

Thursday, August 4, 2011

2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**Baltimore City Mayoral Candidates
Forum on Disability Issues**

Held at:
National Federation of the Blind
200 East Wells Street
Baltimore, MD

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MARC MAURER: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the National Federation of the Blind headquarters. We have come together for the Baltimore mayoral candidates' forum. This is presented by the Maryland Disabilities Forum. I want to thank Robert Hofmann, the Executive Director -- often goes by the name of Bob -- and Amanda Lowery, the membership services manager.

I am Marc Maurer. I serve as the President of the National Federation of the Blind. This building is our headquarters building. It is our good pleasure to have moved to Baltimore in 1978. We have had a very great opportunity in building our organization in Baltimore, and we look forward to Baltimore's continued prosperity.

Some of you will know about the National Federation of the Blind. In the last little while, we have been diligently pursuing certain efforts. We have been trying to find ways to diminish those who are being paid less than the minimum wage in the United States today.

We have also built an automobile that the blind can drive. We closed the streets around this building about ten days ago and drove around the block with blind people at the wheel, giving rides to 150 students who are young, blind students who came for our science, engineering, technology, and math program that we run in the summer. I appreciated the fact that we could close the streets. We thought it would probably be impolitic for us to put drivers who could not see in cars and drive around our block without closing the streets. And furthermore, they didn't have driver's licenses.

(Laughter.)

So far we haven't figured that out. The police were great in that. Our relationship with the city has been great.

The candidates who come today are going to be seeking the office of mayor. And how we build our city of course is the topic of conversation.

The Disabilities Forum is hosting this. We who are disabled have sometimes not been as great participants in our society as we want to be. We have adopted the slogan throughout the disability community of "Nothing about us without us." Consequently, it is

a joy to have all the candidates come to recognize that we with disabilities wish to participate.

For our moderator today, we have C. David Ward, who is the Chairperson of the Maryland Disabilities Forum. Here is David Ward. Thank you.

(Applause.)

C. DAVID WARD: Let me also say good afternoon. On behalf of the Maryland Disabilities Forum and our host, the National Federation of the Blind, we welcome you to today's mayoral event.

Is this place beautiful or what?

(Applause.)

You know, I don't want to offend anybody. Some people say I'm pretty good at it. But isn't there something in the Bible about the blind leading the blind? Well, look what can be created when they do.

(Applause.)

I want to express our sincere gratitude to each and every one of you for participating in another event for Marylanders with disabilities. We are honored to have your presence and look forward to a great program.

It is a pleasure to be moderating today's mayoral candidates forum, and I am delighted to welcome all of the distinguished candidates to the program. The sun may not be shining outside, but each of you up here on the stage with me certainly bring a lot of sunshine to this room.

Before we start, I would like to remind everyone of why today's forum and the activities around it are so important. There are over half a million Marylanders with disabilities. And did you know that the vast majority of them are of voting age? That is over 10% of Maryland's population. And voter interest in disability issues is a multiplier of that 10%. When you consider family members, providers, advocates, public agencies, board members, medical professionals, and the ever-increasing number of seniors -- many of them will experience a disability -- the impact of disability vote has become a huge force in the electoral process.

It is so exciting to be a part of a societal change process that within our lifetimes, at least mine, has seen individuals with disabilities move to higher and higher levels of community integration and participation. And that one of the signs that we are making progress is the sheer number of people with disabilities who are now actively involved in the electoral process attending to the issues, and most importantly, voting.

I would now like to review with you a couple of the most important rules for today's forum. This forum is not a debate. So candidates will not be allowed to direct questions to each other or otherwise engage in debate-type banter. Each candidate will have an opportunity for presenting opening remarks, to answer moderator questions and audience questions, and make a closing statement.

The order of presentations was determined earlier by a drawing.

There are strict time limits for each of these presentations, and they will be strictly enforced.

Ruth, would you raise your hand in the front row so they know who the timekeeper is? Ruth has been doing this for years, and we appreciate having her do that for us today. Thanks, Ruth.

Audience members are asked to be equally respectful of all candidates at all times and refrain from overtly positive or negative or raucous comments in response to candidates' statements.

By the way, aren't you all happy that the raucous caucus in Congress is over for awhile?

Before we begin the candidate portion of the program, I want to mention a couple items to you. Registration tables are outside. If you haven't registered, please do so. Also, we have voter registration available in the back of the room. And I want to thank the Maryland Disability Law Center for setting that up and manning it today. I believe that you have a deadline of August 23rd to preregister for the upcoming primary.

And it would be thoughtless of me if I did not take a moment to thank all of our incredible sponsors who have covered the cost of today's forum. The National Federation of the Blind.

(Applause.)

Our platinum sponsor, the Chimes.

And our bronze sponsors, including Kennedy Krieger, Maryland Disability Law Center, The League for People with Disabilities, VSP.

Our partners for today's program include all of them as well as Abilities Network, Alliance, Inc., Humanim, Maryland Works, Inc., and the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives.

There are numerous smaller and individual sponsorships that we appreciate. We could not do today's event without the numerous participating organizations.

I ask you to look in your program, and you'll see a list of the organizations. Join me in thanking all of those sponsors and partners who made today's program possible.

(Applause.)

So let's get to it. I hope the candidates will indulge us this afternoon. We have strict time limits. We have a very short time period. We have, as you can see, a lot of candidates up here that have a lot of things they would like to share with you in a very, very short time period.

So with that, I would like to begin the formal portion of today's program and ask each of the mayoral candidates to provide opening remarks. Each of them will have three minutes, as determined by earlier drawing. It looks like Joseph "Jody" Landers, III, will go first.

JODY LANDERS: The lucky draw.

Good afternoon. First of all, I want to compliment all of you for being out here for this. This is the second best attended forum that we've been to. I think it's wonderful to see so many people interested in this race, because it's a milestone race for this city.

I also just want to mention one thing. I spent about two or three years working in this building when it was a sewing machine factory when I was 15 to 17. My father was a sewing machine mechanic. What a transformation from the factory.

I'm running for mayor because I am deeply frustrated with what I see happening in our city. We lost 120,000 people over the past 20 years. The 2010 census found almost

47,000 vacant housing units in Baltimore City. We have 30,000 vacant properties. We have the highest tax burden of any subdivision in the state, and yet every year we have a fiscal crisis. Every year we see a diminution of our services that we depend on to improve and maintain the quality of life in our neighborhood, for our children, for our disabled citizens, for our senior citizens. And I believe it has to stop.

Stopping this downward trend will mean rebuilding our tax base, rebuilding our population, rebuilding our job base in the city. But we cannot do this by continuing in the same path that we have been on for the past dozen or more years, 20 years. We have to go in a different direction, and that's what I offer.

I have 40 years of experience in nonprofit, in government, and in the business sector. And I bring that experience and offer it to the citizens of Baltimore in partnership so that we can turn this city around. If we don't begin concentrating on the fundamentals and rebuilding our tax base, every year from this point forward will get worse and worse. How do I know that? Because so far this year, half of all the property sales in the city have been foreclosures. We are witnessing the erosion of our city. I have a plan to stop it. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

C. DAVID WARD: Next we have Frank Conaway.

FRANK M. CONAWAY: No, no.

