

MEDL Inauguration Draft -- TRANSCRIPT

Draft -- 1.7.25

Thank you Jesse -- I couldn't be more proud to take my oath as Mayor alongside you here today.

I want to thank my incredible wife Becca, our kids Taya and Sawyer, my parents, my family and friends for their support here today and every day.

I also want to acknowledge the life of President Jimmy Carter who showed us all what it means to lead with humanity and integrity.

I would like to thank Mayor London Breed for her service to the city of San Francisco.

I also want to welcome Governor Gavin Newsom and First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom, Mayor Willie Brown, Mayor Art Agnos, Mayor Frank Jordan, the incoming Board of Supervisors, and our esteemed elected guests here today.

Finally and most importantly, I want to thank all of you for being here.

Today marks the beginning of a new era of accountability and change at City Hall, one that -- above ALL else -- serves you -- the people of San Francisco.

That begins now.

I entered the Mayor's race not as a politician, but as a dad who couldn't explain to my kids what they were seeing on our streets.

That has never hit me as hard as it did last month at San Francisco General Hospital.

After meeting an extraordinary team of nurses, doctors, social workers, and addiction specialists -- we ended our tour in the NICU.

There I stood in the quiet of a nursery surrounded by babies in critical condition. Some of them recovering from fentanyl exposure.

It was a heartbreaking picture of our city's shortcomings in addressing the crisis on our streets.

But as I listened to the nurses talk about their tiny patients, I began to hear the familiar sound of hope.

The same hope that I've heard on every street corner in every neighborhood across seven square miles.

Make no mistake - hope is alive and well in San Francisco.

The nurses assured me that with the right treatment and care, these babies are incredibly resilient.

They get better.

After seeing an instagram post about my experience in the NICU, one mother commented,

“Three years ago that was my baby and me -- I want everyone in San Francisco to know that recovery IS possible,” she said.

And she's right.

Recovery IS possible, but it needs to be more than a possibility in San Francisco – it must be our mission.

Together, we can ALL get better, do better, and return San Francisco to its rightful place as the greatest city in the world.

San Francisco has long been known for its values of tolerance and inclusion.

But nothing about those values instructs us to allow nearly 8,000 people to experience homelessness in our city.

Widespread drug dealing, public drug use, and constantly seeing people in crisis has robbed us of our sense of decency and security.

Safety isn't just a statistic, it's a feeling you hold when you're walking down the street.

That insecurity is harming families and businesses in the Tenderloin, South of Market, the Mission and beyond.

I refuse to believe that this is who we are.

You voted for accountability and change -- a clear mandate that my administration will work to fulfill every single day.

Lasting change doesn't happen overnight -- it takes time. But if we are consistent, if we have vision, if we aren't afraid to make tough decisions -- San Francisco WILL rise to new heights.

NOW, with the largest budget deficit in the history of our city, we can no longer hide from our fiscal reality.

A problem of this magnitude requires us to make some painful decisions and rethink the way we operate.

We need to stop spending more than we can afford.

We need to prioritize essential services and make the investments that are critical to getting San Francisco up and running again.

And when we come out the other side -- and we will -- we must ensure that EVERY San Franciscan shares in our new prosperity.

From this moment forward, there is a new structure in the Mayor's office.

One that allows for more accountability, and more opportunities for city departments to work together effectively to solve our most pressing problems.

We are assembling a world class administration -- a cross section of people from every sector and point of view. We will fight everyday for San Francisco's future, and a safer, more affordable city for all.

We cannot continue to triage the crises we face.

If we're going to turn this city around, good intentions are not enough.

Strong values are not enough.

We must act with an unapologetic focus on results and create solutions that last far beyond the tenure of this administration.

Starting today, we are treating the fentanyl crisis as the emergency that it is.

As we speak, the San Francisco Police Department and Sheriff's Department are rapidly shifting resources and personnel to bring drug dealers to justice and clean up our streets.

Today, what has been a temporary effort to deal with the increasing drug markets, will be a permanent fixture of this administration.

The fentanyl crisis isn't a 9-5 operation -- it doesn't take breaks -- and neither will we.

That is why I'm introducing a package of Fentanyl State of Emergency Ordinances. This will allow us to further surge resources and bypass the bureaucratic hurdles standing in the way of tackling this crisis.

I look forward to working with the incoming Board of Supervisors for their quick approval.

And to our Supervisors -- I want to thank you for your shared commitment to defeating the scourge of fentanyl and untreated mental illness on our streets.

This authorization will fasttrack a public private partnership to stand up temporary emergency shelter and address the homelessness crisis on our streets.

IT'S time - it is time - to move past the politics of demonizing each other on every single issue.

It's time to redefine how politics works in San Francisco.

When we stand united, we send a clear message to the city and the country that you do not come to San Francisco to deal drugs or do drugs on our streets.

