

Governor Mark Sanford – 2007 Inaugural Address

Thank you for that warm welcome.

Thank you as well to all the people of South Carolina for the honor of serving our state for the next four years.

While on the subject of thank yous:

I want to thank my Maker. I believe that God brought all of us to this moment. I am humbled in simply being here, and I'm humbled in how important the task of bringing change to our state is for every one of us.

I thank my family. Jenny and the boys have made a lot of certain and real sacrifices.

I want to thank friends – both old and new – for all the work and effort they put into bringing today about.

I want to thank our many distinguished visitors.

Finally, I want to thank members of the legislative and judicial branches for their role as partners in navigating the challenging waters before us.

Four years ago I stood before you as governor-elect with grand dreams and important ideas. I spoke of the need for change in South Carolina state government – changing the way we do business, changing the way we handle our finances, changing the way we interact with the taxpayers, and changing the way we look at the future.

In my first inaugural, I spoke of Sir Ernest Shackleton's struggle for survival, and how it was through collective effort, focused vision, persistence, and sacrifice/bold steps they had prospered in a situation in which none should have even survived.

Like Shackleton, we began 2003 at times looking simply to how we get through the situation before us as we faced the first negative revenue numbers in the last fifty years, as we faced unconstitutional borrowings, borrowed trust funds and more.

The trek before us is ultimately about taking steps toward prosperity and making sure as Shackleton did that everyone makes the trip with us.

Today, I stand before you a little grayer, a little wiser and tempered by reality, but nevertheless affirmed in my conviction that we can, together as South Carolinians, make a change for the better.

I'm amazed by how much has changed over the last four years and how much more will change over the next forty.

I'm struck by how fundamentally the decisions of today will impact the South Carolina of tomorrow that each one of our children will one day inherit.

I'm humbled by the sacred obligation my father used to talk about in leaving the world a little better place than we found it, and in this I'm also struck by the importance of now.

Dr. Martin Luther King said in his *I Have a Dream* speech that, "we have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism."

These words are just as true for South Carolina today.

The fundamental challenge for all of us lies in assessing where we are, and where we need to go from here. Ecclesiastes 3 says, "that for everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven." In simplest form, our state is in a season of change.

The bigger question is whether or not change happens to us – or because of us.

Our choices in either bringing or reacting to change will directly impact opportunity in this state, and it is for this reason that I have spoken incessantly about Thomas Friedman and his Flat World over the last few years.

His presumption is that because of globalization, we're in a new found competition for jobs, capital and way of life across the 6 ½ billion souls that make up planet Earth.

In this same vein, David McCullough, who wrote the book *1776*, when asked what was the most pivotal time in American history remarkably replied not 1776 – but from 2000 to 2005. Not the stuff of history books, but the time in which we live.

Think for one second about the rate of change in the world around us.

The Pan Am Clipper Class used to be the envy of airline travel. One of their planes would fly 32 passengers at 150 miles per hour from point A to point B. The Miami to Buenos Aires flight took 6 days with numerous crew stops along the way.

The new Boeing 787, being in large part produced here in South Carolina, will soon take 300 passengers at 560 miles an hour on a 9 hour trip straight from Miami to Buenos Aires.

Sixty years ago, most cars didn't have air conditioning, power windows or even air bags. Today, Lexus cars can literally parallel park themselves.

The IPOD and satellites have replaced the vinyl record and the big three television channels many of us remember growing up.

It is in this rapidly changing world that certain things become more important.

Education has never before been more important than it is in the 21st century. To walk out into this age with anything less than a first rate education is the equivalent of a soldier walking out onto the battlefield without a gun.

The way that our government delivers results for its people has never before been more important given the competition we are in with other states and countries.

One's health has never been more important because an individual can't compete effectively with the other 6½ billion people on Earth without feeling well.

Our state's infrastructure has never before been more important than today when we face the prospect of another million people coming to our state between now and 2030.

The soil conditions for the germination of businesses small and large has never before been more important as a consequence of globalization.

Quality of life, and the way that we look and feel as a state, has never before been more important than it is today – again as a consequence of the new world in which we compete.

Our vision is that South Carolina becomes a state that is second to none in providing economic opportunities for its people. A place where its citizens are better educated, healthier and ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century. A place that offers a great quality of life so important in the building of a life or a family, and a state that retains its pride of place – by in fact retaining great places.

Some would say that although we've made some important steps forward over the last four years...

– as we set aside more land than during any other governorship in South Carolina history,

– or in digging out of a billion-dollar financial hole,

– or in passing a landmark income tax cut, tort reform, or charter school legislation – that fulfilling that vision is just a dream.

I would remind them – all actions begin with dreams.

