



JAMES B. MCCARTHY
SUMMIT COUNTY EXECUTIVE

STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS

MARCH 8, 2006

MARTIN CENTER, THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON

THE AKRON PRESS CLUB



COUNTY OF SUMMIT SEAL
ADOPTED MARCH 9, 1981
GEORGE F. SEIGMAN, DESIGNER

Good afternoon and thank you all for coming today, and thank you to the Press Club for hosting my State of the County address. Special thanks to Nancy and Abe Zaidan and Bob Burford, president of the Press Club. My staff and I have enjoyed many of the speakers over the years that the Press Club has sponsored and I am really looking forward to the next several months.

At my table is a very important gentleman. A part of him is always visible in our county, involved in almost every aspect of county government and has never changed in appearance. This is the man who 25 years ago, designed our County of Summit seal. Mr. George Seigman of Cuyahoga Falls. Last year, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of our charter government so it seems fitting that today we recognize and thank Mr. Seigman for his contribution of a wonderful seal that is now a unique and highly recognizable icon of our charter government.

At this time, I would be honored to present a proclamation to you on behalf of the 543,000 citizens of our County.

Let me first read it to the audience.

Mr. Seigman's wife, Mabel, and son, Jim, and daughter, Bonnie, are also here and we thank you for coming.

Last year, if any of you remember, I took off on the State of Ohio. I ranted about their financial irresponsibility, I yelled about their taking our money and I even suggested we create our own State of Northeastern Ohio. It felt really good, so good that I think I might do it again!

Things in our state have not changed, and it won't change until we elect, not just new leadership, but **LEADERSHIP**. The folks in Columbus are still cutting our funding, leaving the most vulnerable of our society with even less and adding the burden on our local governments. Indigent defense is stripping our General Funds dollars and our local

citizens have to face increasing school levies because the state legislature refuses to follow the law and adequately fund our children's education. Property tax is a failed answer to school funding. We pit neighbor-against-neighbor during levy campaigns, and what must the children think of adults when a levy fails? It is like saying we don't care about you. What a terrible message we send to our children.

Ken Blackwell, a candidate for Governor, is pushing for a constitutional amendment that would limit the amount of tax dollars any government entity could spend. Every responsible public official and businessperson I talk to know it is a disaster in the making. It will take local control of budgets from your elected mayors, township trustees, and school board members and give that authority to an arbitrary mathematical formula. It will override protections local government has in our State Constitution. If you believe that your elected local government officials should be able to make budgetary decisions based on what is good for the future of your community you should familiarize yourselves to the dangers of this amendment and convince your friends and neighbors to vote no on the TEL amendment.

The language Mr. Blackwell and his highly paid consultants will use will either scare our citizens or confuse them. We need to talk to people, explain what TEL will really do and educate them to the pitfalls of this amendment. If TEL passes in November, it will destroy our state, local communities and our educational institutions. If you do one thing this year, educate yourself on the TEL constitutional amendment and then educate everyone you come in contact with so that we can defeat TEL in November. It will hurt us all.

For the past three years, I have fought, begged and probably ticked off quite a few people while maintaining fiscal stability in our county. I was forced to do so because of our state government. I am not apologizing for doing all I had to do to hold down the cost of government, in fact, I am very proud. I am proud of each County elected official who worked with me on maintaining their budgets. I am proud of our Criminal Justice Advisory Board who worked diligently to bring down indigent defense and jail

overcrowding. Oh, there were some who probably thought I was crying wolf, but because of our conservative financial approach over the past year, just this month, Moody's investors service affirmed our double A two rating. Moody's writes in their report, "This double A two rating affirmation and assignment of this stable outlook reflects the County's strong financial operations supported by ample reserves and average debt burden." Compared to our State of Ohio, the County of Summit is in very good financial shape. So, I will continue to fight for a fiscally responsible county and know that even with the state's finances and policies in shambles, we are stable.

Like I said, state policies are still the same, but come November we will have a choice to change the way our State does business. It looks like that choice will be clear, but you all need to vote, and remember to vote for positive change not a continuation of the same old failed policies. Looking back, being called a wolf is nothing compared to what I have heard people call Bob Taft!

