and more hope for the future than ever before. Not a blind optimism, but one that is informed by a tested leader who knows where we are strong and who knows where we must be stronger.

I'm optimistic about our future because I know our past. I know about the leaders – some you know well and others you've never met.

And I know our story. Everybody loves a winner and a good comeback – and that's DC's story, isn't it?

Walter Washington – for whom this building is named – showed us how to win when he proved to the Congress what Washingtonians already knew – that we could govern ourselves.

Business owners like Ben and Virginia Ali refused to be beat by riots, the Green Line construction, and the crack epidemic. And they've been winning on U Street for 60 years.

The Mayor for Life, Marion Barry, won for the downtown when he enticed the Wizards to come to downtown DC and brought with it new employers and residents and an economic revival that reverberates today.

We celebrate the culture of DC and Chuck Brown, the Godfather of Go-Go, who has been emulated by countless artists. Go-Go is now our official music and Ron Moten is winning for the culture by bringing the new Go-Go museum to Anacostia.

Sharon Pratt won for women leaders when she blazed the trail by becoming the first Black female elected in a major American city.

Mayor Williams set the bold goal of growing our city by 100,000 new residents in a decade, a goal that ignited a renaissance.

Doug Williams, the first Black quarterback to both start and win in a Super Bowl showed us that no stage is too big.

Mayor Fenty won when he demanded an educational system that gives every student, no matter her zip code, a high performing school, and led us through the last Great Recession.

Students and families continued to win when Mayor Gray created free pre-K for all.

And in the last eight years, we've taken big swings for DC too.

Our population crested 700,000.

We created an 800,000-job economy.

We had a record number of visitors coming to DC each and every year.

We drove down unemployment rates in Wards 7 and 8.

We closed DC General, and now see our new Cedar Hill Regional Medical Center taking shape in Ward 8.

Our bond rating was and is a triple A, and our finances and reserves were and are the envy of mayors and governors across this country.

We built a team of the best and the brightest at DC Government – 37,000 public servants who make us strong and help us win. And this is the team that got us through the darkest days in 2020, and we stuck with them too. We did not have a single layoff or miss one paycheck during this pandemic. And now I'm proud to say, DC is hiring.

We remember when Vince Lombardi once said that “winning is not a sometime thing; it's an all the time thing.”

That's what he said, this is what I say: “You win by winning...every day, every project, every initiative.” Which for us has added up to 96 months of progress.

But we know we can't rest on our laurels. We have convened a transition team to talk with residents about our opportunities and our challenges, and to hear their big ideas.

And I promise you this: we will make the best of the next four years, focusing on six big areas.

We must and we will win back our downtown because it is the economic engine that allows us to invest in our schools, our safety net, and our public works. It is the proverbial goose that lays the golden egg.

We've modernized our schools because of our growing downtown.

We've built the largest housing production trust fund in the nation because of our growing downtown.

We've created new and better social programs because of our growing downtown.

And all of that is at risk if we can't change the space, fill the space, and bring the people back to our downtown.

The good news is that we are already taking on pandemic related challenges like population loss, revenue loss, and tourism recovery.

But we know we need more and bolder action.

We will reach for new heights – not just with our buildings but with a renewed commitment and resources to attract great employers and good paying jobs.

Tools like our Vitality Fund, which attracts employers to our downtown, are just the start.

Efforts like the Penn West Equity Initiative and Innovation District are a glimpse of what must happen.

And, of course, converting office space into housing is the key to unlocking the potential of a reimagined, more vibrant downtown.

Right now, 25,000 people call downtown home. Here's our goal: we will add 15,000 residents over the next five years, and 87,000 more before it's all said and done. So, that's right, we have a new 100,000 resident goal.

That's a bold goal, but the fact is, no matter what we do, it won't be fast enough without the help of the White House. The federal government represents one quarter of DC's pre-pandemic jobs and owns or leases one third of DC's office space.

We need decisive action by the White House to either get most federal workers back to the office most of the time or to realign their vast property holdings for use by the local government, by non-profits, by businesses and by any user willing to revitalize it.

America wins when the place where people come to join and change the world is buzzing. Buzzing with new graduates and interns, with the startup that has the big idea to meet with federal partners or the business travelers who are coming to Washington to get work done. And of course, with lobbyist on Capitol Hill.

We've partnered with this White House successfully many times, I know we can do it again for what matters most.

The fight for our kids is the most pressing.

We will win for students, teachers, and our schools.

We were the first in the region to get our public schools open for in-person learning during the pandemic, and now the only district in the region who is experiencing enrollment growth. I'm proud that last month I made good on my promise to teachers with our historic teachers' contract. We doubled the number of summer camps for our kids, and we have enriching activities during the summer months with paid internships.

Years ago, we made DC the fastest improving urban school district in the country. And now is our time to make it the best urban school district in the country. The best place for students. And the best place for families.

We already built the best free pre-K in the nation. Now, we will build the most robust free before- and after-school programs in the nation.

I told you four years ago that what I want to be remembered for is that we had a relentless commitment to every Washingtonian getting a fair shot.

