

Thanks to each of you for coming. I appreciate you being here today.

Let me begin by thanking a few people for their hard work. This audit took 7 months to complete. I want to compliment our State Comptroller John Morgan, as well as Cliff Tucker and Brian Burkland for their professional efforts. I also appreciate the work of Richard Walls.

I'm grateful for our staff. In particular, John Troyer, Dwight Van de Vate, Hugh Holt, Mike Arms and their team for the countless hours they worked in providing corrective procedures and establishing safeguards for the future.

As your Mayor, I want to again apologize to citizens of Knox County. These issues occurred under my watch. I am troubled by what has happened and as I've said before... I'm here to tell you it will not happen again.

I have great confidence in our response to the audit. When errors were made we have acknowledged them. We have established corrective actions. We implemented many safeguards months ago.

On the other hand, there are a number of audit findings where we simply disagree. In these cases, we are confident that the expenditures in question reflect legitimate county business and we have provided solid explanation and documentation.

I am the first to admit that my focus was often in other places. I spent the majority of my time on important issues like BEP reform, which gave \$19 million more annually to our school children, on creating new and better jobs for our citizens, and providing outstanding programs for our seniors and veterans.

I have over 2 years left in office and in the end I want our citizens to look back and know that when we made mistakes I acknowledged them, took action, and worked hard to make sure that they did not happen again.

In the past, I assumed good judgment was being used, and the ends justified the means. However, in government you have to go above and beyond regular business practices—a big lesson learned for me.

My goal is very simple; I want nothing less than an open and transparent government. If people blatantly violate policies the consequences will be swift and grave.

Going forward, at any time the State Comptroller's Office or any of our citizens want to review our records we will welcome the opportunity to show them good government.

**Make no mistake about it— I take this audit seriously.**

Has the past 12 months been difficult? Without question it has! For all of us!

We've taken our lumps.

And quite candidly sometimes we've hit ourselves in the head with our own hammer.

With that being said...

This past year has also been a healthy learning experience for Knox County Government. Now we have an immensely stronger government with greater accountability.

Think about it... we now have:

- an ethics committee
- required ethics training
- a new appointment process
- citizens involved at unprecedented levels
- and of critical importance more stringent financial controls.

We have taken our government, turned it upside down, keeping what was good, and adding much needed improvements.

Quite candidly, we need to get back to the business of government. Our attention should be 100% focused on education, jobs, parks, seniors, and other important services. Together we need to make our community a place that achieves its full potential in a fiscally sound manner.

This audit will not damage this government. In fact, this audit has made us stronger than ever before.

Even with all that has been written and said about this issue, we are on the verge of great many things. Now, right now, is our opportunity to become a great American community.

I look forward to working with our County Commission and our citizens to move us towards this goal.