This May, there will be a quarter percent sales tax on the ballot to fund law enforcement and economic development. The sheriff, local law and safety forces have joined in partnership and designed a plan to provide a safer county for our citizens. The mayors, township trustees and community leaders will share in this funding and implement a plan for economic development. If this sales tax passes, the County of Summit will receive approximately \$1.9 million annually for economic development. I am proposing using approximately half of that funding for the arts. I strongly believe, as do the experts, that a community's quality of life goes hand in hand with economical development.

For years, the county has funded and partnered with the Ohio Erie Canal Coalition, Civic Theatre, Metro Parks, The Greater Akron Chamber, Urban League and many more agencies to enhance that quality of life. It is time to provide stable funding for the arts and if this sales tax is successful, I propose to do just that. It is essential to create a healthy and thriving arts and cultural environment for both employers and employees. Businesses look at a community for what that area provides for their employees, because a happy employee is a productive employee. Art venues also produce revenue for the

community. When families attend an arts event, they also go out to eat, they shop, and they spend money. More importantly, you just can't put a dollar value on parents taking their kids to art classes at Summit Art Space. What if we get just one Picasso, how do you place a value on that?

Economic development experts look at circulating dollars and bringing new dollars into communities. Arts and cultural activities do both and studies have shown that these activities are highly successful at bringing in new money. As reported in the Beacon Journal, the Greater Cleveland Partnership hired a firm to rank the quality of life factors that keep CEOs and senior administrators in the region. The list included schools, fire and police safety, parks, sports and arts and culture. Two hundred and fifty CEOs and their staff ranked the list and arts and culture was on the top.

We can't survive and grow without the arts as an integral part of our county's economic development plan. Economic development has always been a top priority in my administration. That is why I created the Summit Business Partnership in 2002. Last year alone, 22 Summit County communities participated in this partnership and 300 companies met with my Department of Community and Economic Development. These 300 companies represent a total employment of just under 15,000 employees. Sixty-five of these companies have expansion plans in the next 12 to 18 months. New jobs equal new revenue, which equals a better life in Summit County.

The eight Enterprise Zone Agreements that were passed in 2005 represent new investments of \$34 million with a corporate payroll of nearly \$18 million. These companies will not only retain the nearly 1,000 jobs currently, they will create 200 more jobs in our County.

Using the first Enterprise Zone Agreement of 2006 as an economic development tool, local, county and state governments worked closely together to attract a multi-national corporation from Europe to our community. Technoform, a German company that manufactures plastic intercept spacers for insulated glass manufacturers, will be locating

its first North American manufacturing facility in Twinsburg Township. This \$4 million investment in our community will create thirty good paying jobs. This is just one company. It is my belief that Technoform's success will be a model for other multi-national corporations to seriously consider Summit County for expansion and relocation opportunities.

Finding employees with the proper skill sets is important for new and expanding companies. Since 2001, my administration has actively been developing a One Stop facility that provides services to meet the needs of employers and job seekers. The One Stop currently has 15 workforce partnering agencies working together to meet these needs, with more partners expressing interest in joining this effort. Services for employers and jobseekers include: job posting, applicant screening and matching, assessment and testing, labor market information, business resources, individualized job placement assistance, workshops on a variety of topics, and much more.

During last year, 2,500 people attended orientation for One Stop services. Over 1,500 people attended workshops, and 5,500 visits were made to the resource room for job seeking assistance and information. Through the One Stop, over 1800 job placements were made. All employer and jobseeker services are provided free of any charge through this Summit County initiative. Due to growth of the One Stop services, we are anxiously anticipating the grand opening of a new and larger One Stop facility for Summit County citizens. It will be located on Tallmadge Avenue, and will be called The Job Center. This is a collaborative effort of the Workforce Investment Board, many community agencies and my Department of Job and Family Services.

Just two days ago, I received an email from Scott Meyer, chairman of our WIA Board, expressing his deep concern and fear regarding President Bush's budget request, which would cut workforce programs by \$680 million. If these cuts take place, we will have seen cuts of over \$2 billion since 2001, despite having one million more unemployed workers than we had in 2001. The President's proposal would also eliminate services to at-risk youth and put our JOB CENTER at risk.

