



**Mayor Greg Stanton**  
**State of the City Address**  
February 28, 2013  
*Transcript*

Thank you, Todd. And thank you to the Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce for hosting the 2013 State of the City and for everything we do together to build a stronger Phoenix economy.

Also, thank you to CeCe Peniston – what an amazing voice – and the Reverend Eve Nunez for that beautiful prayer.

Welcome to everyone in this sold-out room or watching online.

We have much to discuss and many people to acknowledge.

First, to my wife, Nicole. You're a spectacular mom to Trevor and Violet, a passionate protector of our city's kids, and one of the nation's top attorneys. That's not your husband bragging, that's the publication Best Lawyers in America saying so.

We're joined today by many honored guests, and by elected officials from across Arizona. Secretary of State Ken Bennett; supervisors Steve Chucri and Mary Rose Wilcox; a number of state legislators, including Speaker of the House Andy Tobin – Speaker, thank you for being here today; and my predecessor, former Mayor Phil Gordon. Each of you, thank you.

Each day I get to work with great teammates on City Council. We have our occasional disagreements, but we challenge one another to be better. Working together, we create solid public policy for the people of Phoenix. Vice Mayor Bill Gates, Councilwoman Thelda Williams, Councilmen Daniel Valenzuela, Sal DiCiccio, Michael Nowakowski Jim Waring, I'm indebted to your unwavering commitment to the people of our city.

And to my two colleagues Michael Johnson and Tom Simplot, serving their final years on Council, you have built strong legacies and your service will benefit future generations.

To my team in the Mayor's Office – a small-but-mighty bunch – I appreciate you pushing forward such an ambitious agenda, and all your many days of hard work.

Except for one day. The day I got talked into playing basketball with the Mercury. Thanks, Sarah, my nose is almost fully healed.

I have served as your Mayor for just over 400 days. This is the best job in public service. I get to work closely with the most talented, dedicated public servants in America. Phoenix firefighters and police officers who stand between our families and danger; park rangers who sweat through the blazing summer; water department lab techs whose great work again helped us avoid a rate increase.

Our employee groups and our outstanding City Manager David Cavazos, whose joint commitment to strong labor-management relations kept vital services in place – to David and to each of our 14,000 outstanding employees, I owe a sincere debt of gratitude. If I occasionally look good as Mayor, it's because of you.

Because of you, the state of our city is strong.

Please, let's give our city professionals big round of applause.

I've lived in Phoenix for 40 years. I grew up on 39th Avenue. That house was where my mom and dad instilled in their children the value of serving one's community with humility.

Phoenix is where I met and fell in love with Nicole. It's where we've chosen to raise our children.

I know this city. I know the heart of the city. In Phoenix, when we're at our best, the "can do" spirit of the Old West meets the creative energy and vision of the 21st century.

In Phoenix, those who came before us, who led, literally built from nothing a garden in the desert. This generation will continue to improve on that vision, but not without effort and sweat – not without meeting the tough challenges ahead of us.

In Washington DC, Congressional dysfunction has us hours away from job-killing sequester cuts, cuts that will put our fragile economic recovery at significant risk. Closer to home, our state's economic recovery continues to sputter. Around too many kitchen tables, the deep recession of last decade continues to be the crushing challenge of this decade.

The old Phoenix economy, defined by edge construction and real estate spikes, creates enviable peaks – followed by prolonged, hyper-magnified crashes. Our challenge? We must break this boom-bust cycle. But creating the new Phoenix economy – diverse, home to a robust mix of industries – will not be easy.

Competition is fierce in 2013 – not just with the Denvers and Salt Lakes, but also with cities around the country and the world. For Phoenix to win, talk of creating a globally competitive workforce must translate into action. We must confront and solve the challenge of the imminent education finance cliff facing our state.

The math is not pretty: Proposition 100 ends soon; Prop 204 failed; school overrides were defeated. Despite these challenges, we must lift our schools. The city must play an increased role in supporting education. We must create the smarter, more technologically advanced workforce Phoenix needs for success. Failure on education is absolutely not an option for our city.

Every action I take, every ounce of leadership I exert, will be directed toward creating this new Phoenix economy.

Our future is by no means guaranteed.