That means we provide a hand up to those who are struggling and we find ways to make the journey smoother for those who have made it to the middle class. We know that this is worth fighting for.

And we're making progress:

- We made historic investments in affordable housing – over 1.4 billion dollars in the Housing Production Trust Fund alone.
- We have a new target: 20,000 new Black homeowners by 2030.
- We raised the maximum down payment amount for the Home Purchase Assistance Program from \$84,000 with Anita Bonds to \$202,000.
- We provided property tax relief for our seniors – with Anita Bonds. And then made it possible for you to stay in your homes with the Safe at Home program.

But we must commit to grow the middle in DC. That includes helping:

- The new graduate whether millennial or gen Z, saddled with student debt but with the dream to buy a starter home.
- We must help the single woman with a good income but who's using most of it for housing.
- We must help the single mom making a great life for her kids on her own.
- We must help the double retirees trying to age in place.

This is their DC too. And I know their story because that's my story.

In part, what we are doing is promising that this city is a place where people with middle incomes choose to live. And in part, we are making that promise by saying that we will not touch the residential property tax, and we will find ways to provide more free activities for families.

And second, as we keep fighting for those who are already in the middle class, we have to expand it. So, over the next five years, we will add 35,000 new jobs in high-growth industries. And we will make sure – that through the work of

reimagining our high schools we will focus on those high growth industries, dual enrollment programs, and earn and learn opportunities in DC.

Now, it's been said already today, We've been fighting for over 200 years for access to our nation's democracy and we have wins to show for it.

In 2020, we went toe to toe with a bully in the White House. When our nation was attacked, we fought back. And we advanced the cause of statehood further than ever before.

But let me be clear: we will explore every strategy to get more control over our affairs, but we will not stop until we achieve full democracy - two senators and admission as the 51st state.

We know we have a friend in President Biden, and as this new Congress starts, I promise to keep fighting for control of everything we need in the District: protecting bodily autonomy, the ability to tax and regulate local businesses, and to provide services to our justice-involved youth.

The fight for a sustainable and resilient DC is another fight we fight for our kids.

We partnered with the U.S. Department of Transportation to make generational projects come to fruition. The Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge, which was a win for DC workers and local businesses, better connects city and region. I want to thank Congresswoman Norton who got the money and persevered until we delivered the most beautiful bridge in the world.

Now, with three billion dollars coming to us through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we will replicate that success across DC.

We also know a focus on climate change and the uncertainty it poses is one of our biggest challenges. And as a C40 Cities Mayor, I have joined with mayors from around the world to develop innovative solutions that move DC closer to our goal of becoming a carbon neutral city by 2045.



And when we plan for a more resilient future, we should challenge ourselves to think big about our streets. We have made a big down payment in addressing dangerous roadways and intersections. But we also have to think bigger about how we use our streets to create more public space for our residents and visitors to come together to celebrate our city and to support our culture.

Finally, most importantly, as we look ahead to the next four years, there is nothing more important to me than the safety of our residents. Nothing more.

Behind every act of violence in our community, behind all of the data that is tracked feverishly, there are real people. Behind every murder statistic, there is a devastated family. Behind every violent robbery or carjacking, there is a ripple of trauma. Every time a child picks up a gun, a group of friends loses its innocence.

And we know we have made progress, but we also recognize that progress has been incremental. We've found programs that work, like Pathways, which provides some of our most at-risk men job training, subsidized employment, and long-term support. Already, more than 200 Black men have completed this intensive nine-week training.

And while we have had successes, we know we must do more immediately. If a child commits a violent offense or uses a gun in our city, too often there is no consequence. When we send that child back to the same environment without intense intervention, we have failed that child and our community.

We know, especially for our young people, that sometimes accountability is not punishment, it is a lifeline. And so sometimes the best way to save a child and change his trajectory is to require that they get help and that they understand the consequences of their actions. I'm here to tell everybody, we have the facilities, we have the programs that work to get kids on a better path. So, we want to work with them if they've been adjudicated and we want to work with them before they get involved in serious crime. My promise to you is this: to our kids and our community – is that we will use every lifeline to save our children.

We are in a race to save lives. And it is critical that we not work in silos, and I promise to work with all stakeholders – on this stage and in this room – to achieve what we need.

When we work together, there is nothing that we cannot take on. Success is ours to grab.

So, in closing, I want to thank you, the residents of this great city, the greatest city in the world, my hometown, for placing your trust in me for another four years.

I want you to know, that I believe as a city we are only as strong as the ward that struggles most.

We are only as vibrant as our system of values and how it works to protect us and our rich diversity.

And I want you to know that I believe that our political choices are only as sound as all of voices that make them, not a narrow few. It demands that none of us is a slave to an ideology or popularity or too scared to make tough decisions. In recent years, our dialogue became increasingly political and erratic and too strident in our personal politics; that is our past. Our future is working together, and I will set the tone for my Administration to work harder, smarter, and more engaged with all of our partners – those whose views we share and those with views we don't share.

I'm honored to be your mayor, I'm committed, and mark my words: We will comeback, we will win, and we will do it together.

Thank you, DC! God bless you all. And God bless the District of Columbia.