Inauguration of Mayor Michael F. Brennan

Statement, December 5, 2011

Today, I commence my term as Mayor for the City Portland, an office not held by a publicly elected citizen in nearly nine decades. It is a privilege to serve this community and I promise that I will do my best to live up to the expectations of the public and honor the responsibility bestowed upon me by the people of Portland.

It's rather fitting that we celebrate tonight here at Ocean Gateway, because rather than a crossroads, I believe that this new role within city government presents us with the opportunity to turn Portland into a gateway for the twenty-first century.

A gateway for prosperity, for opportunity, for tolerance, for compassion, for sustainability and ultimately, possibility.

More than a century ago, my grandmother, at just fourteen years of age, left Ireland in search of her own gateway to opportunity. Landing in the port you see outside these windows, she found a new home, one where she would fall in love, marry and raise four children. Now, of course, her path wasn't an easy one. With just a sixth grade education, she struggled but through her struggle came a belief and understanding that she would instill in her children and her children's children that opportunity comes with education. Quality education and prosperity are intrinsically intertwined. It is hard to have one without the other. It says something of my grandmother's character that even though her educational opportunities were limited she found a way to make sure all of her children received a college education.

Her hopes and dreams for her kids are no different than the hopes and dreams of Portland families today. Quality public schools, access to higher education leads Portland's youth to the kinds of jobs we want to see more of in Portland. We all want our kids to realize the promise of tomorrow and a prosperous future is easier to grasp when your feet are grounded in the best education our city and state can offer.

For years, I heard friends and neighbors share their worries that they might need to leave Portland to give their kids the opportunities they, like my grandmother, hope for their children. The greatest gift we can give our community is a good education, which is why it is absolutely paramount that we work together whether it's public, private, nonprofit, progressive, independent, conservative, West End, North Deering, Libbytown, or Bayside to foster an education system paralleled by none other in the state.

Through quality education, we can build a new economy for Portland. We can create the jobs we need and attract the workforce we want. We can blaze a trail toward the prosperity my grandmother dreamed of for my father and one I dream of for my sons here in Portland.

For thirty years I have had the great privilege of being able to call this city my home. I know and appreciate the uniqueness of Portland. We are passionate people. We care greatly and are proud of our respective neighborhoods.

As the largest city in the state, we have a unique responsibility to lead. We need to model to the rest of the state how to work together toward a common vision- building a livable city with thriving neighborhoods that embrace their diversity.

By tugging at those threads that connect us, this city can become a beacon of tolerance, compassion and ultimately a gateway for hope. As Mayor, it will be my duty and honor to find ways to work across sectors and bring people together. Just as my grandmother found her way to the threshold of this gateway one hundred years ago, so too can we.

For the next four years, I will work tirelessly to bring this vision to life, but I cannot do it alone. I need the many diverse and unique voices of Portland to join me. Together, we can create an education system that beckons families to come and raise their children here. We can expand the skills of our workforce and attract the jobs we need for a prosperous community. We can adopt policies that give real meaning to the term sustainable, benefitting both our local businesses and the environment.

Portland is an incredible city. I hope you will join me in building a gateway for the future.