Many of us in this room desperately need you to write a letter or email requesting full funding of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs and eliminating the proposed cuts for workforce programs in Function 500 in the Budget Resolution. If we don't talk, we are not heard. So on your way out, my staff will be at the door with a list of your Congressmen and Senators, along with their contact information and a sample letter. If you all do this one deed, we may be able to save a job or a young person in our county. I hope you will agree that is worth a 39¢ stamp!

Eliminating duplication of services through regional collaboration is smart, efficient and what we now do in Summit County! Soon after becoming County Executive it became clear to me that Summit County must take a comprehensive look at the health and human services in our community. My vision was to build collaboration between the various systems and organizations that provide services; and, at the same time assure that the needs of our most vulnerable citizens are addressed consistently, professionally, and in a financially efficient manner.

In 2002, I authorized the Social Services Advisory Board to tackle this complex issue. Now called Summit 2010: A Quality of Life Project, this initiative identified community needs and established 10 goals and 20 priority indicators to be accomplished by the year 2010, a short four years from now. We have already been successful in achieving major movement in most of our goals.

Let me share with you just a few of our accomplishments to date:

- An Income, Education & Workforce Development collaborative was created. This group developed a draft curriculum to address the need for soft skills in the workplace that were identified by Summit County employers, such as: punctuality, work ethics, basic computer skills and financial literacy. The collaborative will offer the training to youth, others who are unemployed and to employers who want to help their employees understand and develop the skills necessary to retain or improve their jobs.

- A health care collaborative called Access to Care began serving clients a little more than a year ago. This project, an outcome of the Healthy Connections Network, established a system of linkages to primary and specialty health care services for the uninsured. To date, seven hundred and forty-two clients have enrolled with a primary care physician and one thousand fifty-seven have been referred to outside resources. Furthermore, the Access to Care program has obtained over \$200,000 worth of donated medications for our citizens who are program participants.
- A system to increase coordination and communication between the courts and public social service systems has been initiated. The Court and Social Services Committee are finalizing a comprehensive list of resources that will assist with timely intervention and referral of court clients to needed social services. In addition, various groups have come together to assist ex-offenders in re-entering the community and becoming productive, tax-paying citizens.

Juvenile Court Judge Linda Teodosio, using collaboration with our County social service agencies, hospitals and law enforcement created the Crossroads program, which has received national recognition. This program deals with youth in the courts that have an affective mental health disorder and co-occurring substance abuse disorder. The program quickly became a nationwide model, not only for the treatment of mentally ill youth involved in the juvenile justice system, but a model of how community collaboration can result in innovative programming. Judge Teodosio and Summit County can be proud of its status as a leader and innovator in intervention for mentally ill and substance abusing youth in the juvenile justice system.

- A Partnership for Success coordinating body to improve youth services in the county has been launched. This group-reviewed evidence based truancy/school attendance program has identified a currently successful program, Community Health Centers’

Project Thrive, as the best program to be implemented in the schools with truancy problems.

Sheriff Drew Alexander has worked hard and smart by providing intervention between the juvenile court system and law enforcement with diversion programs. Sheriff Alexander's office runs a Juvenile Diversion Unit that works with juvenile offenders from the City of Green, Coventry Township, the Village of New Franklin and Twinsburg Township. The program utilizes community service to help make juveniles accountable for their offenses. Over the past three years, 300 juveniles, between 10 and 17 years old, have participated in the Sheriff's juvenile diversion unit.

Youth Diversion Programs save valuable taxpayer dollars by reducing caseloads in our courts, eliminating administrative costs and additional personnel. However, the most important value of these programs is to divert our young people from returning to our courts and jails by reducing juvenile violence.

- At the grassroots level, three pilot neighborhoods, East Barberton, Buchtel and Lakemore, have compiled and distributed community resource guides so that local citizens have information about services that are available where they live. In addition, the Lakemore/Springfield Neighborhood Group is working with the Akron-Summit County Public Library to provide expanded library services and collaborating with Metro RTA to improve bus routes for seniors and others in need of public transportation.

Due to the large amount of partners who are participating in the 2010 plan, our social service agencies are developing communication protocols that will enable them to share data.

