



The Thomas Connection

January 2009

Building Bridges, Finding Solutions

Volume 3, Issue 1

The Newsletter of Ward 5 Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr.

Dear Ward 5 Residents,

It continues to be an honor to serve as your representative on the D.C. City Council. The close of 2008 marks the end of my second year in office—a year in which we as a nation experienced the triumph of a historical presidential election, as well as a year in which we as a Ward experienced the tragedy of extreme violence, including the murder of 35 individuals within our boundaries.

Throughout my second year in office, I have focused on the following:

- **Eliminating Crime and Violence from Our Streets.** In response to the violence that gripped some Ward 5 neighborhoods during much of 2008, I introduced a 10-point action plan to address the underlying causes of violence. Since releasing this action plan, additional funds have been allocated to enhance programming at the Joseph Cole and Trinidad Recreation Centers, and the Trinidad neighborhood was selected by MPD for the launch of its Safe City initiative. Going forward, I will continue to secure resources for my action plan.
- **Bringing Economic Revitalization to Our Neighborhoods.** I was successful in expanding two major city initiatives—Great Streets and Main Streets—to include Rhode Island Avenue and North Capitol Street. Consequently, a land use study of Rhode Island Avenue is now underway and a community-based nonprofit was selected to form a Main Street program for North Capitol Street. I introduced legislation to provide property tax abatements to key Ward 5 economic revitalization projects, including the Washington Gateway Market Center and Residences, EC 12, Eckington One, and Patriot Yards (the old Hecht's warehouse).
- **Improving Our Public School System.** In 2008, my colleagues and I continued our rigorous oversight of DCPS. We passed the School Safety and Security Contracting Amendment Act of 2008, which requires MPD to develop a plan for protecting children walking to and from school and for protecting children from gang and crew violence on, in, and around DCPS property. The plan must be provided to the Mayor, the Council, and the Chancellor by August 15th of each year. We also expanded the District's Pre K program to include all three and four year-olds.
- **Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing.** During 2008 we were able to break ground on two important affordable housing initiatives in Ward 5—St. Martins (178 affordably priced units) and the Ivy City Home Again Projects (52 affordably priced units). My office supported the St. Martin's affordable housing initiative by introducing legislation to secure a property tax abatement for the project as long as it remains affordable housing. My office also ensured that the Home Again Program received \$3.5 million of capital funding in the FY08 budget so that the Ivy City project could move forward.



The current economic downturn will no doubt make the year ahead a challenging one as we seek to maintain the gains we have made in transforming the District into a truly Capital City and Ward 5 into a premier community in which to live, work, and play. As we begin the journey of 2009 together, I pledge to continue to build bridges among our residents, find solutions to your issues and concerns, and put the people of Ward 5 first.

In Service I Remain,

Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr.

Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr.
Ward 5 Councilmember

10-POINT ACTION PLAN

Ward 5 Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr. developed the following 10-point plan after listening to comments and concerns raised at the April 28, 2008 teen town hall meeting—Yo Listen Up—which the Councilmember hosted in partnership with WPGC and the DC Department of Parks and Recreation.

More than 1,000 people attended the town hall meeting to discuss the recent epidemic of homicides, which includes 17 murders in Ward 5 during the first four months of 2008.

1. Actively link teens and young adults to local job opportunities.
2. Expand job training and apprenticeship opportunities for young adults; increase awareness of these programs through grassroots marketing initiatives.
3. Open adult education and career center with programs targeting young adults, such as Phelps.
4. Expand GED programs and aggressively market them to teens and young adults.
5. Increase number of mentoring programs and target them in neighborhoods experiencing spikes of violence.
6. Offer mental health screening and mediation services at libraries, recreation centers, and schools; connect teens and young adults with follow-up services.
7. Expand access to drug and alcohol counseling services.
8. Offer physical health screenings at schools, neighborhood clinics, and other public locations.
9. Establish, fund, and promote youth outreach centers through faith-based organizations and youth-oriented nonprofits.
10. Increase programming at recreation centers in "hot spots" and underserved neighborhoods.



Councilmember Thomas developed the 10-point plan after listening to comments and concerns raised at a April 28, 2008 teen town hall meeting.

COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS' 2009 WARD 5 EVENTS

January 31	Ward 5 Leadership Meeting
February 28	Ward 5 Expo
April 13	Ward 5 Easter Egg Roll
September 4	Harry Thomas, Sr. Day
September 26	Ward 5 Leadership Meeting
October 30	Halloween – Recreation Centers
November 23	Thanksgiving Turkey Give-Away
December 17	Ward 5 Holiday Open House
December 19	Breakfast With Santa

TAWANA GANNT

DECEMBER 29, 1986 — JANUARY 1, 2009

This issue of *The Thomas Connection* is dedicated to Tawana Gantt, a Ward 5 resident and cherished member of Councilmember Thomas' staff. Ms. Gantt, 22, perished in a tragic house fire that occurred on January 1, 2009 and also claimed the lives of her daughter, the father of her daughter, and three others.

Ms. Gantt was a hard worker and known for her cheerful, positive attitude and willingness to lend a hand wherever and whenever needed. We will all miss her.



