



STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS

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COUNTY OF SUMMIT
THE HIGH POINT OF OHIO
RUSSELL M. PRY, EXECUTIVE



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Thank you, Bruce, for that kind introduction and thank you, Akron Press Club, for hosting my 4th State of the County. And thank you all for coming today, and a special thank you to Jenn Mangano, our interpreter today. This is my second State of County at the John S. Knight Center, and I want to thank Susan Hamo and the entire staff for this wonderful setting and especially the great food.

In each of the past two years, I've devoted a considerable portion of my State of the County speeches discussing the economy and our efforts to significantly reduce County spending. I am proud to say that 2010 really bore the fruits of those efforts. From 2008 to 2010, the County reduced its general fund spending by \$18 million from \$121 million to \$103 million.

In total, the 2011 budget that I submitted to County Council in November was \$53 million less than the countywide budget for 2008. These reductions are the result of a significant amount of early planning and could not have happened without the cooperation of a variety of stakeholders. Over the past two years, a lot of people in county government have had to make sacrifices and tough choices. We, in county government, just like our citizens, have to live within our means. This can prove to be especially difficult when our citizens expect and deserve the same high level of services that they have grown accustomed to.

I would like to personally thank County Council, our elected officeholders, our bargaining units, and our employees for all of their help and cooperation in dealing with the impact of the economy. I think the cooperation that exists in Summit County government is pretty special and I am extremely proud of the professionalism of the people who make it work.

2010's general fund expenditures of \$103 million were the lowest spending level the County has recorded since 2003. I'm not sure most people realize just how leanly and efficiently we operate county government here in Summit County. Our County sales tax rate of 1/2% is lower than the county sales tax rates in 85 of Ohio's 88 counties. Lake County also has a 1/2% sales tax and only one county, Stark, has a county sales tax rate lower than we do. In comparison to Montgomery and Lucas Counties (two comparable counties that are slightly smaller than Summit), our \$103 million in spending last year was roughly 25% less than their 2010 budgets of \$141 million and \$132 million, respectively. On a per capita basis, the 2010 general fund budgets of the other five large counties (Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Montgomery, and Lucas) averaged over \$260 per citizen. In Summit County, our per capita general fund spending for 2010 was \$190 per citizen.

I mention these comparisons to illustrate just how fiscally responsible and proactive we've been in managing our finances over the past two years. Last spring, I and members of my staff paid a visit to two prominent bond rating agencies (Moody's and Standard & Poor's) as part of our efforts to secure financing for many of the capital projects we have undertaken over the past few years. I think you can understand the uncertainty we felt heading into those meetings. While we were well prepared and felt we had a good story to tell, we couldn't ignore the fact that the credit rating agencies have not looked favorably upon the Midwest and Northeast Ohio in recent years. Not to mention the fact we were right in the middle of the worst recession since the Great Depression. I am proud to say that we not only left those meetings with an affirmation of our AA bond rating, but also saw our financial management practices rating from Standard & Poor's revised from "good" to "strong." Moody's also cited "strong managerial oversight" in describing the county's financial operations. In addition, when Moody's released its new global rating scale in late April, we saw our bond rating of Aa2 under the municipal scale increase to Aa1.

The two linchpins in securing these ratings were really the economic development efforts we've undertaken and the five year financial plan that we presented. This is a plan that

we have followed since the beginning of this economic crisis and have continually updated to reflect our changing economy. This is a plan that seeks to minimize reductions in services yet maintains sufficient fund reserves over the long term to ensure we can meet the needs of the County for years to come.

I know the issue of using reserve funds to balance the budget has been a topic of conversation for many people in the County. Some folks feel we should spend down more of our reserves and other folks feel we should spend less, and in some cases none at all. The reserves are there for times such as we have seen over the past few years and we have judiciously used them as we've made the corrections necessary to live within our means. We are continuing to follow the plan that the bond rating agencies have affirmed and I'm pleased to say we are currently ahead of the projections we presented to them last April.

Throughout 2010, Summit County's economy began to improve in many areas, picking up considerable steam as the year went on. Consumer spending improved as the year progressed, with sales tax collections for the year up 4% versus 2009. In addition, revenues from property conveyance taxes, building permits, sewer tap in fees and local government disbursements from the State of Ohio improved over the course of 2010. All of these revenue sources are considered to be good economic indicators. I'm proud to say that 2010's economic growth, coupled with the reduction in expenditures, allowed the County to operate with a \$1.1 million surplus in its general fund for 2010. This means, we did not use any reserves, but rather added money back to our fund balance and, as I mentioned previously, finished the year ahead of the projections we provided to the bond rating agencies.