If you do - you WILL be held accountable.

This is truly a new era of cooperation and mutual respect between City Hall, the Board of Supervisors, law enforcement, and the thousands of city employees working on the front lines -- without you we cannot carry out this vision for change.

Which is why you have my guarantee that there will be zero cuts to sworn officers, 911 operators, EMT's, firefighters, and nurses.

Our first responders - they need to know we have their back. We will do everything in our power to fully restaff the police department, sheriff's department, and 911 response team, AND incentivize them to stay.

We must also operate with the understanding that not every issue needs to be solved by someone with a badge and a gun.

We currently have at least nine street teams operated by five different departments. Despite having made a vast investment of resources and personnel, no one - no one thinks the current structure is working.

Our first step in streamlining our crisis response is to mandate that ALL departments coordinate to build and maintain a single public-facing Street Conditions Dashboard.

You can't build strong solutions without good data.

We will also be embedding behavioral health specialists in dedicated first responder units.

Until now, the only options our first responders have had is to take those who are suffering from mental health issues or addiction to the hospital or jail.

I am excited to announce that this spring, we will open the city's first 24/7 police-friendly Drop Off Center.

This will create better pathways to treatment and give police the authority to hold those who refuse help accountable.

As we move people off the streets and into recovery, we will also expand The Journey Home program, providing increased transportation and support for those ready to reunite with loved ones or access care outside of San Francisco.

Another key to producing better outcomes on our streets is to FOCUS our investments in high-performing nonprofit service providers.

This will not only save us money, it will help the city's best nonprofits shine and better serve the needs of our most vulnerable San Franciscans.

More accountability and effective distribution of our resources will clear the path for San Francisco's recovery.

Making our streets safer and cleaner will super-charge the revitalization of our downtown corridor.

I'm excited to share that we will be launching the SFPD Hospitality Zone Task Force. This dedicated police unit will create a more welcoming and safe environment for workers, shoppers, and visitors in the Union Square, Market Street, and Moscone Center areas.

And not just when there's a conference in town -- 365 days a year.

From engaging local artists to once again becoming a destination for world-class events and tourism -- we are building the foundation for a safe urban core that is thriving and inviting to all.

My job is not to demand that the private sector be back in the office everyday. My job is to make you WANT to be downtown again - for work, with your family, and with your friends.

None of this can happen if the hotel industry isn't open for business.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the hotel workers of Local 2 and hotel management -- for coming together to reach an agreement that ended the longest hotel strike in city history.

We got people back to work in time for the holidays, and our hotels are welcoming visitors again — enabling us to attract and host events like the JP Morgan Healthcare Conference next week and the NBA All Star Game in February.

There's no denying it, there is no denying it -- San Francisco is coming back. There's a rising sense of pride and optimism in this city right now that cannot be stopped.

With that momentum, we must proactively plan for the next housing and economic boom.

Within our first 100 days, we will take bold action to enable more housing at ALL income levels - and help new businesses and buildings get their permits more quickly.

To our small businesses, who I know have been suffering.

The era of a new restaurant going through 40 inspections and receiving 50 different answers is over.

That's our promise to you.

We can no longer wait for the right conditions to build, we must do our part to CREATE those conditions.

Better coordination between departments may not sound sexy, but it's going to be a hallmark of this administration.

I'm talking about the kind of coordination that will keep one department from tearing up your street for maintenance, and another from doing it again two weeks later.

We have allowed far too many people to lose faith in government. I know we can restore that faith.

As your mayor, I'm going to take aim at the problems that need solving right here in San Francisco, because that is what you elected me to do.

But I also know that many feel a great sense of fear and loss about the state of our country right now.

I share those concerns.

San Francisco has long been a historic beacon for human rights, and we cannot be complacent.

Attacks on LGBTQ+ rights, hate crimes, and the vilification of immigrant communities are happening across the country - including right here at home.

San Francisco must be a city where every individual feels safe, valued, and empowered.

That means standing firm against discrimination and fighting for the dignity of all communities, no matter what comes our way.

As your mayor, I will always tell you the truth - even when they are hard truths.

The challenges ahead of us are enormous.

But, in the words of Harvey Milk, "You have to give people hope. Hope for a better world, hope for a better tomorrow."

And as I look out on this crowd, I feel that hope.

But -- but -- that feeling on its own is not enough. It must be paired with the courage to act.

Now is a time for action.

This is where our comeback begins.

There are green-shoots everywhere -- but my standard for success is sky-high.

It is the greatest honor of my life to serve as your mayor at this critical moment in our history.

I'm asking you to join me in reclaiming our place as the greatest city in the world -- with a new era of accountability, service, and change.

It's time to roll up our sleeves and get to work, San Francisco.

Thank you.