Summit 2010: A Quality of Life Project is also receiving national recognition. The project was selected from a large number of proposals to be presented at the annual

conference for the National Forum for Black Public Administrators in Fort Worth, Texas this April.

Summit County has done what no other County in Ohio has done before: set a comprehensive plan in place to measurably improve the quality of life in the county during the next four years and beyond. With the collaborative effort of many organizations and people represented in this room today, we will make it happen. In today's economy, regional partnerships and pooling resources to provide services to our citizens will guarantee us financial survival.

Regionalism is successful in many areas of our county government with emergency management and law enforcement leading the way. On September 11, 2001, we all witnessed firsthand the need for successful cooperation of communities working as one through mutual aid. My administration took the lead in establishing the Major Emergency Regional Communications Network, known as MERC.

The MERC network is a matrix of radio channels operating on the Summit County Regional Communications 800MHz radio system designed to provide regionalized communications and inter-operability during multi-jurisdictional large scale and disaster events. It is available to any Summit County political jurisdiction that has 800MHz radios. Presently these channels are on more than 4,000 radios in Summit County and provide reliable communications throughout its geographic boundaries. These channels can be used for major emergencies, disasters, natural or technical, that overwhelm local resources. It is also used by Summit County's various regional response teams like S.W.A.T, Haz-Mat and Technical Rescue Operations.

Communications is the most important tool in an emergency situation. After the major black out in 2003, Mayor Don Plusquellic approached me and asked if the County would partner with the city in creating an emergency telephone notification system. This year, we activated our county's Reverse Alert. Reverse Alert is a regionalized telephone notification system that is administered by my Department of Public Safety. It is another

component of our county EMA Emergency Warning and Notification System. This reverse telephone emergency notification system is operational for all communities and can be used for boil alerts, amber alerts, evacuations to name just a few. Reverse Alert can be activated on request by each individual community, or by the county for multi-jurisdictional notification. Homeland Security dollars funded the equipment and software needed for this regional program. However, none of these programs would exist today if it weren't for a lot of hard work, dedication and cooperation of many private and public employees. Putting together regional programming is very difficult and time consuming and you must have cooperation and trust from a large group of individuals.

One of our most successful outcomes we witnessed through collaborations last year was reducing indigent defense costs. With the growing demand of heavier criminal caseloads and flat budgets, in 2005, our criminal justice system was faced with the challenge of seeking alternatives in order to stabilize the soaring costs of our criminal justice system. Last year at this time, I stood before you with an out of control budget for indigent defense. From 2003 to 2004, we experienced an over 16 percent increase in indigent defense costs. This year, I am proud to say that we have worked together in substantially stabilizing these costs. Also in 2005, my Public Safety Division embarked upon a system re-engineering project to reduce the Summit County jail overcrowding without compromising public safety or the integrity of the justice system. Prior to the project, our average daily population at the county jail was 727, which is 56 inmates over capacity of 671. I am very proud to announce that we are presently operating close-to, and even sometimes under, capacity.

These successes have been accomplished through the dedicated hard work of the justice stakeholders in Summit County, such as my Public Safety Division, Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh, the Common Pleas & Municipal Court Judges, Sheriff Drew Alexander, Clerk of Courts Diana Zaleski, and our community corrections providers. It is undisputed, that there will be significant short and long term cost savings for Summit County taxpayers due to this collaboration and intense work.

These cost savings can be examined in two primary ways. They are Actual Cost Savings and Construction/Operation Cost Avoidance. The Actual Cost savings is directly attributed to expenses associated with meals, supplies and utilities. A reduction of 56 inmates equates to an annual actual cost savings of over \$200,000. These savings are a result of the system re-engineering project through efficiencies made without any additional human or financial resources. If Summit County opted to construct and staff an additional 56 beds in order to accommodate the inmates that would be present in the jail if not for this project it would require a one time construction cost of \$1.7 million to \$2.2 million with an operating expense of nearly a half-million dollars annually.

The Criminal Justice Advisory Board deserves recognition and praise for the work they have done and the cooperation of all agencies, offices and individuals. Thank you very much for a job well done and for your continued service to our citizens.