For Phoenix to reach its competitive best, three bedrock priorities must be paramount: One, the creation of high-wage jobs and a competitive workforce must occupy every working moment. Two, our city organization must do more with less – and then do even more than that. We will continue to balance our budget without gimmicks and protect our flawless AAA credit rating. Phoenix will become more responsive, more innovative, more entrepreneurial. And three, we must make our city even more livable.

Let's grow sustainably, making decisions today that protect tomorrow. We need safer neighborhoods and to embrace our city's diversity. More support for our schools and more support for arts and culture. Let's preserve our city's history. And build a downtown that pulses with life. We have started down that path. Our city is strong, with the potential to get much stronger.

The new Phoenix economy is taking shape. In the last 12 months, we have seen the siting or opening of more than \$400 million in bioscience projects. These projects will soon treat more than 60,000 patients a year, creating an annual economic impact approaching \$500 million.

Downtown, on the Biomedical Campus, the much-anticipated Health Sciences Education Building opened in July, joining together the University of Arizona, NAU and the city. Across the street, together with St. Joseph's Hospital and the U of A, we broke ground last week on the \$100 million University of Arizona Cancer Center. This 220,000-square-foot project is one of a kind – Arizona's only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center.

The city is more than a landlord here. We committed \$14 million during the worst economy since the Depression – and kept to that commitment – because the Cancer Center is everything we want in the new Phoenix economy, an engine for high-wage jobs and a driver for better, life-sustaining health care.

The same goes for what's happening up north near Desert Ridge, with the Arizona Biomedical Corridor I announced last year. Already, our long-term work with the Mayo Clinic and Arizona State University is paying off. Construction is underway on a new \$180 million proton beam therapy center. In August, Mayo announced an investment of \$130 million in their new cancer center.

The city is doing its part, too. We're busy finalizing a comprehensive development plan.

We're lining up private investors. Desert Ridge, with its available acreage and strategic location, represents the perfect site for a New Economy project. Not more strip malls and sprawl that scream old Phoenix. Thank you, Councilman Jim Waring for your help leading this project. And a big thank you to State Land Commissioner Vanessa Hickman. We can't do this without both of you.

As we work to create hundreds of high-wage health care jobs, we've taken action to protect the quality health care jobs we already have.

Last year, we shepherded to passage the city's new Access-to-Care Ordinance. Why did Phoenix get into the health care business? To spur economic growth and deliver medical services to those in need – at no additional cost to city taxpayers.

Access to Care unites the city, local hospitals and AHCCCS to protect jobs for nurses, physician's assistants and so many other medical professionals. It gives thousands of Arizona children access to KidsCare. Phoenix is only the second city in the nation to implement this strategy. Why take the lead? We took the lead because we can't afford to lose nurses. We can't afford to lose X-ray techs. We can't afford to lose doctors. We can't afford to lose more than 200 million federal tax dollars to other states. We need that money and those jobs right here in Phoenix.

The Access to Care ordinance demonstrates the unique leadership role our city plays in Arizona. I was proud to see Governor Brewer say in her State of the State speech that she modeled her Medicaid expansion plan after what we did in Phoenix.

Quantum leaps in economic development also require parties willing to see past old ways of thinking. It's a passion of mine. Regional partnerships matter. If we want an advanced economy, we as Mayors and cities must work together.

I see Gilbert Mayor John Lewis and Surprise Mayor Sharon Wolcott. Thank for you for being here today. Thank you for committing to the idea that our Valley will rise or fall together on transportation, education, sustainability and every other issue that matters. Vital relationships transcend borders.

I've spoken often about repairing our relationship with Mexico, our largest international trading partner. Our economic success depends on leveraging this relationship to the fullest extent possible.

We're not just being neighborly. Improved international trade means more revenue and more jobs here in Phoenix and in Arizona.

In 2012, I led two trade missions to Mexico City. In April, I'll travel there again for a third trade mission. The recent election of President Enrique Peña Nieto has created an opportunity to reset this relationship, to get the policy and the politics right and to repair the damage done by past divisiveness.

On the subject of immigration reform, let me be clear – without being partisan. I applaud the leadership of President Obama and our senators, John McCain and Jeff Flake. To create economic success, it's time we put aside our differences. We need to grant the dreams of the young DREAMers in Arizona. Let's give these talented young leaders licenses to drive. And let's pass the DREAM Act, so they have full license to lead our city in the near future. I call on Washington to pass comprehensive immigration reform today.

