

Burgess Inauguration Comments
Monday, January 4, 2016

Thank you, Joleen, Elisabeth and Katharine. I'd also like to recognize my son-in-law, Dahm Choi, who is also with us this afternoon.

I'm very fortunate because I have a very rewarding, fulfilling and challenging job. And, I am honored that the people of Seattle chose me to continue my service on the Council.

In a few minutes I will pass the responsibilities of being Council president to Councilmember Harrell. Good luck, Bruce.

My new primary committee assignment includes oversight of the city government's finances, our neighborhood planning and outreach work and affordable housing. This last part of my portfolio is very important this year because we will submit the Affordable Housing Levy to the voters for renewal and potentially a significant expansion. Seattle voters in their wisdom always step up and invest in the future . . . we saw this last November with approval of the Move Seattle transportation levy and we saw it a year ago when our voters approved a permanent source of funding for our parks and when they approved the Seattle Preschool Program.

The Preschool Program is off to a great start—15 classrooms and 288 kids. This program is especially important because we know that many of our children are being left behind. Tragically, many of Seattle's kids enter Kindergarten already behind their peers and it will be nearly impossible for them to catch up. New research clearly shows that compared to other Western countries, the United States is leaving many of our children behind and this gap is persistent well into adulthood. The same is true here in our good city.

In the coming weeks, we will start a conversation about what additional steps we can take to remedy this decades-long problem. Universal, high-quality preschool is a crucial first step, but there are other evidence-based efforts we can implement as well.

In conclusion, I wrote a little haiku to frame my approach to public policy; so, I will end with a Burgess haiku:

Always serve humbly
do things that really matter
Focus most on the kids