



**Mayor Stephanie Terry  
Inaugural Address  
Monday, January 1, 2024**

Wow.

Before I begin, I just want to pause...

What a moment.

What a moment...for me, for you, for our city.

There were some who said that we would never get to this moment.

And, years ago, in sadder parts of our city's history, there were even some who worked hard to try to make sure that this moment never happened.

And yet...here we are.

We're here because of the ones who fought back against unwritten rules. They believed it was possible for a woman to serve as Mayor.

And we're here because of the ones who spoke up against centuries of injustice. They knew it was possible for an African American to lead the City of Evansville.

I stand here today as the 35th Mayor of this city because of all of them and it is truly one of the greatest honors of my life. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for believing in me.

Now, I know, it's an extraordinary responsibility...but I'm ready.

And, I know what comes next. I'll get to show others what is possible as I work to change lives and neighborhoods. Being the first, I'll also be held to higher standards...and that's okay.

Because I'm ready. I knew when I made the decision to run it was about something bigger than me. Even on the toughest days, I stayed the course because I knew I was doing what God had placed on my heart to do.

To my family and friends..., where would I even be without all of you? You supported me, lifted me, and guided me at times in my life when I felt overwhelmed, or at a crossroads. Your faith in me, along with your love...it's brought me, it's brought us to now, to today. Marques, Myles, and Denereo thank you for your patience, courage, and love. To my Mom and Dad, who would have thought a little girl from Mulberry Street in the center city of Evansville would be the Mayor? Thank you for raising me to trust God, serve others, and believe that I could accomplish anything my heart desired. I love you all. I know all of my grandparents- Jesse & Rosie Esters, Martha Landours, Jethro Landours, Clark & Bettye Johnson, and George and Connie Clemmons are all rejoicing and smiling down from heaven.

Thank you to the Mayors who came before me.

Mayor Winnecke, Mayor Weinzapfel, Mayor Lloyd, and Mayor Vanderveer. The dedication and care you put into your work is reflected in the city we have today. From the Riverfront to the Ford Center to the I-U Med School Campus. You have left me with a strong foundation and lots to build on. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your service to our great city.

To our new City Council members...I can't wait to start our work together. When I look at all of you and see the breadth and depth of your talent... and the unique skill sets and experiences you bring, I cannot help but have faith in our future. The people are counting on you to represent them with passion and commitment.

You may know, this is a Bosse homecoming for me. It's also a homecoming for two of our city council members...are there any other Bulldogs in this place?

We are just the latest to join the ranks of graduates out here changing the world.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to hold this ceremony here. It means a lot to me to show the future generation what's possible. Thank you to E-V-S-C, Assistant Principal Strieter, the Bosse staff, and our planning committee. And, a special thank you to these amazing young musicians who played music to welcome us all into this space. I suspect I will someday read your names as distinguished alumni of this great school..let's give them a round of applause.

To all the young people in the audience, you can achieve whatever your heart desires if you maintain a positive attitude, work hard, be resilient, and surround yourself with people who will support and uplift you.

It's young people like these musicians, and all those here today who inspired me to run for Mayor.

And, this past year, I met citizens who energized me with their ideas and their visions for our city's future.

I listened.

To me, those inspirations and ideas, that collective vision for what our city could, and should be, is the guiding star for our administration and the roadmap for our work ahead.

You made it clear that each of our neighborhoods has a personality...a history...and a set of qualities that makes it special. And so, we will build on that and ensure all our neighborhoods have a standard of living that starts with being safe and ends with access to beautiful parks.

You told me that our young people are full of passion and promise. So, we must ensure they have access to a high-quality education and the necessary wrap-around support services they need. Through our Mayors Education Roundtable, we will work in partnership with schools, businesses, community organizations, and our faith community to offer opportunities for them to learn, grow, serve, and prosper. And when it's time, we will clear a path for these young people, move over, and let them lead. Ensuring the success of our young people will stay at the forefront of our agenda.

You shared with me that walkable sidewalks, access to public transit, smooth roads, low crime, and clean drinking water make you feel good about our city. And so, we will make sure that those basic city services are not "basic" but exceptional. And we will work to meet those needs while keeping an eye on doing what protects the environment in our area of southern Indiana.

Finally, in private moments, many of you pulled me aside and confessed that at times, the high cost of your utility bills, and your rent, and threats of crime, and the rest of life, sometimes make things challenging. And so, most of all, my administration, a Terry administration, won't forget that and won't forget you.

We will lead with heart.

The transition is over. We move in tomorrow and we get to work. And, thanks to my transition team, we have assembled a bright, talented staff. Together, from this day on, we will govern with transparency, create a culture of creativity, and work toward not just what is achievable, but all that is possible. We have one thousand four hundred and sixty days to make a difference.

And, this week we will announce our plan for the first 100 days of the Terry Administration. When you read it, you'll see that we intend to move forward in a way that makes sense and in a way that will lay a strong foundation for the next four years.

Our 100-day roadmap will include details and key goals, and we intend to hold ourselves accountable for making progress in the areas of public safety and neighborhood revitalization, and in making sure our government works for everyone.

We have high expectations for what we can accomplish and we will bring a sense of urgency to the work.

But as I have said time and time again, it will take everyone if we are to move forward together.

“Team Terry” got me here but now it's “Team Evansville.” We are going to address our city's challenges together and make you meaningful partners in our city's progress. Now is the time for us to put aside division and politics. Now is the time to put aside that saying “that’s how we’ve always done it” and work together for the betterment of all of Evansville. When we do we will ensure that E is for Everyone.

From Bosse Field to the Glenwood Leadership Academy. From the University of Evansville to the Howell Wetlands, we are a caring and collaborative city.

And, there is nothing we can't accomplish, together.

This Mayor,

This City Council is here to serve you!

And, today, I ask you to join me. Join us.

Give of your time, talent, and expertise. Ask tough questions, and bring your best self to the work ahead...to the work that we must do. Because this historic moment gives us a chance we've never had before. A chance to make good on all that we can dream, but only if we are united not just in our hopes and our aspirations, but in our purpose and our actions.

I've been sharing lately that one of the last times I was on this stage, I was a senior in high school. I am proud to say I played Dorothy in the Bosse High School Musical production of “The Wiz.” I remember like it was yesterday ((sing- when I think of home, I think of place)) And, of course, you know, one of the lessons of The Wiz...was.. there's no place like home. I certainly feel that today. I love our city and I promise I will work to make sure everyone feels there's no place like our home here in Evansville, Indiana.

Finally, in thinking about this day, I keep coming back to the idea that a community is a collection of individual stories. Those stories are intertwined, and together, over time, they make up the history of a city.

So, on this day, with gratitude and a profound sense of awe, and responsibility, I humbly offer up my story and more importantly, what my story means and represents, to the history and people of Evansville.

I look forward, with great anticipation, to rejoicing in all of the stories that will follow mine as we begin on this day, in this place, to write a new chapter in our city's history.

Thank you to the people of Evansville. Thank you for the trust and responsibility you have placed in me. I am honored and extremely proud to serve as the 35th Mayor of the City of Evansville! God Bless you all!