KEY BILLS INTRODUCED BY COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS THAT BECAME LAW IN 2008

Councilmember Thomas introduced or co-introduced 316 pieces of legislation in 2008—135 bills and 181 resolutions. Of the 135 bills Councilmember Thomas introduced or co-introduced, 59 are now acts of law, including the following:

Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act of 2008 (A17-0324): Requires employers in the District of Columbia to provide paid leave to employees for illness and absences associated with domestic violence or sexual abuse.

Compliance Unit Establishment Act of 2008 (A17-0360): Establishes a compliance unit within the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor to conduct an audit and report on compliance issues for real estate development projects previously managed by the dissolved National Capital Revitalization Corporation or Anacostia Waterfront Corporation and placed under the management of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development.

AED Installation for Safe Recreation and Exercise Temporary Act of 2008 (A17-0410): Requires the Mayor to establish a program to install and maintain automated external defibrillators in Department of Parks and Recreation facilities; also mandates training for personnel to operate the defibrillators.

St. Martin Apartments Tax Exemption Temporary Act of 2008 (A17-0503): Provides for tax exemptions for the St. Martin Apartments development project located in Lots 114 and 115, Square 3531.

Pedestrian Safety Reinforcement Amendment Act of 2008 (A17-0522): Permits civil enforcement of violations of the failure to yield to pedestrians; creates infractions for failure to yield to pedestrians; increases the amount of fines and points for civil infractions for failure to yield to pedestrians; requires DDOT to create and post special signs to alert motorists of the penalties for failure to yield to pedestrians; and requires that the funds collected as a result of the increased fines and the new infractions be deposited in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Enhancement Fund.

Title 22 Amendment Act of 2008 (A17-0524): Amends an Act to include the placement or display of a noose as an unlawful act; amends an Act to control the possession, sale, transfer and use of pistols and other dangerous weapons in the District of Columbia, to provide penalties, to prescribe rules of evidence, and for other purposes to expand the definition of dangerous weapons to include knuckles made of metal, wood, or plastic.

Chief Financial Officer Approval of Payment of Goods and Services Temporary Amendment Act of 2008 (A17-0537): Clarifies that the Chief Financial Officer shall not approve payment of goods, services, and leases until the Council has affirmatively approved the contract or allowed the contract to be deemed approved without Council affirmative approval.

Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization Clarification Emergency Amendment Act of 2008 (A17-0575): Clarifies that Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization is only authorized to direct and manage the modernization or new construction of District of Columbia Public School facilities as intended by the establishing statute.

Utility Line Temporary Act of 2008 (A17-0589): Requires the Mayor to bury all utility lines along 12th Street, N.E., between Rhode Island Avenue and Michigan Avenue in Ward 5, and for the District to pay to connect the utility lines to private properties out of existing funds budgeted for the 12th Street streetscape project.

Day Care and Senior Services Emergency Act of 2008 (A17-0615): Requires the Mayor to submit to the Council a comprehensive analysis of proposed child day care services and senior citizen programs to be offered by the Department of Parks and Recreation prior to the closing, discontinuing, or relocating of any child day care service or senior citizen program offered by the department.

School Safety and Security Contracting Amendment Act of 2008 (A17-0624): Requires MPD's School Safety Division to provide recommendations by July 31st of each year to the Mayor, the Council, and the Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools regarding the impact of school closings, consolidations, grade reconfigurations, use of swing space during school reconstruction, and gang activity on the safety and well-being of children in District of Columbia Public Schools. Requires the School Safety Division to develop a plan for protecting children walking to and from school and for protecting children from gang and crew violence on, in, and around District of Columbia Public Schools property, and to provide the plan to the Mayor, the Council, and the Chancellor of the District of Columbia Schools by August 15th of each year.

THOMAS JOINS COMEDIAN STEVE HARVEY IN WARD 5 TURKEY GIVEAWAY

Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr. joined nationally acclaimed comedian Steve Harvey to give-away turkeys to residents of Ward 5's Carver Terrace public housing complex on December 18, 2008. The turkey giveaway was covered live by WHUR radio talk show host Tony Richards.

"Steve Harvey sets the standard for giving back to the community," said Councilmember Thomas. "I am pleased that he selected Carver Terrace for this event and honored to participate with him in bringing a bit of holiday cheer to Ward 5 residents in need."



Councilmember Thomas joined with Steve Harvey to giveaway turkeys to residents at Ward 5's Carver Terrace public housing complex on December 18, 2008.

THOMAS PERFORMS IN THE MUSICAL "GOD'S GIFT TO DC—NO MO' CRIME"

Councilmember Thomas sang and danced in "God's Gift to DC—No Mo' Crime" on December 19 through 21, 2008, a musical production by the Friends of Carter Barron Foundation of the Performing Arts.

The show starred DC's most gifted and talented youth and five-time Grammy Award nominee Kelly Price. In addition to Councilmember Thomas, the musical also featured performances by his colleagues, Ward 8 Councilmember Marion Barry and Ward 7 Councilmember Yvette Alexander.