Our charter government has been a unique and valuable tool in creating cost cutting programs and partnerships. However, our charter needs to grow and change in order to secure an even better government for our citizens. Like all charter governments, it is important to have an independent commission periodically review our charter and make recommendations for change. Under our charter, nine citizens, no more than five of which can be from the same political party, are appointed to do this important job. The last commission met in 2003, and in 2004, after months of study, investigation, interviews and public hearings, they recommended ten changes to the charter.

Unfortunately, under the language of our charter, County Council alone gets to decide which, if any of the Charter Commission's proposed amendments, actually make it to the ballot.

In 2004, our County Council chose to ignore each recommendation made by this citizen's panel. Council is the gatekeeper and frankly, they have locked the gates to recommendations that come from the people of this county. For that reason, I am asking our community to support an initiative that will require County Council to submit all

amendments proposed by the Charter Review Commission to the voters. The charter belongs to the people of this county, not just to County Council.

Over the next several months, I believe we can gather enough signatures on petitions to place this charter amendment on the November ballot. It is time to give the Charter Review Commission the power to go directly to the people so that they may decide the future of their government. I trust their decision and I trust their voices. I hope you will all join me in this initiative which will give our citizens the right to vote on important issues that will directly affect their future and the quality of life in our county.

A healthy community is an important ingredient to our quality of life. Health care costs are sometimes just too high for our citizens. I asked my Department of Insurance if there was anything we could do to provide extra savings on prescription drugs for our citizens. After two years of research, thinking outside the box and some partnering, I am announcing two new prescription programs for our citizens.

The first program is designed for our Veterans. This program, VeteransMED, is a new partnership between the County of Summit Veteran Services Commission and the Executive's office. Currently, Veteran Services provides eligible Vets with a voucher to obtain prescription drugs. The Vet takes this voucher along with his prescription to a local pharmacy to have it filled and Veterans Services is then subsequently billed by the pharmacy for the entire retail cost of the drug.

My administration will offer our negotiated rate for prescription drugs to Veterans Services through our contract with CareMark. We estimate the savings to be over 23 percent on an average prescription. These savings will benefit Veteran Services and give them additional dollars for direct Veteran services.

Currently a veteran may need to come to Veteran Services several times to obtain several vouchers for prescriptions. We will enhance their program by setting up a VeteransMED ID card to allow for 30 or 90 days worth of the medication, thus saving the Vet several

trips to Veteran Services and saving administrative time issuing the vouchers. We will also enhance the VeteransMED card by setting up monthly supply limits by drug category, or by setting up eligibility time limits, so that we can avoid abuse of this new card.

These cost savings will provide the additional funding needed to increase the number of Veterans that can be served by the program and/or increase the amount of prescription drugs available to the Veterans. One hundred percent of the cost savings will go directly to aid our Veterans, while making it easier for our Vets and their families to obtain the medicines they need. I have met with George Baker, director of Veterans Services and Jack Ryan, board president. We all agree that this partnership will not only enhance services to our Veterans, but add needed funding to direct services.

The second program I am announcing today is ExecutiveMED. ExecutiveMED is a prescription drug card that can provide savings on all drugs and is available for everyone. Young, old, families and singles, with health care coverage and without health care coverage. If you already have a prescription drug card, you can use either ExecutiveMED or your own card, whichever is most cost effective and it covers all drugs so if your current drug card does not cover a drug you need, you will have ExecutiveMED to help with cost savings. For those citizens who do not have a prescription card, this card can save them an average of 20 percent of the cost of their drugs.

To get an ExecutiveMED card, you will just need to pick one up at locations to be announced, or request one from my office. No personal information is required so it is fast and easy. Cards will be available beginning May 1st. I am hoping the press will partner with us in notifying citizens on how, when and where they can get their new ExecutiveMED card.

Both of these programs are an extension of our own prescription drug program with CAREMARK and we acknowledge their support and cooperation in providing the assistance needed for these programs.

I want to commend my Department of Insurance, who has over the past three years saved the County over \$3 million by reducing our health care cost without cutting benefits and for their innovative approach to provide quality health care benefits. In today's rising cost of medical care, this is quite an achievement. I know that each day, someone stops me and praises the department and its staff for all the work they do.