Economic progress also requires us to better leverage our traditional strengths. Sky Harbor Airport means nearly \$30 billion a year to our economy. The success of our region and the success of the World's Friendliest Airport are inextricably linked. You've seen the headlines. The recent airline merger has created uncertainty and concern. What can we do to protect our position? Control what we can – continue to improve our airport infrastructure. Get Sky Train ready for its spring grand opening. And with the help of our entire Council – led by Councilwoman Thelda Williams – create at Sky Harbor the best airport in the nation, bar none. That's what we can control.

That's the economy-driving responsibility we must embrace.

Economic success in the 21st century also depends on talented people. During the past year, I visited 70 of our city's top employers – in your headquarters, in your manufacturing facilities. I spent more time on these visits than any other responsibility during my first year as Mayor. Why? Because the number one thing we can do to create new jobs is to support our existing employers.

What did you tell me? You told me you need employees with the right skills. That is your top concern, ahead of taxes or regulatory changes. And I heard you. In response, we're overhauling the city's job training programs.

Our new employer-focused strategy will seek out business sectors and companies with open jobs. We'll teach these job-seekers the skills they need to fill your critical positions. We also will partner with the Maricopa Community Colleges and their new Corporate College -- a perfect complement to our strategy. Thank you for your continued leadership, Chancellor Glasper.

Our city's ability to compete on a national scale depends on this creativity – just as economic competitiveness requires us to adopt policies that advance our city's reputation and its commitment to equality.

On Tuesday night, led by Councilman Tom Simplot, we passed a new, more inclusive anti-discrimination ordinance. This new law will better support our city's LGBT residents and our disabled residents. Competitor cities and Corporate America had leaped years ahead of us in this area. We had to take action – decisive, forward-thinking action. And that's exactly we did. Today in Phoenix, no one will be denied a home, a job or a restaurant meal because of whom they love or their sexual orientation.

Was it overdue? Yes, no question. But this ordinance was also about our need to compete for the best and brightest creative minds. We need the best talent possible if we're going to continue to do much more with much less.

In the past year, the constant pressure to conserve every dollar has tested our organization – just as it has tested each of you here today. I can't sugarcoat this.

Our city today is stretched in a way it's never been stretched before. Just a few years ago, in 2010, we faced a \$277 million budget deficit. We were staring at a thousand layoffs, closing libraries, senior centers, and after-school programs. Our police officers and fire fighters were facing 500 pink slips. Just a few years later, in 2013, our organization is stretched thin, but not beyond the breaking point. Today, after making many tough choices, Phoenix has 2,500 fewer employees than at its peak. Per capita, we have the smallest city workforce in 40 years.

Economic projections said our recovery would be full steam ahead by 2013. That was too optimistic. Fortunately, we've managed to keep the crime rate low and keep core services in place. And we've made smart fiscal choices. We've preserved our AAA credit rating. Property taxes will fall again this year, reducing revenues from that levy by \$400 million since 2010. Our innovation and efficiency effort, led by Vice Mayor Bill Gates, has saved our city \$62 million.

Financial calculations like that look fine on a spreadsheet. The thing is, we don't live on spreadsheets. We live in the real world. That requires balancing numbers with the people those numbers impact.

That what's at stake as we reconsider the emergency food tax. Some say, "It's just \$2 a week for the average family." Others point out that 23 of the 25 cities in our region do the same thing. I get the arguments. But for many families, that \$100 a year matters.

The question for me is, "Can we repeal this emergency measure without gutting public safety and compromising the city's fiscal health?" That's the bottom line. That's our choice. It's not an easy one. I will make this decision soon – with all the data on the table, in the full light of day, with every option explored.

We will strike a balance between financial considerations, human considerations and the impact on the safety of every resident in this city. We struck that same balance on our pension reform proposal. We took on that issue proactively, to improve the city's financial bottom line on the front end. Other cities waited until crisis struck. Our Council acted from a position of strength.

We unanimously put Prop 201 up for an election on March 12th. City voters have a chance to save Phoenix nearly \$600 million over the next two decades. Thank you Council members Valenzuela and Simplot for leading the charge. Thank you to the Greater Phoenix Chamber for your support with this measure.

I know the voters of Phoenix will say yes to this strong proposal. Using resources more efficiently also drove us to streamline our procurement system, giving priority to local businesses.