Despite all of this improvement, I would be remiss if I did not mention that our revenue sources still remain significantly below where they were just a few years ago. Sales taxes that improved to \$34.4 million last year were as high as \$36.8 million in 2008. Property conveyance taxes that improved to just over \$4.8 million last year were nearly \$10.5

million in 2005 and investment earnings that totaled \$4.4 million last year were \$11.9 million in 2007. It will still be many years before we return to these levels.

In addition, we still have our fair share of economic challenges looming on the horizon. While the economy in Summit County continues to improve, there are still areas of concern that hinder economic growth and may have a negative impact on Summit County's revenue estimates for 2011. Despite recent drops in unemployment, requests for cash assistance, food stamps, and Medicaid at the Summit County Department of Job and Family Services remain at all time highs. The number of citizens receiving assistance from these programs is up 40% in some areas since the beginning of 2009. In addition, the County may see significant reductions in state funding over the state's next biennial budget covering July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2013. This will affect the County General Fund, Department of Job and Family Services, Child Support Enforcement Agency, Children Services, the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health (ADM) Board, and the Board of Developmental Disabilities (DD).

The impact of these potential funding cuts remains uncertain at this time. In addition, the County Fiscal Office is working on its tri-annual property re-appraisal. The outcome of that exercise may have a negative impact on County revenues in coming years as well.

While we certainly have met the economic challenges presented to us to date, there appear to be many more yet to come and we will continue to work proactively and collaboratively on these as well. Over the past year, I have established two working groups to help meet these future challenges. The first group is an internal working group with which I meet on the first Wednesday of each month for a monthly financial review and forecast update. This group is made up of representatives from the Executive and Fiscal offices and looks at not just actual monthly and year to date results but also reviews local, state and national economic indicators. It is the expertise of this group that helps shape the one and five year forecasts that guide our near term decision making process. The analysis of this group is part of the update that is provided to County

Council each month. It is this kind of effort that has afforded us the ability to react quickly and decisively to an ever changing economic climate.

In an effort to find creative ways to help address many of the current and long term economic issues facing county government I, along with Councilwoman Ilene Shapiro, co-sponsored legislation in 2010 that created the Financial Sustainability Task Force. This task force draws upon the talents of many of our local business and civic leaders in an effort to capture not just creative new ideas, but to incorporate efforts currently being implemented in the private sector to both streamline operations and improve the bottom line. It is anticipated that the work of the Financial Sustainability Task Force will culminate in a comprehensive set of recommendations that will provide financial sustainability in both the near and long term and will further serve as a planning model for the efficient long term operation of Summit County Government.

Despite the difficult economic times we have faced over the past several years, I am proud my administration has been able to celebrate many successes in 2010.

On August 24, 2010, we opened our new Summit County Animal Control Facility in Akron. The new \$2.9 million state of the art, high performance, LEED certified, green facility is equipped with administrative offices, an adoption zone, an intake area, outdoor visiting space, quarantine quarters and a veterinary clinic.

On moving day, our county Emergency Management Agency, County Animal Rescue Evacuation (C.A.R.E.), which serves Summit, Lorain and Medina Counties and local rescue groups gently and safely transported over 50 dogs and 60 cats into the new facility using the experience as an evacuation drill.

Animal Control has celebrated many successes over the past year. In July, we held our first Adopt-a-thon with local rescue groups and before the day had ended, over 200 pets had found new families. Our partnership with PetSmart Charities has provided us with many opportunities. They awarded our Division of Animal Control a \$15,000 grant to

purchase veterinarian equipment and this year Rescue Waggin transported our 200th dog safely to a new home in another state. And finally, last year we celebrated the highest adoption rate in a decade.

One success that did not seem to be affected by the economy is my monthly Change for Change events. When I first became Executive, I wanted to host a monthly networking event to have fun and get to know the folks I work with, not just my office, but staff from local organizations and agencies. With the generous help of Rockne's owners, Chris and Sandy Hamad and their children, who donate tips they receive that night, our monthly Change for Change has contributed over \$34,000 to date for local charities. Please stop by Rockne's on Merriman Road the last Tuesday of each month and enjoy some networking and fun. Thirty-six non-profits have benefitted from your generosity and that of the Hamad family – thank you.