Quality staff is essential to any organization and my Department of Finance and Budget won a national award of achievement this year from the Government Financial Officers of America. While my Department of Communications won six national awards for design, special projects and outreach. The National Association of Counties awarded our 9/11 Remembrance Project, its Arts and Historic Preservation Achievement Award. I believe last year's 9/11 project is by far the most beautiful of all the remembrance projects.

Individual Peace, a mosaic, assembled by over 300 citizens and employees, stands three feet tall and is a triangular sculpture of red, white and blue glass, china and ceramic pieces. As we do each year, we print a poster celebrating the finished art piece. We have an Individual Peace poster for each of you when you leave and from the poster you can create your own model of the sculpture that looks like the ones you see on your tables.

And I won an award! Now, most of you know that I am a true believer of working together in a bi-partisan manner for the greater good. I can now always look at this award to remind me of that belief! The Summit County Board of MRDD nominated Cuyahoga Falls Mayor Don Robart and me, together, for an Ohio Public Images Award because of our bi-partisan support for the recent levy campaign and for our advocacy for people with disabilities. This award recognizes elected officials and/or community leaders who consistently champion causes for people with developmental disabilities.

I was honored to stand with Mayor Robart during the recent levy campaign to assist this fine organization and greatly appreciate this award.

The hardest part about giving this annual address is that I want to tell you about everything and in detail, such as:

- The innovative gasoline octane measuring program of our Fiscal Officer John Donofrio;
- The partnership with Lockheed Martin that will provide jobs to our area;
- The grants we provide to the Ohio Erie Canal Coalition and their great work;
- The Port Authority and its many successes;
- The park land that is ready to be transferred to Metro Parks;
- The continued success of the Akron Canton Airport; and
- Our new and highly successful Consumers Affairs Office.

I really could go on-and-on and talk about the great work that the more than 3,000 County of Summit employees perform every day for us.

But for the sake of time, let me just say that I am very proud to be your County Executive, I love my job. I am very hopeful that we will continue to build new partnerships, tackle tough issues and implement new programs that will enhance the future of the citizens of this great County of Summit.

Thank you.



George Francis Seigman

The originator of the County of Summit seal, George Francis Seigman, was born on June 29, 1921 in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1925, Seigman's father relocated his family to the City of Akron after being hired as an accountant at Firestone Rubber Company.

George Seigman, a proud graduate of Akron North High School's Class of 1939, studied art and history at Kent State University and earned a Bachelor's degree in 1943. Upon graduation, Seigman married his sweetheart, Mable Guenther, and five days later was called by the United States Navy to serve in World War II.

After returning home from war in 1946, Seigman began his career as a history teacher with the Akron Public School System. It was this occupation that allowed him to support his wife and 11 children.

Following his retirement in 1978, George began to revive his artistic talents. After years of creating artwork in the privacy of his own home, Seigman timidly entered a public contest to design the County of Summit seal; a competition conceived by the first County Executive John Morgan and a committee of civic leaders.

On March 9, 1981, County Council adopted George Francis Seigman's design as the official seal of the County of Summit and awarded him with two \$50.00 savings bonds in honor of his achievement.

The adopted seal depicts the following four important eras in county history:

- The factory and manufacturing industry that bolstered the county's economy in the late 1800s and throughout most of the 20th Century.
- The land area that was to become Summit County was the western-most point of an area known as the Western Reserve. The Western Reserve originated in Connecticut and stretched into Ohio. It was mostly a wilderness area and home to many Native American tribes.
- Summit County was a major stop along the Ohio and Erie Canals. In fact, some of the locks along the canal route were preserved and can be seen today. The name "Summit" is the result of the county being one of the highest points along the canal route.

- Before Summit County became a thriving manufacturing center, many of the people who lived here made their living by farming. Summit County was an attractive place to farm because of the fertile soil and the abundance of fresh water sources.

Seigman's seal also features the County of Summit's founding date, as well as ten stars that represent the county's 1981 ranking as having the 5th largest population and the 5th largest income level in the State of Ohio.

George Seigman, a resident of the City of Cuyahoga Falls, continues to take pleasure in creating artwork and spending time with his wife, 10 living children, 23 grandchildren, and 10 great grandchildren.

- END -