

# MARC H. MORIAL

September 27, 2017

Dear Candidate:

Congratulations on offering yourself to become the next leader of our 300-year-old city.

Our city has survived and thrived for three centuries. New Orleans has withstood hurricanes, yellow fever, segregation, urban violence, unfavorable economic conditions, poverty and sometimes complacent and rigid elected, business and community leadership - yet - she still achieves recognition as an incomparably unique place and one of the world's great American cities.

I write, not as one who has served as a State Senator, Mayor of New Orleans, President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, nor as President of the National Urban League.

Instead, I write as a passionate New Orleanian, a diehard Saints and Pelicans fan, and a lover of gumbo, red beans, po' boys, Mardi Gras, the Jazz Fest, and the Essence Festival.

I write, not to offer unsolicited advice, but to offer perspective, because you have embraced an important challenge to become the next leader of our great city.

As you consider the weeks and days ahead, before the primary and the general election, I urge you to educate yourself on the city's history and the work of the city's great mayors who among others include, Martin Behrman, Chep Morrison, Moon Landrieu, and Dutch Morial.

I offer to you the illustration of our Administration from 1994-2002, where crime was reduced by 60%, joblessness was cut in half, the poverty rate decreased, and the University of New Orleans Quality of Life Poll showed a majority of citizens felt the city was moving in the right direction. We built a dynamic coalition across all lines to move the City forward.

My final approval rating stood at 70%.

Gaining insight, perspective and understanding of the historic challenges and heroic efforts of each generation of New Orleanian will prepare you to attend to the city's future challenges.

As I see it, the Mayor plays three important roles.

First, as the Chief Executive Officer of the Municipal Corporation called the City of New Orleans, its attached boards, and related state agencies, such as the Housing Authority of New Orleans, and the Regional Transit Authority.

Second, the Mayor plays the role of the moral leader of the City. That person to whom the citizens look to in times of crisis, and in times of challenge to set the tone and to lead the way on the most pressing and difficult issues. This is where the mayor's role requires not simply political acumen nor expediency but a strong internal compass which guides one to do what is right and just in challenging circumstances.

Third, the Mayor plays the role of political leader of the city and region, and in this role, has the challenge and the responsibility to pursue the best interests of the citizens of New Orleans by working with business, labor, faith, community and civic leaders, and other elected officials – the City Council, the state legislature, the governor and state officials, and the leaders of adjoining cities and parishes.

This role requires time, attention, relationship building and a sense that the Mayor of New Orleans is the most important elected official in the region and the second most important elected official in the state after the governor. Historically, in many instances, the Mayor of New Orleans has always been a national spokesperson for America's cities and urban residents, as well as, on issues of civil rights, economic opportunity and justice.

As you approach this campaign, I urge you to also consider your thoughts and points of view on the following critical issues:

1. **Public Safety.** Public safety is more than police and law enforcement. However, while police reform and a well operating New Orleans Police Department are essential to public safety, it goes beyond that. It embraces the leadership that a mayor must provide to the overall criminal justice system and the role the mayor must play in understanding the necessity of having comprehensive and holistic approaches to public safety which includes, mental health, youth development, economic opportunity and neighborhood sustainability. Public Safety above all requires that you have a coherent well thought out plan of action – not talking points, clichés or mimeograph copies of best practices from the internet.

I would urge you to spend time consulting with experts and the community to develop the best approach to reforming the New Orleans Police Department and creating a strong set of holistic policies which lead to a safer city. Now, no

credible public safety plan today is without criminal justice reform provisions and a reentry plan for offenders who have served their sentences. The public deserves a comprehensive public safety plan from you. Mass incarceration is failed policy, and today, New Orleans must be smart on crime, not just tough on crime.

2. **Housing and Neighborhood Development.** New Orleans in its post Katrina iteration has a severe housing crisis. Rents and mortgages are sky rocketing. Of course, if you are a landlord or a seller of property, this may be in your best economic interest. However, a housing plan that serves only landlords and sellers of property is not in the best interest of New Orleans.

The housing and affordability crisis is a direct result of the city's inability to advance a comprehensive policy to expand the number of quality affordable housing units while at the same time encouraging the development of market based units both for home ownership and rental. This area provides a chance for great economic growth but also requires bold and courageous leadership and the ability to bring together non-profit, public and private agencies in a comprehensive way. Without it, gentrification, disruption and inequitable development will result. Equitable development should be the guiding principle.