Event sponsors included the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, the DC Department of Employment Services, the DC Department of Parks and Recreation, Hotel Palomar, Pepco, United Planning Organization, Shaw Community Ministry, and the Office of Councilmember Thomas.

"This was my second year participating in a Friends of Carter Barron Foundation holiday production," said Councilmember Thomas. "It is a pleasure to be involved in an event that showcases the extraordinary musical talent of our young people."

MPD LAUNCHES SAFE CITY INITIATIVE IN TRINIDAD NEIGHBORHOOD

Councilmember Thomas announced his enthusiastic support of the DC Metropolitan Police Department's new Safe City initiative. Safe City is initially being launched in Ward 5's Trinidad neighborhood, which has been plagued by high crime and numerous homicides.

Safe City is a multi-pronged program that will deploy a neighborhood-based CCTV network in Trinidad (CCTV provides video images of public space to enhance police coverage); award approximately \$25,000 each to Joseph Cole and Trinidad Recreation Centers to increase programming at these sites; obtain mobile outreach equipment that can be utilized in various locations in Trinidad; implement the "Light Up the Night" program to give away light bulbs to create better lighting at night; launch the "Live Link" cell phone program for community leaders and residents to have access to call 911 to report crime and/or suspicious behavior; and promote community-based initiatives at the Joseph Cole and Trinidad Recreational Centers, including the "Youth Advocate" program and the "We Can" Program.

"I commend Chief Lanier for her continued focus on Trinidad, and for selecting this underserved Ward 5 community for the launch of Safe City," said Councilmember Thomas. "The resources allocated to this community, particularly the funds earmarked to enhance programming at the Joseph Cole and Trinidad Recreation Centers, demonstrate Mayor Fenty's and Chief Lanier's commitment to implementing my 10-point action plan to bring much-needed social, recreation, employment and other services to the traditionally underserved neighborhoods of Ward 5."



Councilmember Thomas participated in the announcement of MPD's Safe City initiative at the Joe Cole Recreation Center on December 19, 2008.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

OFFICE OF WARD 5 COUNCILMEMBER
HARRY "TOMMY" THOMAS, JR.
1350 PENN. AVE., NW SUITE 107
TEL. NO. 202.724.8028
WEBSITE: WWW.HARRYTHOMAS5.COM

2008—A PICTORIAL REVIEW



THOMAS CONDUCTS MULTIPLE DPR OVERSIGHT HEARINGS IN DECEMBER

Ward 5 Councilmember Harry “Tommy” Thomas, Jr., Chair of the Council’s Committee on Libraries, Parks and Recreation, held several DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) oversight hearings in December 2008.

On December 4, 2008, Councilmember Thomas held a hearing regarding the closure of seven DPR childcare sites. Councilmember Thomas, whom DPR did not inform in advance, learned from concerned parents about the agency’s decision to reduce its childcare sites. Nearly a dozen parents testified at the hearing in support of DPR’s childcare programs. Most were critical of the agency’s one-week notice regarding the closures.

At the hearing, Councilmember Thomas expressed concern that under enrollment in DPR childcare programs is due to insufficient recruitment efforts. “We must actively market our childcare activities and do a better job of getting the message out about their availability,” said Councilmember Thomas. “Given the number of working parents that reside in the District, I am confident that demand for these programs exists.”

On December 15, 2008, Councilmember Thomas held a hearing on DPR personnel practices in response to complaints from agency workers regarding pay inequities, inconsistent disciplinary actions, and questionable drug testing policies. Councilmember Thomas recessed the hearing and reconvened it on two separate occasions—December 19 and 22, 2008—to afford DPR Director Clark Ray additional opportunities to testify before the Committee. Mr. Ray nor any other agency representative attended the hearings on December 15 or 19, 2008. “It is important that our District agencies appropriately apply and enforce personnel rules and regulations,” said Councilmember Thomas. “The complaints my office has received from DPR workers indicate oversight regarding personnel practices is invaluable to building a first-rate workforce in our city.”



Councilmember Thomas chairs the Committee on Libraries, Parks and Recreation.

THOMAS SPONSORS HOLIDAY EVENTS FOR WARD 5 RESIDENTS

To ensure that Ward 5 residents had a joyous holiday season, Councilmember Harry “Tommy” Thomas, Jr. hosted a Ward 5 Holiday Open House on December 18, 2008, and a Breakfast With Santa on December 20, 2008.

The Ward 5 Holiday Open House was held in the first floor of the Wilson Building and included a range of entertainment, food, and music. Councilmember Thomas arranged transportation so that more than 200 seniors were able to participate in the festivities along with other residents from across Ward 5.

Breakfast With Santa was held at the Turkey Thicket Recreation Center and provided toys and books to more than 300 Ward 5 children, as well as a catered, hot breakfast for the kids and their parents. Other activities included storytelling and magical tricks. “Bringing residents of the Ward together to celebrate the holiday season and providing for those less fortunate are family traditions that I am proud to continue,” said Councilmember Thomas. “Nothing is more satisfying than spreading joy at Christmas time.”



Councilmember Thomas hosted the Ward 5 Holiday Open House on December 18, 2008 (top photo) and Breakfast With Santa on December 20, 2008 (bottom photo).