C. DAVID WARD: Oh, I'm sorry. Ms. Harding.

VICKI HARDING: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Vicki Ann Harding. I'm running for mayor. I want to first be recognized as a mother and as a grandmother and as a woman. And the reason why I say that is because I represent the family. I'm very disturbed how we have so much division within our communities, within our homes. We need to bring back the cohesion.

When I decided to get into the race was because several years ago, as an activist, I was heavily involved in the school system, but as a parent. I never worked for the system. I noticed that our children weren't being educated properly.

What else I noticed is that there was some unsettling things happening within the school systems, the violence, and I came upon the test score scandal. I was the one who uncovered that. I was the one who sounded the alarm one day. Ever since, as I became a researcher, I taught myself how to look up law. I filed injunctions to stop them from closing our schools, and I also came across the corruption in the government of Baltimore City. And that's what needs to stop.

I was also -- my brother was also victimized, and he's part of this organization, because he was shot in the head and he's now blind. He's still alive, by the grace of the Most High. So this area is very near and dear to me as well.

When I looked at it, some of the areas that I saw were being treated unfairly in disservice was the disabled, the seniors, the children, and veterans. I found out that more than half of our homeless people are veterans. And I'm very concerned about that. That's why I want to be recognized as a human being, because I do have a heart. And I'm not seeing people who are running this government who are heartfelt. So with the corruption, which has been a primary on my platform, but I do not minimize any other areas, because with the corruption going on, this is why we don't have enough money to finance better services for the homeless, for the veterans, for the disabled, for our seniors, for our children.

So that is the reason why I am in the race, and I hope that before today has ended, that you vote for me. Thank you.

(Applause.)

C. DAVID WARD: Thank you, Ms. Harding.

Okay. Now I can call on Frank Conaway.

FRANK M. CONAWAY: Thank you very much, sir. I'm a clerk of the circuit court.

One of the reasons why I was so adamant about not being number two is because of the great respect I have for Vicki Harding. I didn't want to try to upstage her. That's the reason why I was so vociferous in saying that.

We have been around the political game for a long time. Around 50 years I've been involved in politics. And I've seen a lot of changes happen in this city. Most of them in

the last 20 years have not been to my liking. I thought about trying to change things here because there needs to be change.

Now, my mantra, which I'll keep saying throughout this election and my tenure as the mayor of this city, it's jobs, jobs, jobs that we need. The only thing that's going to straighten this city out is jobs, jobs, jobs. And I repeat it because I want you leaving here saying that I said jobs, jobs, jobs.

Why do I put so much emphasis on jobs? First, people can't live happily without work. They do bad things because they like to eat, sleep, have fun, and they need to take care of their families. So they need jobs. They need jobs so they can get their children straightened out and ready to go to school, buy clothing for them, give them food and whatnot. So again, jobs.

And then people who have jobs usually don't hang on the streets. They're tired when they come from work. They go in, they clean up, they eat dinner, talk to their children, maybe kiss their wives, and go to bed so they can go to work the next day.

Now, jobs will also straighten out our schools. You see, we don't have enough money for children who want to go to school and they stay out. Problem is, when they're in school, they're incorrigible because they're unhappy. We don't have parents to help the children in their schooling. Everyone knows that schooling starts where? At home. With the parents. And it continues when they come out of school and go back to the parents. So you have to get the parents more involved in the schools. I think I can do that because I will be begging parents to come out and do things with their children, come to PTA meetings, ask about the curriculum, help the children that do well have some extra activity.

We just don't treat our citizens the way they should be treated. Our children are not treated the way they should be treated. And when our children look at what happens higher up, it doesn't look too good for them for the future. Our children don't see what's really going on up top, that it's going to be something good for them.

So jobs, jobs, jobs. And again, jobs, jobs, jobs, and more jobs. Thank you.

(Applause.)

C. DAVID WARD: Thank you.

Next I would like to ask Otis Rolley for opening remarks.

OTIS ROLLEY: Good afternoon, everyone. This is Baltimore. So when I say good afternoon, you respond.

AUDIENCE: Good afternoon.

OTIS ROLLEY: Right. We're a friendly town.

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for this opportunity to talk to you this afternoon about why Baltimore matters and why I hope to serve as your next mayor.

I live in northwest Baltimore, I worship in Mid-Govans, and I work downtown. I'm a father, a husband. I have three children, a 2-year-old, a 10-month-old, and a 9-year-old. And I want a city for them where they can grow up and attend public school and prosper there, where when they graduate, they're equipped and ready to go into college and/or into the workforce. I want a city where they are comfortable in any neighborhood, that they are safe, that they are happy and healthy.

I love Baltimore. I've worked under three mayors, and I learned a lot from the three very different mayors. I've also learned a lot from the communities I've learned in. What I've learned from those mayors, those communities, from my family and friends is that Baltimore has phenomenal potential that we're not living up to.

So as mayor, I would love the opportunity to take us to the next level.

I did what I was told to do by my grandparents. They said, you go to school, you learn, and then you take what you learn and you apply it to try to make the world a better place. I have a master's in city planning from MIT. I want to continue to use that to serve the citizens of Baltimore.

The reality is this. You need medical attention, you need to see a doctor. If you need legal help, find a good lawyer. It's time that the mayor of Baltimore was, in fact, someone who has studied, worked in, experienced cities, loves cities. I have spent my entire professional career working in and around Baltimore City.

Baltimore can be a world class city. We can live up to our potential. We can recognize all members of our community. But we can only do that when we have a mayor who understands the complexity of our city, the complexity of the problems, and have the wherewithal and experience to resolve those problems. I believe I can do that as your next mayor.

This city has a population where about 20%, over 100,000 of our residents, are disabled. Yet our budget only allocates about .003 resources for the Commission on Disabilities. We have to change that reality. We have to do more than what we've been doing, and I hope to do that as your next mayor. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

C. DAVID WARD: Thank you. Next I would like to call on Stephanie Rawlings Blake.

(Applause.)

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS BLAKE: Thank you very much. I would like to thank the Maryland Disabilities Forum for hosting this event and to President Maurer, thank you for your hospitality. I'm glad the city was a part of your experiment. Although, I was told everyone had a driver's license.

(Laughter.)

Anyway, I'm proud to be here. It's a beautiful, beautiful building.

So I'm Stephanie Rawlings Blake, and I am here because I love Baltimore. I love my hometown. I love the people who live here. And that is what motivated me to have a career in public service. I work hard every single day to be the mayor that you can depend on.

My administration cares deeply about Baltimore City's most vulnerable citizens. My disabilities commissioners work hard to identify facilities, streets, areas, everywhere, that are not ADA compliant. We work with employers and citizens with disabilities to educate them about employment opportunities. We fight for employment opportunities for citizens with disabilities. And we're also training our first responders so they're able to better serve our citizens with disabilities.

Our citizens with disabilities have the same needs that everyone else has. They want jobs, as was stated earlier, they want affordable housing, they want accessible healthcare, and equal justice under the law, and my disabilities commission works hard to make that happen.