3. **Jobs, Poverty, Economic Development and Infrastructure.** The Mayor must be a visible aggressive proponent of the diversification of the New Orleans economy and, the expansion of the manufacturing, health, technology, trade and cultural sectors is paramount.

New Orleans needs jobs and New Orleans needs quality jobs. The challenges of poverty in New Orleans are the challenges of the working poor. There are many New Orleans citizens who work in industries like hospitality who do not earn sufficient wages to make ends meet and have the quality of life that they desire and need. This issue requires a full examination of the hospitality and tourism industry in New Orleans. There must be an effort to enhance and improve wages, working conditions and the plight of those who work in the industry, as well as in other low wage sectors of the City's economy.

The City must vigorously pursue the pro-growth tourism policies that have made New Orleans one of the most favorite destinations anywhere in the world but, must also ensure that the growth benefits all of its citizens.

City Government, and its attached boards, and related agencies need the aggressive bold, visible leadership of the Mayor to continue to invest in the City's infrastructure, from its streets, water systems, parks, playgrounds as well as important transportation major projects. Transformative projects – the Super Dome, the Convention Center, the Canal Street Car Project, Port improvements, the new Louis Armstrong Airport, as well as other public/private partnerships have

always been key accelerators of economic growth. In all areas of revenue growth, the City must continue, and expand its policies for minority, and women business participation.

4. **Children and Youth Development.** As stated above, youth development is essential to public safety. We must recognize that the Mayor does not have a formal role in education.

Instead, the Mayor must focus on what they can influence.

The Mayor approves and sets the tone for the New Orleans Recreation Department Commission, as well as, a robust public budget that supports youth and youth serving programs. There is a great opportunity here. The City needs a comprehensive youth development initiative that covers a range of services including jobs, and recreation.

The goal New Orleans should have, is to build the best municipal recreation department in the country, as well as, the very best youth development programs. To accomplish this, a priority of public funding must be given to youth initiatives and the philanthropic, corporate, and faith community must be energized and mobilized.

5. **Race Relations and Diversity.** When it comes to race relations and diversity, New Orleans is an even more diverse city. It should – embrace this diversity and celebrate this diversity – for this diversity is its strength. A renewed effort is required for more meaningful economic participation, by communities and business owners of color, in the life blood of New Orleans.

On an additional note, now that the Civil War monuments have come down, I say congratulations and hooray! Those monuments were never anything but an effort to celebrate slavery, and as I argued over 25 years ago, they belong in a museum.

I believe that it is a bogus issue to pretend that there should be a referendum or a reconsideration of a 6 to 1 vote that was taken by the New Orleans City Council. It is time to move on.

Now that the monuments have come down, I believe strongly that the community should discuss what replaces those monuments. A public competition could be undertaken, with the leadership of the cultural community, to select appropriate public pieces for these prominent and picturesque locations.

For example, Lee Circle could become Tricentennial Circle, a permanent display to the future of the city on the occasion of its 300<sup>th</sup> Birthday. The debate must

move on to what comes next and to what type of public displays represent the values and the unity – that we are – and – that we need – today.

6. **City Finances.** City finances have been stretched since the 50s for many reasons too numerous to discuss here. My recommendation is for the next Mayor to conduct a comprehensive review of all sources of revenue – sales taxes, real estate taxes, fees, as well as all sources of federal, and state revenue going to all local, public agencies, not just city government. Are they properly allocated in accord with the priorities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Particular attention must be paid to the current allocation of hotel/motel taxes. Should more of these funds be allocated to general government? How about public safety? How about youth development? How about schools? This is a public discussion that is long overdue.
7. **Finally, Leadership.** If you become Mayor of our great city, that intangible quality of leadership is what will make you or break you. I urge you to think and to talk about what leadership qualities you believe a mayor should possess, as well as, what qualities and values are important to the people of the city.

With respect to Mayor Landrieu, I believe that he has done a good job leading and serving the City. He inherited a mess after eight years of failed municipal leadership. Mayor Landrieu is not a perfect public servant but he is a dedicated and passionate public servant. His quest to build a new Louis Armstrong Airport will yield dividends for decades to come. If you are elected, you will begin with a solid foundation.

As we begin the fourth century of our beloved city, the next Mayor must be accountable and accessible to the citizens of New Orleans and have the courage to accept the responsibility and privilege to take the city from where it is today, into its next century. Good luck, and Godspeed.

With warmest regards, I remain

Red beans and ricely yours,



Marc H. Morial

- Mayor of New Orleans (1994-2002)
- State Senator (1992-1994)
- President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2001-2002)
- President and Chief Executive Officer, National Urban League (2003-Present)