At the beginning of any new partnership, you never know what might happen; that is the exciting part. When everyone at the table is open minded, passionate about the subject and ready to make changes, the sky is the limit. That appears to be the case with Summit on Children and all the wonderful opportunities that have come out of that one partnership.

Three major initiatives came out of attending the Summit on Children.

Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio developed alternatives to juvenile incarceration that reduced the number of offenders we send to the Ohio Department of Youth Services by 70%

John Saros, Executive Director of Children Services created a partnership with AMHA to assist children who aged out of the system with housing opportunities.

The Family and Children First Council joined me in the establishment of First Things First, an early childhood care and education system enhancement plan that strives to address system gaps and to identify improvements needed so that our children have the

greatest opportunity for positive physical and mental health, early learning and developmental outcomes and access to needed support for families. Over 40 agencies have worked together over the past two years and continue to meet, strategize, create programs that stop duplication of services, and work toward the final goal of broadening the efforts that currently exist by expanding our scope and extending their focus to a comprehensive early childhood plan.

Our families and children will have the best we can offer through this coordination of services. Currently, First Things First is in the third phase of the program.

Tonya Block has led this charge and we greatly appreciate the funding provided by the Summit County Health District, the GAR Foundation and the Akron Community Foundation.

We have recently brought on a new full-time Project Coordinator, Courtney Hudson. Courtney will oversee the implementation of the First Things First plan by working with each of the lead agencies. My sincere thank you to all of the stakeholders involved in this program.

Each of these three programs filled a void in programming for children in our community. Having recognized the need, developing a program and then working together to create a solution is the very best of what a partnership does.

As I said earlier, when you begin a partnership you never know what new programming may come out of the discussions. During one Summit on Children task force meeting, Judge Teodosio, John Saros and I starting talking about the possibility of a kids expo - a day long event that would provide information and resources for our children and their families.

Summit for Kids was successful beyond my wildest imagination with over 8,000 people participating in this one day event. When Judge Teodosio, John Saros and I talked about

creating this event, I knew we were passionate about providing certain needs for our children and making a real difference in their lives...but I was blown away when I saw a community join in with the same passion.

Businesses, non-profit groups, governments, media outlets, volunteer groups and many of our combined staffs worked toward one goal and did it with a passion. I could never name everyone who helped make Summit for Kids an amazing day, but I know that Judge Teodosio and John Saros join me in wanting to tell each of you that we know you were there, you worked extremely hard in a very short time and that we appreciate every single thing you did. Please, if you contributed to this successful kids event, by sponsorship, by volunteering, by making calls, arranging entertainment, providing give-aways, assisting with any aspect of Summit for Kids, stand up right now and take a bow...Thank you all very much. Of all the partnerships and all the collaborations, this event showed our community that Summit County knows the value of working together for the common good.

This year's Summit for Kids expo is August 20th and we invite each of you to participate in this event and thank you for continuing to provide our children with the best possible tools for a bright future.

Summit 2010, a quality of life project is the creation of the County's first Comprehensive Health and Social Services Plan and continues to move forward each year. Four neighborhoods now have a pilot project that delivers a variety of services to children and families. The 2010 project is also engaged in larger community planning efforts and has launched the Bridges Out of Poverty program, an anti-poverty effort, funded and supported by a coalition of government agencies and philanthropic funders. Summit 2010 has redefined our safety net through programs such as Access to Care, which has delivered health services to more than 3,200 of our citizens without health insurance. Summit 2010 will continue to sample areas in our county to better determine areas of need and then develop community resource guides to assist our citizens with a variety of

topics. Summit 2010 will also continue to track our progress and develop strategies that will improve the quality of life for all Summit County citizens.

In 2009, we merged the Akron Building Department with the Summit County Building Department and last year, my administration worked with the Mayors of Silver Lake and Cuyahoga Falls and their staffs to merge the Cuyahoga Falls Building Department into the Summit County Building Department. Over the past two years, we have saved a significant amount of tax dollars and created a more enhanced one-stop process for our citizens and area contractors. I want to thank Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic, Cuyahoga Falls Mayor Don Robart and Silver Lake Mayor Bernie Hovey for joining me and creating this efficient, cost saving, user friendly process for the people of Summit County. And today, I am happy to announce that the County is currently working with Mayor Kline and his staff in the City of Tallmadge to consolidate the Tallmadge Building Department later this Spring.

If you remember, during my 2010 State of the County, I asked each of you to find a partner, to build a collaboration, to join together to survive our unfortunate economy. And you did.