George Bernard Shaw wrote, “You see things and say ‘why?’ But I dream of things that never were, and say ‘why not?’”

In Robert Kennedy’s 1968 Presidential bid he paraphrased Shaw’s words and said, “Some men see things as they are and say ‘why?’ I dream of things that never were and say ‘why not?’”

I’d ask each of you as South Carolinians to think of Shaw and Kennedy’s notion of dreams and this notion of “why not?”

Because in any decision, you get to the point of “why not?” No matter how much evidence you have before you, at some point you have to make a decision, and with it take a step of faith.

And given the challenges of the world we live in, it is time for each one of us not only to dream of a greater South Carolina and the building blocks to getting there – but that we also be willing to say “why not?” in being bold and taking concrete steps to change the way some things have been done for far too long in South Carolina.

Why not – right now – commit to excellence in the things we do individually and in what we expect from those in government and the results we get from government?

Because change takes time, we can’t waste time. We must act now.

In stepping forward, I believe certain principles should guide our actions.

One, that there is no greater key to unleashing South Carolina’s potential than unleashing the power of each South Carolinian.

South Carolinians are a great people as demonstrated by their actions. Those actions have been demonstrated in the workplace, home place, and even on the battlefield in each of the wars that have preceded today's latest test of character and resolve in the Middle East.

They are demonstrated daily as hard working South Carolinians produce world class products like the Cougar or the Buffalo at Force Protection on the coast or the X5 at BMW in the upstate.

They are demonstrated in the remarkable services of a 3D Systems or Wholesale Forklifts up in Rock Hill or with Park Seed in Greenwood.

They are demonstrated everyday with unrecognized heroes teaching in the classroom, nursing patients in the hospital or in disking under last year's harvest in the setting sun.

They are more visibly demonstrated with the successes of a Sidney Rice on the field or a Ray Ray McElrathbey both on and off the field. But in all cases and in all too many ways, we see a disconnect between individual South Carolinians and the government that serves them.

Accordingly, the answer to many of South Carolina's challenges lies not in more government, but in more freedom for each South Carolinian.

I believe in the inherent dignity of each human soul. Our founding fathers were very deliberate in setting up a republic wherein each person was guaranteed life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Inherent in that promise was the recognition that every person would have different ideas of happiness and that no man would have to scrape or bow before another in pursuing their own dreams.

Therefore, maximizing an individual's discretion and choice on where they work, receive education, health care and more, are a key part of our vision in improving South Carolina's future.

Now is the time.

Two, I also join thousands of others in believing the structure of our government must change. A constitutional construct put in place when neither black people nor women could participate in our political system is an outdated construct. It is inefficient and in the competitive world in which we live this bridle economic opportunity and it continues to hold us back.

Now is the time to restructure state government.

Three, we must commit ourselves *each* year to improving the business soil conditions of this state. We must do so in ways that are open and transparent and fair, as government should never be in the business of picking winners and losers in the commercial market place.

Now is the time.

Four, we believe that government's growth must be slowed to sustainable rates. This is key to staying true to the common sense notion of paying for the promises you've made in government before you make new ones. More than anything, it's about speeding the rate of change in South Carolina.

By its very design, things in government change slowly. Therefore, if you want to match the rate of transformational change in our economy with what's occurring in the world around us, you need to slow government's growth. You would do this not because government is inherently evil, but to put more money in the private sector is key to revolutionizing our economy.

Now is the time to discipline our government's growth.

Five, we must commit to taking everyone with us on the voyage before us. In the Bible it talks of when you do it to the least of these you do it unto me.

So we must be very deliberate in not only thinking of every South Carolinian as a brother or sister who deserves our respect and careful attention – but that we must go one step further in looking at our policies to make certain we are including all South Carolinians as we go about the business of increasing opportunity.

Now is the time to make diversity a reality and allow all our people to prosper.

Finally, we must be bold. We must free ourselves of the shackles that come with limiting our sights to simply whatever fits into the old notion of “the way things have always been done.”

Now is the time.

I think if we view these challenges and changes as opportunities, profound improvements can come our way over the next four years – and I am genuinely optimistic that they will.

In his second annual message to Congress in 1862, Abraham Lincoln said:

“The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew.”

Two hundred years ago South Carolinians like Rutledge, Lynch, Middleton and Heyward pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honor to a new form of government, and the question for each one of us is what will we commit.

In our collective hands are the keys to change. I need your help. I need not only the full participation of everyone gathered here today – but more powerfully the participation of citizens across this state.

Indeed in our collective hands are the keys to change.

I look forward to working with you over the next four years to prepare our state for the next four decades. Together we can, and together we must.