We all know that I came into office under very weak circumstances. The biggest budget deficit in history threatened our city's livelihood. We eliminated \$121 million deficit without raising property taxes by a single penny, without laying off police officers or taking money out of our classrooms. We improved public safety, but I agree, I'm sure everyone agrees, that we can and we must do more. My public safety plan will lock up repeat violent criminals, will toughen laws on illegal guns, hire hundreds of new police officers while continuing our efforts to work with neighbors, community activists, religious leaders, so our policies can protect all of our citizens.

I'm a product of our Baltimore City public schools. So is my daughter. I'm doing everything in my power to improve schools in every neighborhood, with the best teachers, increased enrollment, and real accountability.

And finally, I think everyone here agrees that we need lower property taxes. I have a responsible and achievable plan to reduce property taxes that won't destroy the city's finances. The difference between my plan and the others is that my plan is fiscally responsible and it targets homeowners first, while the other plans risk stripping our city of over \$400 million in tax revenue.

Again, thanks for sponsoring the forum. Stephanie Rawlings Blake. I ask you for your support and vote on September 13th so I can continue to be a mayor that you can count on. Thank you.

(Applause.)

C. DAVID WARD: Next I would like to call on Catherine Pugh.

CATHERINE PUGH: Let me also thank the Maryland Disabilities Forum for presenting this debate this afternoon.

And let me just say that I have a passion and a love for the people of Baltimore as well as for the city itself. And the reason that I'm running is because we are, in fact, the sixth

dirtiest city in America. We happen to be the fifth most violent city in America. And the seventh highest crime rate in the country.

When I look at where we currently stand, as a result of 47,000 boarded up houses in our city that we have not paid close attention to, and I hear the various plans and terms of where we want to take our city, I am so concerned about losing another generation of young people to violence and crime. And as has already been said, when we have 120,000 disabled people in this city and we don't think that we need to put that position at a cabinet level, because we need to pay close attention to all the issues as relates to the disability community.

I've had the great opportunity of working with the forum as a state senator. But as the next mayor of Baltimore, I want you to know that I will focus on creating year round opportunities for everyone in our city. Those who think that we cannot reduce the property tax because we want to look at the 2005 plan that was presented by another mayor want to maintain the city. Catherine Pugh as your next mayor will push this city forward. It's about investing in the people who live in our city. 49% of the residents in this city are renters, not homeowners. If you want to grow the city, you begin with the people who live in the city first. And that's why every single person sitting in this room, you are very important to the future of this city. Any mayor will understand that you are the cheerleader for the city. You're the voice of the city. You provide the direction that you want that city to go in.

When I become the mayor of Baltimore, it won't be about deputy mayors. It will be about a mayor of vision. There's not anyone sitting on this stage who can tell you how to take \$100,000 and turn it into a million dollars. That's what I did with the fish out of water project. I started the Baltimore marathon because I wanted to deal with the adult illiteracy rate in the city. In that marathon now, 22,000 people and \$28 million impact on the city.

I'm concerned about the future of our city. This city has not been redeveloped and refocused in over 50 years. And working with the police department, I can tell you, we can bring crime down, but it is a community policing strategy.

So I look forward to pushing Baltimore forward, not maintaining the city, but making the best city that it can be. Thank you for the opportunity to be here with you.

(Applause.)

C. DAVID WARD: Thank you.

Wilton Wilson, not here? Okay.

We have finished our opening remarks. I want to thank you each of you for doing that.

I'll ask our participants in the audience, if you would hold your applause to the end of the day, we could really give them all a standing ovation, and it will help maybe save us a few minutes in our time as well.

Now for the next round, I'm going to be asking the candidates some questions. Three exactly. The real challenge for the candidates is to try to answer those questions within 90 seconds. So I hope you will be aware of the fact that you can't cover everything in 90 seconds, but maybe give a little bit of flavor for what our candidates think.

The first question is the following: People with disabilities often find the process of accessing needed services overwhelming, from complicated application processes, to a lack of service coordination, and facing the run around of navigating multiple service silos.

How, as mayor, would you make it easier for people with disabilities to access and receive needed services?

And first, in the order of questions, would be Stephanie Rawlings Blake.

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS BLAKE: Thank you very much. Every day I work with my administration to make our government, your government, work better for you. And I do that with the disability commission as well. They are a very active group, a group of volunteers. They're not even paid for their service. They're committed and they love their city and the residents who live here.

One of the goals of the mayor's disability commission is to make sure that we give everyone equal access to city services. They're my troubleshooters. They tell me when

it's too difficult for someone to get in a building. And we fix it. They tell me if there's a problem with getting city services. And we fix it.

My representatives with the commission is why we were able to make sure even though we had to deal with snowmageden, that every single person who needed to get to dialysis was able to get there, unlike in other cities where they were not able to take care of their citizens with disabilities. We take it very seriously. And just like we're working with our citizens with disabilities on access issues, we're looking to the disability commission to be your champion and to work with us hand in hand to make sure that everything, not that I tell you need, but that you tell me you need, gets done in our city. Thank you.

C. DAVID WARD: Ms. Harding.

VICKI HARDING: As mayor, I would probably look into revamping the system. Having a brother, as I stated earlier, being a victim of violence and having a disability, I was there with him when a lot of the processes he had to go through in order to get certain things that should have been available, and he's still looking for other services and has a lot of problems.

I think one of the biggest problems in Baltimore City government is that there's no watch tower. There's no process of monitoring. These services have to be extended and expanded, more to our disabled and other people with problems.

I do realize that because of the disability, that we should be hiring other people that can assist us more so we can speed up this process so people can be rendered the services that they need. Thank you.

C. DAVID WARD: Mr. Conaway.

FRANK M. CONAWAY: It occurs to me that when we speak about disabilities, we speak about buildings and whatnot. I think a little further along the way than that. That is, I want someone in my administration to be high up in my administration to sit beside me and tell me what people with disability need and feel. Sometimes when you have death in the family, people come to you and say, I know just how you feel. No, they don't. They can't know how you feel unless it's happening to them.

So I would have this person along with me to let me know how things are.

People with disabilities maybe aren't as disabled as you think. The greatest disability is the disability of the mind. If you've got that, you usually can do whatever you want to do. So we've got to have people to go to work. Because they're disabled, they don't have to stay home. We have to make things accessible for them so they can get in and out. But we've got to have jobs.

I have people tell me they're educated, but I've met educated fools. Excuse me. I've had people tell me that they can't see but they're sighted. And I've had people who are sighted that are blind. So therefore, I understand that part of it. Thank you.

C. DAVID WARD: Ms. Pugh.

CATHERINE PUGH: I think the problem has already been said. It's a voluntary organization. That's a problem. When you have 120,000 people in your city who are disabled, first of all, you want a cabinet level position so you can really hear firsthand from individuals who have problems. Every agency in the city ought to have someone who answers on behalf of the disabled. So there should be a staff position there.

And then when you talk about the volunteerism, volunteerism doesn't work all the time. So you've got to put people in paid positions so that you can understand on a regular basis how to deal with the problems folks are facing. Advocacy is great, and all of you know that. We love advocacy. But if you're the mayor of a city and you're concerned about 120,000 people who live in your city, you put a cabinet position in place and you make sure that every agency has someone who addresses the problem and streamlines the process and doesn't make it difficult to have access. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

JODY LANDERS: I want to say that our city suffers across the board. Not just for disabled persons. If you live in the city and you try to get a permit for something, if you live in the city, try to get a police report for a traffic accident, you call central records and they tell you, we only accept requests by mail. Oh, and you have to enclose a \$10

check with your request. And you might get the report back in 20 days. And it's a photocopy of a report.