One of our biggest successes was a newly formed collaboration. Three Health Departments became one under the Summit County Health District.

As of January 1 of this year, the Akron Health Department, the Barberton Health District and the Summit County Health District joined together and became one health district, pursuing new opportunities to improve and expand public health services to our citizens, saving valuable tax dollars and providing advantages to grant and programming applications.

I believe we, in Summit County, have been extremely fortunate to have created so many opportunities through partnerships. The amount of trust, open dialogue, smart ideas and forward thinking has brought us much success and saved tax dollars.

In December, 2010, Neal Peirce from the Washington Post wrote a column that discusses successful collaboration. In that article Peirce identified the common underlying principle that makes collaboration successful. That principle is simple trust. I believe that Peirce is correct that the building of trust between public partners, private partners and non-profit partners is the key to forming successful collaborations and consolidation of services.

I want to thank a number of individuals who have exemplified this principle and thank them for successful events in 2010.

First, I want to thank Gene Nixon, Tom Quade, Mayor Bob Genet and Mayor Don Plusquellic for their work on the consolidation of our health departments into one health district.

I want to thank Dr. Luis Proenza, Dan Colantone and Lavea Brachman for their cooperation and initiative in helping establish and coordinate the first Akron Prosperity Forum.

I want to recognize Dr. Frank Douglas and the entire ABIA team for their work, not only in developing the programs, but in working with my staff in establishing a permanent headquarters for the Institute.

The partners that make up the First Things First initiative for early childhood represent a true community partnership. I want to thank Tonya Block, Dave Jennings, Chris Yuhasz, John Saros, David James, Malcolm Costa, Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio, Donae Eckert, Julie Rittenhouse, Donna Skoda and the countless other organizations and volunteers who have made this successful.

Without the help of the United Way acting as fiscal agent we would not have been able to

have succeeded with our Summit for Kids and to Bob Kulinski and his staff I am eternally grateful.

In matters of economic development the County has been fortunate to have as a partner the Summit County Port Authority. Chris Burnham and his staff are the silent, hard working individuals who have been critical in many of the successes that we have had, not only to retain good paying jobs in our community, but to create good job opportunities for the future. Thank you, Chris, for your and your staff's hard work and commitment to our community.

In 2010 I lost three people who were instrumental in forming my beliefs, education and work ethic.

Early in the year the long serving Mayor of the Village of Boston Heights, Raymond McFall, passed away. I had the good fortune to work with Mayor McFall for ten years and watch as Ray selflessly dedicated his life to the betterment of his community. All public servants should learn by that example.

In early Fall one of my long time mentors in the legal profession, Richard Sternberg, passed away after a courageous battle with Alzheimers. As a young lawyer, Richard taught me to be thorough, informed, compassionate and fair in all dealings, whether with my clients or with opposing counsel and their clients. Developing a commitment to fair play and fair dealings, again, is a quality necessary for good public service.

Finally, at the end of 2010, I lost my good friend, Frank Martino, who had given me my first job as a lawyer and who had been a second father and a life mentor to me. Frank taught me the value of hard work, patience, and the ability to listen in all dealings. Frank died at the age of 91. Frank, however, had worked until the age of 82, at which time he retired as President from the International Chemical Workers Union. Frank dedicated his entire life to workplace safety and to the pursuit of good paying jobs for all individuals. The value of a good paying job cannot be understated. A job gives an individual hope, a

sense of self worth and an opportunity to succeed in life. As we look back on 2010 and as we look forward into the future, I believe that the efforts that Summit County has participated in leads the way to retain and create those types of good paying jobs for our residents.

Jobs have been and probably always will be my top priority. Each year, each project, each partnership provides new ideas and suggestions on what exactly it takes to create and retain jobs. Bringing together people to share experiences and opportunities is one of the best ways to create new job opportunities.

Just a few weeks ago, I was very proud to host the Building Prosperity in Akron Forum, along with the Greater Ohio Policy Center, the Greater Akron Chamber, the City of Akron and the University of Akron. This economic development forum is one in a series of forums and meetings being held across Ohio in connection with Restoring Prosperity: Transforming Ohio's Communities for the Next Economy report. The report will be used as a blueprint for changes and state policy reforms that will, hopefully, bring economic vitality to our community and the state.

This day long event provided community leadership the opportunity to share ideas, promote innovation and build on "The Akron Model." The Akron Model is recognized as one of the most effective, innovative and robust platforms for economic development and new wealth creation. This forum will provide us with a baseline for progress, identify possible clusters of innovation, assist in developing both talent and workforce, and enhance the quality of place and product.

