

**Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieu**  
**January 14, 2008**  
**Inauguration Speech\***  
**State Capitol, Baton Rouge**

\*Introduction portion of the speech was not delivered verbally due to time constraints.

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By the Grace of God, we come together today to celebrate democracy's greatest gift – the peaceful transition of political power. We willingly accept the responsibility to govern well, for the common good of the people of Louisiana, each an American, one and all.

We come together today to renew our commitment to democracy's central promise: freedom.

Freedom to worship as we are called.

Freedom to speak as we please.

Freedom to assemble at will.

Freedom to dissent when necessary.

Freedom to be who God intended us to be.

Freedom to enjoy the right naturally bestowed.

We come together today to commit ourselves to the proposition that freedom is only half of democracy's great promise. For our search for freedom should always be tempered by and tethered to the equally powerful notion that where there is a right to enjoy, there is a responsibility to embrace.

Democracy is practiced well when those who claim the rights and privileges share the burdens and responsibilities. Democracy's light shines the brightest when opportunity and responsibility walk hand and hand.

We come together today to acknowledge the great irony that freedom is not free. Not in peacetime, nor war, not on our homeland, nor on a distant shore. She calls us to service and sacrifice. Take her for granted, refuse to respect the rights of others, fail to protect her, she will wither. Perhaps slowly, perhaps imperceptibly, but nonetheless wither.

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Freedom deserves a robust defense, and she is best defended when we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. When we love thy neighbor as thyself. This is the most elegant communion of two equally powerful ideas. And it is the only certain path to ensure not only freedom for all, but justice for all, as well.

By the grace of God's sparing hand, we stand on a narrow edge of time: sorry that we have squandered our heritage, fearful of our capacity to change, hopeful that we will summon the courage to do so, and mindful of the fact that failure is not an option.

We must refuse to condemn our children to the prison of mediocrity and the low expectations that have held us back for so long. Mediocrity dare not be our legacy. It cannot be our children's destiny.

Generations to come will rely on those of us gathered today to reject the mistakes of the past and to seize this moment in time. To lay the foundation necessary for the people of Louisiana to truly enjoy the fruits of the gifts naturally bestowed. To come together as one people, with one voice, as one state.

To seek and find higher common ground, and to ultimately create with our own hands, our hearts, and our minds, and through sheer will power and resilience, a place that others across the world will look to as a shining example of the best that democracy has to offer.

A place that is honest and fair. A place that is safe, a place that is smart, a place that is healthy, a place where families live and children - all children – grow happy and healthy, where people who are different flock towards rather than away from one another, and wring from each the great value that diversity brings and the richness it bestows. As Psalm 103 reminds us, "Do not forget all the gifts of God."

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A place that sings to the mountain tops. Finally, after 200 years of waiting at the back of the line, walking in the back door, suffering the slings and arrows of life's outrageous fortune – we are ready, willing and able to do what is necessary and proclaim that the people of Louisiana are indeed worthy of both the promise and burden of freedom.

The nation waits and wonders. As the people of America look down on Louisiana, both figuratively and literally, some well intentioned - others not so - I say to you people of Louisiana: Do not be afraid. Have faith in yourselves and each other. Great progress is not always planted in the halls of power or where the rich and respected roam. Sometimes life's greatest lessons are harvested from the most unlikely of places. The greatest stories of triumph come from those who thirst the most for redemption. So too will the future of America be harvested from the most unlikely of places at the most unlikely of times – from the most unlikely of people - because we are the Americans who thirst longingly for redemption in the eyes of the world and who have the most to lose if we dare not succeed.

So as we prepare to enjoy this transition of earthly power, let us acknowledge and see the ever-guiding hand of God by asking:

Dear Lord, teach us to be generous. Help us to serve you as you deserve. To give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed to the wounds, to toil and not seek for rest, to labor and not ask for reward except that of knowing that we are doing your will.

It is in this spirit of generosity, this spirit of self sacrifice and this glorious spirit of service that we the people of Louisiana offer ourselves to the people of this great nation as the best and most immediate laboratory of democracy, and America's best hope for restoring its greatness at home and abroad.