You can send in an electronic request and you'll still get a paper copy of a response in the mail.

Folks, we are wasting money. We are not performing for all citizens up to the level we could, and I wish we could just improve services overall. Who is involved in a business today or an endeavor that's doing things the way they did them five years ago, ten years ago? No one. But that's not true of the city of Baltimore. We are so far behind, we need to put an emphasis on improving services and access for everyone, because when we make it a priority to serve every citizen better, it will serve the disabled, it will serve seniors, it will serve everyone in this city. Thank you.

OTIS ROLLEY: The first position paper I put out in this campaign was about rebuilding Baltimore government. It wasn't about government reform because you reform something that has some semblance of order. You rebuild things that need to be fixed from the ground up.

We have been failing to provide the needs of all members of our population. I laid out in that strategy, laid out in that game plan, steps that we need to do. We need to be more accessible, more transparent, more accountable. Our processes need to be streamlined in a way so that citizens no longer need to have an advanced degree or have special assistance to get through the myriad of services in Baltimore. I recognize that the only way we're going to start meeting the needs of Baltimoreans, the only way we're going to start growing, is by fixing service delivery tool, which is Baltimore City government. You cannot do that with one staff person in the commission of disabilities. You can't say that you're committed to change and to reform when you're funding \$95,000 a year in a \$2.8 million budget. You spend what you care about. Your priorities show it in your budget. We need to do better than what we've been doing.

C. DAVID WARD: Before I ask the next question, I would like to ask that the following event staff please go to the lobby. Adam Sneider, Cheryl Rogers, Ellen Leiserson, and Chad McCrudden. Thank you.

The next question for our candidates is the following: Many people with disabilities end up in the wrong system to meet their needs, whether they be incarcerated, on the welfare system, so on and so on.

How would you, as mayor, do to ensure that this population's needs are identified and met?

Again, Stephanie?

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS BLAKE: Thank you. One of the things to go back to another point about being needs being met and you talked about the incarcerated population, it is very important for all of us to have access to jobs. And when I became mayor, it became very important to me to work with my colleagues to give our citizens with disabilities more access, because particularly if you are part of the reentry in the community, if you have been incarcerated, your needs often can't be met because you feel the door is being closed on you. That's why it was important for me to work with the council man to work with the legislation that gives hiring preferences to people in the city. So if you're applying for a job in the city and you're a person with a disability, we give you a bump up. If you're qualified, you take the test, you get in, you get preference if you're a citizen with a disability. That helps us to address your needs, because we are making you a priority for hiring with the city. That's one way we can ensure, along with the others that I talked about before, when I talk about reaching out to my commission to help me make sure we're doing everything we can for citizens with disabilities. This is another way we can make sure the needs are being met, by making sure that you have opportunities, particularly with Baltimore City.

C. DAVID WARD: Ms. Harding?

VICKI HARDING: I guess my concern is that why do we need legislation in order to meet the needs of human rights? I mean, we can create those resources right here, and I don't see that within this current government. And I'm not sure because the resources are not there or is it simply because there's not enough concern on the behalf of the disabled people? And not just disabled, but also with veterans, also with seniors, also with our children. And these areas have been extremely neglected. So I am very concerned with that.

I think that once we deal with the budget itself, because what needs to happen is that these budgets, we need to request an independent audit. We need to know where all this money is being allocated. And with the corruption in the current government right now, this is why we don't have enough money to provide for these services. They're telling you that there's not enough been, but then they turn around and build a Grand Prix. Something is wrong with that picture. And we have people, a lot of these people that are here that are disabled, they want to work. I have a brother who can't see, but that does not stop his hands. He wants a job. It's been very difficult for him. So I can only fathom what people are going through. Thank you.

C. DAVID WARD: Frank.

FRANK M. CONAWAY: Yes. I don't think people with disabilities need a bump up. I think they can compete. They just need a chance. I've seen people with disabilities able to do better work than people who supposedly have no disability. As I said, it's the mind that's the thing. If you can do the job, you get the job.

Now, as clerk of the circuit court, I have over 300 employees, and from time to time I have people who have been incarcerated come in and apply for a job. Many times I say yes. And many times Annapolis Administrative Office of the Court say no. When they say no, I say yes again and these people are hired. People need to have a second chance, whether they have a disability, whether they've been incarcerated, whether they've had a poor life coming up, they need an equal chance to do an equal job. And there are no bump ups. If you can do the job, you can get the job. Thank you.

CATHERINE PUGH: The problem we have in Baltimore is that it's broken. In order to fix something that's broke, you have to face it. This city refuses to face the fact it has problems. And when you have a problem, you have to come up with real solutions, and we don't have real solutions currently for the problems that this city faces.

I think oftentimes we get caught up in the trappings of being in a position as opposed to the responsibility of the position. The responsibility has to be with the people. You will prioritize those things that are important, and nothing is more important than providing for the people who live in this city. Access should be made available to all of us who want to work. Second chances should be given to anyone who has paid their debt to

society. When I look at the disability community, and I've worked very hard on legislation, because sometimes legislation is required to provide the access and opportunities that are needed. All we're saying through legislation is that everybody deserves an opportunity. That's why we have to put the cabinet position in place. That's why every agency has to have someone representing the disability community, so that we can make sure that everyone gets an equal opportunity and equal access to the opportunities that the city can provide when it is fixed. Thank you.

C. DAVID WARD: Mr. Landers.

JODY LANDERS: The whole thing is public service. Public service. Yet we don't even have the simplest feedback and evaluation loop that gives the city information back about the level of service that we're providing. This is not rocket science, folks. Private sector business is doing this constantly.

I went into the Verizon store the other day and got a service done. I got out in the parking lot and I got an instant message on my telephone before I left the parking lot that said, Mr. Landers, would you be willing to take a short survey and let us know how we performed.

I would ask anyone to tell me when the last time they received a city service, any service, that there was a postcard, a follow-up phone call, or a survey that said, how well did we perform.

(Applause.)

That has to be one of our top priorities if we're going to improve service.

You know, people get put in the wrong system because we're not asking the right questions. We're not asking for the feedback from the very people that we are charged with serving. And that's what I was talking about before when I said city government is still acting and behaving like they did 20 years ago. We have to continue to do it.

OTIS ROLLEY: The question was what would I do as mayor to try to make sure the needs of the disabled are identified and responded appropriately to.

I think the best way to do that is to have a strong, well equipped, well staffed, well resourced commission on disability within the city of Baltimore. I think beyond that, it's

really also about having a new culture within city government that prioritizes customer service, that doesn't conduct back room deals, that really recognizes that we are paid by the tax dollars and that the citizens of Baltimore are our bosses.

I think another piece of what we need to do is create more economic opportunity, particularly for those who are disabled. And while I celebrate Councilman Curran's bill on this, the hiring preferences weren't implemented because it requires established rules by civil service for it to be implemented and that has yet to be done.

We start and stop and start and stop. It's a failure of management. We can take this to the next level if we can address the real issues in this city, deal with those issues, and meet the needs of all of our populations so we can start to grow again.