The Austen BioInnovation Institute in Akron is one of our most unique collaborations and successes. A partnership between Akron General Medical Center, Summa Health System, Akron Children's Hospital, the University of Akron, NEOUCOM, and the Knight Foundation, the ABIA, with support from the City, County and First Energy promises to pioneer the next generation of life-enhancing and life-saving biomedical innovations through research, development education and training.

The ABIA is poised to become a critical part of our economy over the next decade, by leading the medical and biomedical industry in Summit County. Over the next ten years, the ABIA and its partner organizations intend to create 2,400 jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in research, investment and commercialization.

In July of 2010, I announced a partnership between the County, State, Port Authority, ABIA and First Energy to build a new 40,000 square foot headquarters for ABIA with a modern medical simulation center and education and training facilities. This multi-million dollar project will convert an older County building into a new state-of-the-art facility for the ABIA in the center of the Akron BioMedical Corridor. Since that announcement, the partners have moved the project forward and the interior of the building is currently under demolition. I am proud to announce that construction will begin next month and that ABIA is scheduled to move into this new facility by the end of this year.

In addition to this wonderful project, ABIA continues to make important contributions to our economy and community. In September 2010, ABIA announced it had received a \$2.6 million Ohio Third Frontier grant for biomedical technology development. Additionally, just last month, ABIA and the University of Akron Research Foundation were honored with a \$1 million i6 Challenge Award to promote economic development in the greater Akron area.

The ABIA represents one of the most innovative private-public partnerships in the nation and will benefit our entire community by creating new jobs, new businesses and improved healthcare for the citizens of Summit County.

The 260,000 square-foot Bridgestone - Firestone Technical Center is also moving forward... and quickly upward. The construction is incredible and each time I drive down Main Street and see this beautiful building, I am proud the County of Summit could play a major role in this project and in keeping 1,000 high salaried, high tech jobs in Summit

County. The project is scheduled to be completed by January 2012 and will enhance South Main Street and will further stabilize and be an anchor employer in the Firestone Park community.

In 2007, Goodyear, IRG, the City of Akron, State of Ohio and the County of Summit, announced plans for the construction of a new Global World and North American Headquarters for Goodyear to be built in Akron. Since that time, the collapse of the economy has hurt the ability of partners to finance this project. However, due to the hard work of all the partners, in January of this year, it was announced the \$160 million headquarters project will move forward the first half of 2011. The County of Summit, City of Akron, State of Ohio and Summit County Port Authority will finance \$60 million of this project with Goodyear financing the remaining \$100 million. The new facility will be owned by the Summit County Port Authority who will then lease the building to Goodyear for at least a 25 year period. We anticipate financing will close this spring, and construction will take approximately two years to complete. This project ensures Goodyear will retain 2,900 jobs in Akron for the next 25 years and will continue to be an innovator in polymers and a huge purchaser of goods and services throughout Summit County and Northeast Ohio. This collaboration included both job creation and job retention and serves as a shining example of what working together can produce. Thank you to all the stakeholders and their staffs; it was a very complicated and difficult deal to put together during an extremely challenging economic time. The fact that we did it reflects on the hard work, dedication, creativity and perseverance of many in this room today.

I once described the process of preparing our workforce for jobs as an equestrian steeplechase. There are many hurdles down the path to success and you must clear every hurdle to win the race. The hurdles can be a variety of things the lack of a high school diploma or GED, the need for advanced skills in a high-tech job market, or even the need to learn basic job skills such as how to dress for a job and showing up to work on time. In order to ensure that our workforce has the necessary skills to obtain and keep jobs, and to advance our local economy, we must analyze each hurdle and create an action plan to

get over that hurdle. Additionally, we must look at the race as whole and determine how we can focus our resources to ensure that everyone crosses the finish line.

According to Mary Walshok, author of “Closing America’s Job Gap,” and the dean of the university extension at the University of California at San Diego, the key to recovering from the recent recession, and to limiting the negative effects of future recessions on northeast Ohio, is to train new skilled workers. In 1991, fewer than half of US jobs required skilled workers, that number will rise to more than 75% by 2015. We must identify industry clusters that are important to the region and match training programs that make workers qualified for jobs in the new market. As skilled workers from the baby-boom era retire, we must ensure that they are replaced by equally, if not higher skilled, workers.