And it's why we took bold steps to revamp our permitting and development process. Thank you, Councilmen Simplot and DiCiccio for leading this effort I know we will see even more advancements in the future. That's what I mean when I say we must be singularly committed to creating new efficiencies and a new Phoenix economy.

That commitment involves rethinking not only the way we do business, but also the way we live in Phoenix. The more we improve life here, the more competitive our city becomes. We need to continue to evolve – and continue to more deeply integrate sustainable practices into everyday life and every decision we make at the city.

I'm talking about PHX Renews, the largest transformation of vacant land in the nation, right in the heart of the city at Central and Indian School. I'm talking about our new bike share program to expand the reach of light rail. We're going to begin Bike Share before the end of the year. I'm talking about Plan PHX – putting a modern twist on the process of revising our General Plan – using social media and the web, we're taking planning out of City Hall and putting it in the hands of thousands of residents. Here's a plug. Check it out for yourself. My PlanPHX.com.

I'm excited about our new sustainability initiative ... “40 By 20.” Think about this: Today, Phoenix recycles only 13 percent of its solid waste. By decade's end, “40 By 20” will triple the amount of recycling in Phoenix. How do we get to there? More education, aggressive outreach and economic incentives for residents and businesses to recycle. That's my challenge to the city. I know we will get it done.

For a decade in public service, I've led by acting regionally. But being a regional leader doesn't mean ignoring the essentialness of a thriving downtown. In fact, just the opposite. A great downtown helps build a solid region.

2012 was a solid year for our core. We already talked about the great bioscience advances. City Council approved the city's investment in the new downtown ASU Law School. And we approved two new high rises – the Barron Collier project east of CityScape and the Golub project at Second Avenue and Monroe. With the construction of 240 apartments atop the Hotel Palomar - believe it or not - CityScape will be completed.

Every day coming to work, I pass those new residences -- Roosevelt Point, the Lofts At McKinley. I see new venues like Gypsy Bar and the Blue Hound; old favorites like Tom's Tavern. We have bigger First Fridays, more pop-up parks, and yes, Phoenix, we heard you – new parking meters that take credit cards!

A great downtown isn't skyscrapers alone. It must be a neighborhood chock full of life. We are well on our way -- in large part thanks to Michael Johnson's decade of consistent advocacy. Thank you, Councilman.

The new Downtown Phoenix Inc will propel us even further forward. DPI will be a focal point for all our central city efforts with a clear mandate. Bring even more life to the center of the city – concerts, events, excitement. David Krietor is the right man to serve as DPI's executive director. Dave, thanks for taking on this challenge.

DPI's new board will include Kimber Lanning of Local First AZ, Tim Eigo of Downtown Voices Coalition, Cindy Dach of Made Boutique and Erlinda Torrez of the AZ Latino Art and Culture Center. Folks, I need all you, your best ideas. Your presence guarantees this organization will have serious street cred. This grassroots group puts decision-making power in the hands of committed locals, downtowners who understand how to balance livability and commerce.

For our downtown to thrive and for Phoenix to win economically, our transportation infrastructure must also grow stronger. In 2012, the light rail system served a record 13 and a half million riders. In January, we broke ground on the Northwest Extension – which had been stalled – adding three miles of track along 19th Avenue.

We have four light rail extensions in planning today. Twenty years from now, with help committed leaders in Washington like Rep. Ed Pastor and Kyrsten Sinema ... our region will have a 57-mile light rail system. That system will better position us to compete economically.

So will doing more to deepen the city's commitment to arts and culture. In 2012, we tripled funding for arts and culture grants. We opened an art gallery in City Hall funded entirely by private donations. And we're building a new headquarters and rehearsal space for the Arizona Opera along Central Avenue.

Making life better is what drove us to create the Phoenix H.E.R.O. initiative, to help unemployed veterans find the jobs they deserve. Joining us today are three heroes: Daniel Spottiswood, an Army vet, Darryl Stokeling, a Marine, and Andrew Stone, an Army vet who returned from Afghanistan last year. This trio all recently got jobs with RR Donnelly through the Phoenix H.E.R.O. initiative. Daniel, Darryl, Andrew: thank you for your service. Please stand.

We will not stop there.

To fight chronic homelessness, my office hired a full-time advocate to give this issue the attention it deserves. The evidence is clear. The faster we get people off the streets, into stable housing, the greater their chances of success in breaking the cycle of homelessness.