(Applause.)

C. DAVID WARD: Again, I would ask that you please hold your applause until the end and we can recognize everyone.

My final question as a moderator for the candidates today is the following: The disability community includes individuals experiencing many different types of disabilities and life circumstances. Examples of the types of disabilities include head injuries, mental illness, visual impairments, developmental or intellectual disabilities, deafness, physical disabilities, and many other examples of various life circumstances. For example, being a veteran, homeless, poor, having a criminal record, and many others. Kind of sounds like mainstream society.

As mayor, how would you ensure that the needs of each specific group are met while addressing the needs of the broader disability community in a fair and equitable manner?

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS BLAKE: Thank you. I think it's important that first we are honest about what our priorities are and what we can afford. It's also about being honest about, you know, we have priorities, but everything can't be a priority. If you are suggesting that we cut the city's budget by \$400 million and then want to promise that you're going to give every department more resources and more services and more this and more that, you can't have it both ways. So you have to be honest about what

you're able to do, where the money is going to come from, and how you're going to spend it. That's why I'm so pleased to have, in my office, someone who works hand in hand with me to make sure that we're in touch with our citizens with disabilities.

So I'm not sitting around telling anyone what they need to do, but so that we're talking constantly, making sure that we're assessing the needs and making sure that we are doing everything we can to make sure that our citizens with disabilities needs are being met, whatever they are. So we work hard with our veterans, with those with physical limitations, mental limitations. We make sure we provide opportunities for all of those individuals, working with our not-for-profit stakeholders. They work with us; we work with them. That's how many of us are here today. So I appreciate the partnerships and I look forward to many years of working together to improve our city and our services for people with disabilities. Thank you.

VICKI HARDING: What's painfully obvious to me is that this current government priorities is screwed up. The services for the people has been put on the back burner. I don't need to go through any -- I don't believe I need to elaborate on it. Look around you. Look at our city. We're here simply because people with disabilities are concerned about the way they're being treated.

And so what we need to do and what I would do as the mayor, I would, as I said, revamp these services and have a watch tower to oversee to make sure the people's needs are being met. If we look at these budgets and see the government waste, how it's being needlessly spent on things of no priority, such as giving wealthy developers here \$160 million that could have been applied to services for people who are in desperate need, then we can balance this budget. There's so much irregularity in the spending in Baltimore City. And until we have a government that's put in place that can monitor and can account, and then show the people where this money is being applied, we're going to continue to have this problem. We're going to continue to have a system that is not providing for the people.

FRANK M. CONAWAY: Yes, we must prioritize. There's no question about that. But in the past, it seems to me that we've been prioritizing for things that we wanted the most.

Any time you spend \$304 million on a hotel convention center that you don't even know how to run, anytime you spend millions of dollars on a race track and fixing streets downtown while we're having problems uptown, that shows me that you're not prioritizing. You're not taking up money for people who have disabilities.

And then one segment of the population that we have forgotten that wasn't mentioned is the elderly. We have elderly people who are not coming under disability, but they need help and we need to help those people more than we need to build a hotel or have a race track built in Baltimore City. Prioritizing is true, but let's look out for the citizens of our city that needs us the most. We haven't been doing that and we need to start.

When I get into the mayor's office, you can count on prioritizing what needs to be done.

CATHERINE PUGH: Let me begin by saying that, first of all, if you've done the research and you've done the homework, you would understand that you grow your tax base by investing in the people who live in the city first. For example, if you were to look at focusing on that 49% of your residencies that are renters, you could grow your city's budget. You could grow by \$90 million a year. If you create a pipeline from the colleges and universities, of the 10,000 students who graduate every year, 70% of those move to the county and don't live in our city, you would grow your city's budget. If you would look at the 47,000 homes and create homeownership among the people who live in the city by giving some of those homes at a low cost to the citizens of Baltimore, you would grow and expand your budget. It's not about cutting the budget, you all. Anybody with common sense knows that you don't cut \$400 million out of the budget. If you're going to cut the property tax and provide the services for the people of the city, you're going to grow your budget because you got all kinds of populations in the city, and the people of the city have to be the priority. There's a wonderful book that I would like to suggest to anyone who thinks they could and should be the mayor. It's called "Come Back Cities." It will tell you how to do it and show you what to do to run a city and run it right and grow the tax base so you can provide the tax base for all the people of Baltimore. Thank you.

JODY LANDERS: I want a mayor who will be a partner, a partner with me as a city resident, a community leader, an activist, whether on environmental issues, housing, sanitation.

I think that the disabilities community wants the same thing. There's not one answer for all disabilities. Different communities have different needs. We need an administration that's going to listen.

But here's another thing. We need to get our fiscal house in order. The truth of the matter is, like you would save for a rainy day or plan for the future and you wouldn't spend all the money you take in, you would put some aside for a rainy day or for the future so that if a crisis came up, you would be able to deal with it. What our city has done, during the boom years when real estate was booming, we had the equivalent of 80 cents on the tax rate in new revenue come into this city, and we spent every penny of it. We did not plan for the downturn in the real estate market. We spent every penny. And even during that time when we were spending that additional 80 cents, services were being reduced, across the board, in neighborhoods, for programs, and for schools. So we've got to change the way we've been doing business. We've got to invest in the city and grow the tax base so that we have the resources to be able to address the needs. Thank you.

OTIS ROLLEY: I'm going to say something that you probably won't hear me say a lot throughout this campaign. I agree with the current mayor on an issue. She said we have to be honest. And I agree. We have to be honest. We have to be honest with what we're doing and what we're not doing. We have a commission on disabilities that has been moved out of city hall and is now working with housing and community development department. An agency that her own transition team said is one of the most broke teams in the city government. A \$95,000 budget does not meet the needs of 120,000 people of your population. Let's be honest. We need to start to run this government properly, investing in our neighborhoods, investing in our people, prepare for growth and development, and then appropriately cut the property tax.

We have to be honest that we can do a much better job than what we've been doing when we have a plan of action and follow that plan, have the wherewithal, the strength, intelligence, and experience to implement that plan. When we're honest about that, we'll do the honest and right thing on September 13. Thank you.

C. DAVID WARD: I want to thank the candidates for their responses to the moderator questions and move us now into questions from the audience.

Over the last couple of weeks, we have asked that individuals from the community submit questions that they would like to have answered today. And obviously due to time, we're not going to be able to get everyone's questions in. But I do want to offer you this opportunity. If you submit, and if you already submitted questions, and if you would like to submit questions for the candidates up here today, please do so, and we will get them to the candidates and ask for them to respond to those questions. And we will then post them on the MDF website for your review, to help you in making informed decisions.

We will try today to get as many questions as possible answered, but I can assure you we will not get to them all.

By the way, if you don't have internet access, feel free to call the office and we'll get those questions in.

The first audience question comes from Adam Sneider. He is with the Healthcare for the Homeless. His question is related to housing. Adam?

AUDIENCE: Thank you for the opportunity to be here. Healthcare for the Homeless serves about 7,000 different people with comprehensive health services in Baltimore annually and appreciate the partnerships with many in city government and with many people seated here who help us to build a future without homelessness.