In Summit County, we are lucky to have several partners helping to develop our workforce and create jobs, including our schools, colleges, The University of Akron, organized labor, the Greater Akron Chamber, and a large and diverse number of employers. Today, I would like to announce a new initiative to bring these partners closer together in order to further job creation and retention in our community- the Summit Jobs Partnership. The Summit Jobs Partnership will be a collaboration between the public and private sectors that will utilize available public resources to satisfy the workforce needs identified by private sector employers.

The first step of The Summit Jobs Partnership will be to establish the connection between the County, University and schools on the public side and the business community on the private side. To do this, I will turn to Summit Workforce Solutions, and its new President and CEO, Maureen Van Duser. Summit Workforce Solutions is a local non-profit agency that currently owns and operates the Job Center on Tallmadge Avenue. The Summit Workforce Solutions Board is comprised mostly of members of the business community and is, therefore, ideally situated to serve as the bridge between the private and public sectors. Through Summit Workforce Solutions, the private sector will be able to identify their workforce needs, and the public sector will be able to identify the

resources, tools and programs that they have available. As the link between the two, Summit Workforce Solutions will be able to develop policies that pair the needs of the employers with the job training and educational resources available.

The next step in implementing the Summit Jobs Partnership is to actually identify the needs of our employers and to identify the skills and education that our residents must have to obtain and keep their jobs. As our local economy has changed from tire manufacturing to medicine, polymer research, and advanced manufacturing, the needs of our employers have changed. Additionally, the skills and education needed by workers has also changed. My office has contracted with the University of Akron's Taylor Institute to conduct focus groups and a market analysis wherein we will turn to the business community to identify the key local industries and the job training and educational needs of the workers in those industries. The days of the public sector telling the business community what training and education is best for their needs must come to an end. Instead, we must turn to the business community to identify what skills their employees need and to structure public and educational programs to meet those needs. Through Summit Workforce Solutions, the Summit Jobs Partnership will allow local employers to actively participate in and direct the development and implementation of publicly funded educational and training programs.

Finally, the Summit Jobs Partnership will turn to Summit Workforce Solutions to develop strategies and policies to focus and target the available public and educational resources to meet the needs of employers in our community. In today's competitive economy, we can no longer train and educate just for the purpose of training and educating. Instead, we must target the training and education of our workforce towards jobs that are actually available in the local economy. Rather than training workers to be tire manufacturers, we need to train workers to be network engineers and biomedical device manufacturers. By targeting training and education resources in this way, we will ensure that the residents of Summit County have better opportunities to obtain and keep jobs. We will also ensure that local businesses will have a high-skilled workforce that will make them more resilient to economic downturns.

As part of the Summit Jobs Partnership, I am pleased to announce the creation of a new public resource in Summit County geared toward assisting businesses and creating jobs. This year, my Department of Community and Economic Development will dedicate \$150,000 of CDBG funds to develop a revolving loan fund that will provide micro and small loans to local small businesses for expansions and the purchase of equipment that is tied to the creation of jobs. By providing these loans, we will be able to assist small businesses in the still-tight credit market and, at the same time, provide additional employment opportunities for Summit County residents.

The ideas behind the Summit Jobs Partnership are not earth-shattering. Instead, the Summit Jobs Partnership is simply a common-sense approach to improving our economy, creating jobs and creating workers that are able to compete in the 21st century. In similar fashion, the Greater Akron Chamber recently announced its Talent Dividend initiative. I believe these programs will benefit each other and look forward to working with the Chamber and its partners to improve our economy and create jobs.

We are hopefully approaching the beginning of the end of bad economic times and many in this room have had to reshape and rethink the way of doing business in order to survive. We will survive and we will be better for it. But we must continue with new ideas and we must create new opportunities for jobs. We must take the right steps to ensure that we are passing on an improved community and economy to future generations. I believe that the Summit Jobs Partnership will continue to lead us down the path to recovery and will position Summit County to remain a leader in today's global economy.

The State of Summit County is very good considering the world around us. We have used our time wisely during this downward economic trend to review and streamline many aspects of our county government and to find programming that will eliminate increased spending, duplication of services and silos of independence. Our county became a team;

we built bridges of trust, created partnerships of responsibilities and came together in collaboration for future opportunities.

I know of no other place that has created an atmosphere of congeniality out of a dark moment of fiscal despair and I know of no greater people than the ones that call Summit County home. Thank you for all you have done and, hopefully, will do to continue to serve the citizens of our community.



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