That's why we revised our voucher system to a "housing first" model – one that serves those in the most need, not those who have waited the longest in line. With leadership from Councilman Simplot, we also opened Encanto Point, to put a permanent roof over more heads. This summer, we'll expand our comprehensive strategy, convening a homelessness summit with non-profit advocates and the faith-based community. When our residents are at risk, when our neighbors are in pain, we need to take action.

Words are simply not enough.

The same is true with the issue of domestic violence. I want to take a moment to say thank you to Wells Fargo. Your \$300,000 donation to United Way is helping us move families in crisis away from danger and into safe, secure housing.

Speeches are great, but let me make a key point. Our city is not just what we say about it. It's more than words. Our city is the people who live here, who pour their energy into our neighborhoods and into our schools. Phoenix is defined in a million ways by the million-plus people who call it home.

That's why I believe so strongly in education. For our city to achieve great things, every child must matter.

That's why we restored the city's education office and why we formed the Arizona Mayors' Education Roundtable. We're working together with mayors statewide on college and career readiness. Cities need to do our part. We can't rely on the state alone to educate our children.

That's why, together with Councilman Valenzuela, I've agreed to lead the way with Read on Phoenix. Together with Helios, the Arizona Community Foundation, the Piper Foundation, and the United Way we're rethinking literacy education to make sure every child in this city can read by third grade. That's mission-critical. Not only is it a new mandate under state law – it's the only way to build the economy of the future.

We need to meet kids wherever they learn – schools, libraries, community centers, and summer programs. We'll provide teacher training and new materials to make sure students hits this critical benchmark. We will screen kids early to get immediate help and tutor to those who are struggling. We'll work with districts on a pilot program to give kindergartners books and we'll give parents more tools to teach their children.

That's key ... parents are every child's first and best teacher. We're going to roll up our sleeves and get this done. Education can only succeed if kids feel safe at school. This week, Chief Garcia and I met with education leaders from across the city. We heard them loud and clear. The risk of school violence is one we cannot take. These superintendents and leaders told us again what we've heard for months: They want a direct line to the Phoenix Police Department ... a closer relationship with public safety at every level.

That's why along with Councilman Nowakowski ... we're developing the Phoenix School Safety program. This program will double the number of police officers in schools citywide. We're going to work with every school in Phoenix – every one of them: public, private, charter – to develop clear, effective emergency response plans.

That plan will be immediately available to every Phoenix police officer and every first responder called on in an emergency. This isn't a one-off gimmick; this is no-nonsense

community policing ... boots on the ground. We don't need Steven Seagal to keep our kids safe. We need real cops doing real police work. Violence has no place in our city.

Recently, we have felt pain and grief too often and too deeply. We ache when we lose a brilliant lawyer like Mark Hummels. We hurt when a drive-by shooting claims an innocent soul like Sandra Johnson. We get angry when we lose a business leader like Steve Singer. Violence diminishes our city.

So today, I'm announcing the Phoenix gun-buyback program. This buyback will take place every Saturday in the month of May. In partnership with Arizonans For Gun Safety, this \$100,000 effort will allow anyone in the Valley to drop off a weapon, no questions asked.

I respect the Second Amendment. This buyback will take steps to make Phoenix safer without curtailing the rights of responsible gun owners. Why risk the controversy? Because I respect Chief Garcia, who told me, "Every unwanted gun we take off the street is one less gun out there to harm our officers or hurt our residents."

Thank you, Chief. You and I started at about the same time. Your leadership and professionalism have been a tremendous asset to our team.

The state of our city is strong.

We have strong financial fundamentals. A strong bottom line. Those strengths have enabled us to meet the challenges of the last year. Those same strengths will help us persevere through the challenges ahead. And make no mistake, will keep moving forward.

We will create more high-wage jobs and business success, more livable neighborhoods and better quality schools.

I will live up to the single sentence that defines my job as your mayor. I will do everything in my power to make the Phoenix economy exactly what we want it to be.

Together, we will build a future where the new economy roars. We will create a Phoenix blessed with safety and opportunity, full of educated young minds and thriving health.

The future of Phoenix is not guaranteed. We have to make the right choices. We have to earn it. And we will.

Today, the state of our city is strong. But together we will create the even stronger future Phoenix so richly deserves.

Thank you.