Recognizing that many people with disabilities live on extremely low incomes, SSI pays \$674 a month. Temporary disability assistance, the state program, pays only \$185 a month. Recognizing the very limit the income that many people with disabilities have, what would your administration do to, absent additional public resources and recognizing that the private market often can't achieve low enough rental, what would

your administration do to create a housing plan that would complement the city's 10-year plan to end homelessness and really create housing for people with very, very low incomes who have disabilities?

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS BLAKE: Thank you. First, thank you for all you do. Healthcare for the Homeless is an amazing organization and I'm proud of the work that you're doing and I'm proud of the partnerships you have with the city.

Part of the work we're doing is around streamlining that process, the process where we identify, first, where those properties are that are visible and ADA compliant. So we know the resources that are out there. And your organization has worked very hard with our commission, and in partnership with the White House, because they're doing the same thing across the nation, identifying those properties, making sure that we're giving people access to those properties, as well as streamlining the process for individuals with low income who need access to housing.

What I will do is remain committed to identifying the properties, remain committed to giving access to people with disabilities so they can have a place to live. When we have a commitment to make homelessness rare and brief, it is a commitment to all of our citizens, including those citizens with disabilities.

VICKI HARDING: I think Adam came up and asked. I don't think he needs a pat on the back. He needs answers. And again, it goes back to how the money is being spent in Baltimore City. It's imperative that we have audits done on this money, because there is an extreme irregularity in how this money is being allocated to fit the needs and to accommodate people and helping and providing them homes.

I'm not getting this. Why does Baltimore City have so much homelessness and it's going to take ten years? That's a problem with me. This is exactly why I'm running in this race, because I don't believe -- they tell you that they don't have money, but I don't believe that. And I believe that getting in this and auditing the budget, that they only telling you about one and seeing where all this money is going, I believe that we will -- I can find money to end homelessness before ten years. I can find money to improve services for the disabled. I can find money to expand services for the seniors.

FRANK M. CONAWAY: Someone I respect told me years ago that there's always money that Baltimore can find if needed. There's always money that can be found. And I think we've proven that over the last couple of administrations, that there is money to be found.

Now, a couple of people said, let's be honest. Okay. Let's be honest. And let's be honest and say we have not done the job for the disabled people that we should do. I see a lot of empty lots in Baltimore. A lot of empty houses in Baltimore. I don't know why we can't put some of our homeless people in those places. I see houses built all the time. And what really bothers me is I see a lot of condominiums being built. That's crazy. They can't rent them or sell them, but they keep building them. That is because contractors get money for building them and there's no long range plan for unemployment or to help the homeless or the disabled. We need to really stop this foolishness and be honest about it and do the job for the people that need to be done.

CATHERINE PUGH: You asked how we would end homelessness and provide the housing that's needed for the homeless. We have done some. I looked at what we did in this recent year, providing bond bills and so forth for more affordable housing. But what we need do is organize our housing department and prioritize how they are spending their money. We use too much of our block grant money for projects downtown and not for the people. That's about restructuring.

In Jacksonville, Florida, what they did because so many people were unable to apply for mortgages and opportunities to buy or rent homes, was they created their own mortgage lending program through a bonding program for the disabled as well as for those who are homeless and who could not afford to get housing.

We have to look at what we're doing with the 47,000 boarded up houses in the city. Instead of bundling them up and giving them to developers, let's look at organizations like Healthcare for the Homeless like we do for Habitat for Humanities and get a better flow of those homes into the community to be sure everyone has access.

JODY LANDERS: First off, let me say I would love to come back and have a two-hour discussion about this because you can't really address it in 90 seconds. We could do a lot.

Right now, we offer a 10-year frozen tax level to anyone who rehabs a house to historic standards. We offer a 50% tax credit for the first five years on rehab vacant houses and on just rehabilitation and home improvements.

I would like to see us explore offering that same ten-year tax freeze for properties that are rehabbed to disabled standards and are offered at a fixed rent to disabled persons.

There's no reason we can't do that.

There are a lot of other things we could do. This is one of the areas I've been most involved with over the past 13 years with the greater Baltimore board of realtors. The problem is, when you rehab a property and put \$100,000 of improvements into it, the city tax rate alone equates to \$200 a month in property taxes. So the equation doesn't work. We need to recalculate this formula. And I believe there's a lot we could do to get private investors to come in.

The other point I'll make is I see all the time homes advertised. They rent for \$800. If the person would buy the house, they would only pay \$500 a month in housing costs. We have to reverse that.

OTIS ROLLEY: Adam, what I hope it do differently as mayor of Baltimore, if given the opportunity to serve, is to enforce and implement the inclusionary housing law, not so seek wavering based on campaign contributions, but really to make sure that we are providing more affordable housing for our citizens. I plan on rebuilding, reorganizing the department of housing and community development so that it is doing both housing and community development, that it is working with the 501(c)(3)s within the city of Baltimore, the neighborhood associations, to not just do bricks and mortar work, but to work in community development activities to strengthen the neighborhoods and provide more opportunity for our residents, both those who are here and those seeking to come. And I also want to move forward with reducing the property tax rate, because I think part of the issue as related to the vacancy is the fact that the private sector gets it. We get it too downtown. We seem to understand it downtown that the property tax rate is too high and therefore isn't an incentive for development. But in Baltimore, the only way to create more housing opportunity for all citizens is when we realize that the \$150,000 developer is as important as the \$150 million developer.

Given the opportunity to serve, those are some of the areas I would want to change to create more opportunity for all of Baltimore.

C. DAVID WARD: The next question comes from Chad McCrudden, an advocate, professional, and person with a disability. His question deals with employment.

AUDIENCE: As mayor, what specifically would you do to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities, not necessarily just one disability, but all of them, mental health, physical disabilities? I was wondering if you might be specific in your answer as to whether you would make available in your city government administration a job or jobs for and to people with disabilities to lead by example?

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS BLAKE: Yes. I agree that we need to do more to provide opportunities to open the door for our citizens with disability, and that's why I work with the councilmen and our commission on disability and most of you in this room on the hiring law. I was very pleased when the league for the disabled gave me the award this year for the legislative work, because it's important. We do have to lead by example, and that's why I was a champion of that legislation. And we are. We lead by example by giving preference to individuals with disabilities, and we don't do that and then hide the information. We share with employers all over the city how they can use the skills and the talents of our citizens with disabilities to do work that they need no matter in what sector it is.

When I talked about training, we're not just training first responders. We're training employers for how they can best use our citizens' talent, citizens with disabilities. I'm pleased with the work that we're doing. I know we can do more. My hope is, with your help, we can continue to do more and expand opportunities for our citizens, because there's so much that this community has to offer.

VICKI HARDING: I would take it even a step further. Not just jobs but what about entrepreneurship? My brother, as I stated, you know, have a disability. And he's very good with money. He's very diligent with his hands. I'm currently working with him as far as starting his own business, because he's very independent. He doesn't let his disability stop him from being the man that he should be, because he's also a father and he is very active in the community.

So as the mayor, I would look at these options, because there's so many things that can be offered to people with disabilities, and I want to make sure that you all have that same opportunity as people who do not have disabilities as well. Thank you.

FRANK M. CONAWAY: The question is, the answer is, of course I would do as much as I can to hire people with disabilities. Let me just say this to you. I have 300 employees where I am now. Feel free to come by and apply for a job when we have a job available. I'll treat you the same ways a treat anyone else. If you're deserving of the job, you'll get the job. If you are not sighted, that doesn't stop you from doing some things. If you have trouble getting into the building, we've taken care of that. We'll be very happy to have you interview the same as we interview anyone else. We think you deserve a job if you can do a job, and I think you can do a job.

So what I say, if you don't believe me, try it.

CATHERINE PUGH: I think what I said earlier applies here as well. You haven't had a cabinet level position, and it's not about increasing the budget to add that person to your budget; it's about making sure that your government is streamlined to the point that you accommodate people in your city. So I want a cabinet person who is disabled sitting there so I can get firsthand the needs of the community.

I also talked about making sure that they have access not only to employment, but to housing and whatever is needed for this community. But you can't get it by having an agency that is not fully staffed. You can't get it by just depending on volunteers to inform you. So I will make that cabinet position and I will make sure that every agency provides access to the disabled community employment, housing opportunities, transportation, as we do new buildings in our city to make sure they're accommodating, when we look at creating senior living communities, that they're accessible and people don't have to go up 18 stories and we have to worry about what happens to them if a fire breaks out. So yes, I will make that a cabinet position and make sure my administration is more than accessible.

JODY LANDERS: Yes, I obviously will do what I can. I've had positions in the past where I've been able to hire disabled persons for various positions. That's not an issue

with me. I think anybody with a disability ought to be on the same ground as anybody else who applies for the job and can meet the criteria.

Here's the problem for the city. The only kind of jobs that the city creates are jobs that add to our tax burden and add to the cost of government. We need to attract private sector jobs into the city, and that's where we really have fallen down. Unfortunately, there are a lot of disabilities that the city operates under. 30% of all property in the city is tax exempt. We hurt ourselves by keeping that much property in the tax exempt category.

I would look to the building and employment base here in the city, but we can't do it simply by this kind of service jobs that we generate through tourism business. We have to get more competitive. As I said, at one time this building that we're sitting in probably had 1500 jobs in it. And they're gone. So we need to concentrate on bringing private sector jobs back into the city, because that will expand opportunities for everyone. That will help us grow our tax base and improve the services that all citizens need. Thank you.

OTIS ROLLEY: I think we create more economic independence for disabled individuals within our city by adequately staffing and funding the commission on disabilities, by doing more in terms of using the mayor's office as a bully pulpit, to do PSAs, utilizing the Baltimore City television station, and just reaching out to the GBC and to Maryland Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, to really explain that those who are disabled can do the jobs and that they can be part of employment in the labor pool.

The reality is, every employer, whether the city of Baltimore, whether private or public, you want employees who think outside the box. And the reality is, as a disabled individual, are you operating outside the box often already. You have skills and resources that can help businesses grow and prosper, and you also have the resources that can help you to start your own business and add jobs and opportunities to the city of Baltimore. We have some laws on the book that we need to implement in a better way, and we have certain resources already here that need to be staffed up and improved upon so we can better meet the economic needs of our citizens.

C. DAVID WARD: I'm told that I'm running short on time and I have to now take the time to move to our candidates' closing remarks.

At this time, I would ask that, once again, you know, the next time I buy raffle tickets, I hope Ms. Blake will buy them for me because she always seems to come up first, at least in today's drawings.

So for closing remarks, I would ask that Ms. Blake begin.

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS BLAKE: Thank you. And thank you for not just agreeing for being the moderator, but for doing an excellent job. And I thank the federation for the blind for letting us use this gorgeous building and the disabilities forum for hosting. And for everyone who came and shared.

Again, I'm Stephanie Rawlings Blake and I want to continue to serve as your mayor because I love my hometown and the people who live in it.

Leadership, as in life, sometimes you are called upon to fix problems that were not of your making. This is true of any American leader, especially during these tough economic times. The great recession has made it more difficult for cities to do everything, including create jobs, balance budgets, at every level of government, federal, state, and yes, even local government.

Now is not the time for radical plans or for unrealistic talk. We will get Baltimore back on track if we work hard, if we tell the truth, and if we continue to do as I have, and that's make the tough choices that we need to make to continue to move the city forward. That's the only way that we'll create jobs, the only way that we'll reduce crime, the only way that we'll improve our schools, and the only way to continue to crack down on political corruption.

We see that the federal level in D.C., unfortunately right now, what happens when radical ideas and unrealistic plans are allowed to take root. They are driving our country and our president in a direction that I don't think any of us in this room want to go.

Fortunately, that's not how we do things in Baltimore, and it will never be. I will never surrender to unrealistic talk that would threaten our progress and force the city to cut core services. But I know by working together, we will make Baltimore a place where

families have good schools that they can take their kids, a place where our streets are safer and families feel more secure in their homes in every neighborhood in our city.

So thank you again. I ask you for your vote on September 13th, and even those of you who want to come out for early voting, I ask for your vote as well. With your help, we can continue to make Baltimore better, safer, and stronger. Thank you again.

(Applause.)

VICKI HARDING: Discrimination is still going on today. When people are ill afforded opportunities, regardless of their race, religion, a disability, sex, it's illegal.

As far as what needs to be done, we can sit up here all day and talk about it, but it's just talk. We have done enough talking. We need to move on and move Baltimore City forward. And I have not seen this within this current government. Yes, corruption is rampant in Baltimore City. And this is the major hold back that is not being discussed at this present time, and that's why it has been a priority as well as other issues in dealing with people with disabilities and homelessness.

We all know when we need a bath, we take a bath. So why would we assume that homeless or when people with disabilities have needs that they should not be provided? Or why should they wait? Or why should they be frustrated or discouraged when they are entitled to these services? That's a problem for me. So my reason for being in this race right now is because I am human. And you all are human. And these needs are -- our human rights are not being met. And it is a big problem that needs to be dealt with, and you should not be put on the back burner. We talk about a budget, but we don't talk about how this money is being allocated. We're not talking about the corruption. We're not talking about the illegal arrests in Baltimore. We're not talking about the crime. We've got schools that are dilapidated. We have test score cheating. Like I said before, one thing for certain, two things for sure, it's not the children and it's not the parents that's cheating on these test scores.

So I would ask that you in September, or even in early voting, vote for me, because I do have a heart and I know that if I speak from the heart, you will receive from the heart.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

CATHERINE PUGH: On September 13th, Baltimore has a very important choice to make. Whether or not you want the city to be maintained or you want to push the city forward. Whether you believe that you cannot grow or whether you believe that the city can be moved forward.

Believing in the city means you need visionary leaders who understand that we have to do things differently. I encourage our current mayor and those seeking office to read the book "Come Back Cities" and "A Pray for our Cities" because it takes bold, visionary leadership to realize that you invest in the people who live in your city first. We cannot afford to lose another generation of young people to crime and violence. The police will tell you, we don't need 300 additional police to be added to this city's budget. What this city needs is more police and community cooperation. We need more police on the streets, walking our beats, and interacting with the community. That's what the police department will tell you.

We can grow our community by investing in our people. We need leadership that understands that the mayor is the cheerleader for the city. We need someone to go out there and bring business to our city and expand our tax base. We need someone who understands that our children can be productive members of our society and we should not be closing rec centers. The mayor is the person who sets the vision for the city. You need someone who understands that you are the person who directs the GBC and the philanthropic community to become your partner, the faith based community. We can't do it all by ourselves, but working together, we can make this a better city. We need a leader for Baltimore. We need a leader who understands that it's not just about sitting in office; it's about being responsible in that position. We need someone who understands that we can change this city if we're committed to changing it. We can make this city better if we're committed to making it better. Maintaining a city is not good enough. Growing a city can happen when you invest and believe in the people who live in the city. We are too developer-driven in this city. We need to move towards being community-driven. When the Bronx lost people, they realized this top down theory does not work in New York. Same here. You have to go from the bottom up.

Lift the people, move them in the direction, give them hope in this city that we do not have upon the sixth dirtiest city in America, one of the most violent in America. And Forbes magazine just voted us cities of comparable size one of the worst cities to do business. This means you've got to change what is currently in place and bring about a visionary here who understands that working with all of you, we can make a difference. I ask for your vote. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

JODY LANDERS: I'm going to give all the candidates credit for loving the city. Believe me. You wouldn't enter a campaign like this for any other reason. So we all love the city.

That's not really the issue. The issue is, where do we want this city to go.

The current mayor says now is not the time to make change. If now is not the time, when is the time to make change?

I don't know what you see, but I see a city that's been on a downward climb for the past 20 years, and I do want to change that downward direction. If we stick with the status quo, that is exactly what we will get, the status quo.

So I'll submit to you, if you are happy with the current condition of the city, if you are satisfied with the 47,000 vacants, if you're satisfied with the loss of jobs and decline in services, if you're satisfied with the elimination of trash pickup in neighborhoods, or being charged for that in the future, if you're satisfied with being nickel and dimed to death with new taxes every single year while your services are declining, then by all means, don't make the change. Vote for the incumbent mayor.

I made a choice when I got into this race. I want to see the city go in another direction. I don't have a degree from MIT. My degree is from Morgan State University. I'm a problem solver. That's what I am. I don't want to just be the mayor. I want to solve problems for the city. For my family, for your family, for all of us. That's what my entire adult working career has been about: public service and service citizens.

Now, I haven't been in office for the past 20 years, so I'm a little suspicious when those who have been in office are trying to lay off and not take any responsibility for the

existing conditions that we find in our city. I'm sorry. I don't buy that. And I hope you won't buy it either.

I ask for your support on September 13, because working together, I guarantee you, we will transform this city and it won't take another ten years to do it. We'll make changes within the first four years. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

OTIS ROLLEY: A friend of mine threw an event for me to try to help to raise some resources so we could run this race for mayor. I wasn't in a position to get a lot of money from big time developers because I was really trying to run a race that was going to be a little different.

When we threw this event that we had at a place, they contacted some of my friends and some professors and classmates, and one of the professors who is disabled, in a wheelchair, said that she was going to come. She came with her husband, arrived at the restaurant, and they had a wheelchair lift to make it accessible but the lift was not working. She had called ahead of time just to confirm, to make sure it was working. They told her, oh, yeah, yeah, it works.

It was really cold out. I've been in this race now since November of last year. It was really cold out. And she called me from outside. I came outside. She said, "I can't come in. I called ahead but I can't get in there." She said, "I'm going to write you a check though, right now, in the cold." Her husband said, "Let's mail it." She said, "No. I'm writing it right now." She said, "Otis, I want you to be mayor. And when you're mayor, I want you to remember exactly how I feel right now. Remember how I'm being blocked from access. Remember what's going on right now when you become mayor."

I'm running for mayor of Baltimore not just for her but for all of Baltimore. And when Adam asked his question earlier and the current mayor said, "Well, I'm going to do what we've been doing," what we've been doing is not working.

(Applause.)

We are losing population. 15 of our schools passed MSA. That's all. I want all kids to have a chance to go to postsecondary education, whether Morgan or MIT. I want to

change the course of direction from where we're going right now. Because it's not working.

I'm running for mayor because I believe Baltimore has phenomenal potential. I believe that Atlanta and Boston and all of these places should not be looked at with high regard and Baltimore laughed at and thought of as the place of the wire. We have better resources and assets and schools. We have phenomenal neighborhoods and people. We have to step up with leadership.

My name is Otis Rolley. I hope you will vote for me. Otis Rolley for mayor. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

FRANK M. CONAWAY: Some people have been running for awhile for mayor, since last winter. I've been running for 45 years.

(Laughter.)

Finally I think this is my opportunity.

Let me tell you something I want you to understand very clearly. I don't tell you what you want to hear. I tell you what you need to know. You want to know the truth, listen to Frank Conaway because that's what I'm going to give you. I'm not owned by anybody and I think you should look at the expenditure reports when they come out and see what people are getting for their money. Then you'll find out who runs and who is asking for your vote.

I am not looking for a job. I have a job. I'm looking to do a job. And if I didn't have a job, I would live my life in such a way that I could ride out in the sunset and be all right.

But I want to do something to change this city, and you need someone independent to change this city. For instance, with crime running rampant in this city, why, why do we have the current police commissioner still on the job? Football teams fire coaches. And sometimes in the middle of their contract. Baseball teams fire managers, sometimes in the middle of their contract. Why must we keep someone who is not doing the job? Should we just fire all of the patrol men and keep the commissioner? No. We need to make some changes and you need someone with the guts to do it. I can tell you right

here, right now, three or four of them will go the first day I'm sworn in. And they know it. And they know it. You have to have the guts. And I will not have anybody come in from a higher office trying to tell me how to be mayor of Baltimore City. You know what it be? Down the road, down the road, I will not accept that and I will not accept it not only from a higher elected official but anybody trying to tell me how to run the office. If you don't think that I run that way, come by my office and see. I run my office with an iron fist. Nobody needs to come in and tell me what to do.

And also, as I said, when you walk in my office, there is no door to my office. When I become mayor, there will be no door. And then once a quarter, I will want to have is a meeting with the people so they can tell me what they need.

I have 15 seconds left and I want to say this. I've been trying to find out where elected officials disappear after they elected. You don't see them anymore. I find my children, though. They haven't disappeared.

I need your vote. I will do a job for you. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

C. DAVID WARD: Okay, folks. Now it's time for each of you to recognize each of our candidates up here for coming up today, bringing some sunshine to this room. Let's let them hear it.

(Applause.)

I also want to thank each and every one of you for participating today. And if you leave here with anything, just remember this. It is your personal attention to the issues, active involvement, advocacy, and vote, that creates real impact on improving the lives of Maryland citizens with disabilities.

Again, I can only share the same as the candidates shared. Please vote, Tuesday, September 13, 2011. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MARC MAURER: David, before people go, we do have some voting machines in the back that we can show off to folks. These are accessible voting machines. They do work for blind or print disabled candidates. We'll be glad to show them to you. We have

all of the voting machines that can be used in nonvisual ways, and we can show them off.

This sort of leads me to the thought, if you want to know something about blindness, ask the people who know something about it, and we are the ones. So if you would like to know, ask us. We would like to show you the machines before you go.

We also register people to vote here. We are nonpartisan, but we want everybody to vote.

(Applause.)