

# Council Member Erin Mendenhall, District 5 | 2018

## Oath of Office Speech

---

What an honor it is to be chosen by the people of District 5 to represent our community for another four years. Thank you, my fellow residents.

And another honor it is to serve alongside my peers: Stan Penfold, Lisa Adams, Charlie Luke, James Rogers, Andrew Johnston, Derek Kitchen, and now Amy Fowler and Chris Wharton. The four of us addressing you today, I believe, sit before you relieved the election has passed, excited to begin or continue the work, honored and humbled.

And here many of *you* may sit, thinking, "I can't imagine why they'd want to do this job! Low pay, high pressure, public criticism!" (All true!) And yet you've joined us today to honor and celebrate democracy—you, our friends and family, colleagues, campaign staff and supporters, Salt Lake City staff, elected officials, past and present, and politicians.

Regardless of your current willingness to become a candidate for office, we all recognize the value of public service, of giving of oneself to the work of our community.

As the novelist George Eliot once wrote, "What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for each other?"

You do this every day—serving family, neighbors, strangers, nonprofit organizations, churches and more. This city is strong with community spirit and service of all kinds. It's that very sense of community that anchors us during times of disarray, loneliness, even now, perhaps especially now, with the collective, growing frustration with federal politics.

If you're like me, there's many days I'd rather switch my car radio from the news broadcast to music or silence, than hear what new monumental mistake the president has made or the blow by blow of federal gridlock de jour.

But these feelings of bewilderment and frustration have actually moved many *into* politics throughout history!

The greatest President yet in my lifetime, Barack Obama, said, "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."

As women in elected office, Mayor Biskupski, Amy Fowler and I are part of a mere 27% of female held elected seats in this state today.

We must achieve greater gender equality in elected offices here in Utah. Our lack of representation is exhibited by issues that legislative policy *could* positively affect, if the momentum of representation were there.

The gender wage gap is one such issue, wherein Utah is fourth worst in the nation with women making 70 cents to every dollar of their male coworkers, Latina women in Utah are at the bottom of our category making only 41 cents to every male dollar. 26% of Utah's female workforce is in the primary

# Council Member Erin Mendenhall, District 5 | 2018

## Oath of Office Speech

---

or sole breadwinners for their families. Gender pay inequity affects hundreds of thousands of Utah women and their families.

I have been working with Mayor Biskupski and her administration on this issue and am excited to see our work advance with forthcoming policy recommendations that include workplace expectations, pay decision processes, interviewing practices, and, I hope, child care opportunities for Salt Lake City employees.

Salt Lake City has never been shy to lead our State on such important issues as this, and it is the City Council that distills our community voices in to policies that affect our everyday lives. Our quality of life as neighborhoods and as individuals is tightly threaded into the fabric of policy woven on the third floor of this building.

Today, I'd like to make you an offer: Lunch to discuss strategy of your campaign for some public office. I'd like to ask you to imagine yourself standing where I am now, at some point in your future. If not in this city, then your own home town.

For me, why I'm standing here today boils down to a few simple truths.  
I love this city.  
I love people.  
I'm willing to work.

My desire to positively affect community issues like air quality and other environmental concerns, human trafficking, geographic equity in housing opportunities, homelessness, funding for streets and prioritization of alternative transportation options in our city are all beams of the bridge that lead me in to public office, built upon the stones of my few, simple truths.

The stones of your own foundations may mirror mine, or not at all.  
I challenge you to ask yourself what they are, for you, and then imagine what shape your own bridge might take. It may be a structure to support your work as a candidate for office, or it may be in support of someone else who is—both bridges are badly needed to help us reach the future we desire and to heal from the division we currently suffer from as a nation.

I feel utterly myself to stand her, before you, today. I am where I want to be, which is simultaneously a fluid, ever changing ground. I recognize and appreciate the wisdom of civil rights leader and mentor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Howard Thurman, who said, "There is something in every one of you that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself. It is the only true guide you will ever have. And if you cannot hear it, you will all of your life spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls."

The genuine in yourself, as it turns out, is able to be taught, nurtured, and even allow you to change your mind.

This office—perhaps every elected office—allows you the opportunity to learn far more than you imagined as a candidate. It offers you the grinding stone of public opinion to hone your tools for making

# Council Member Erin Mendenhall, District 5 | 2018

## Oath of Office Speech

---

decisions. This position allows you to learn from the best of the best, from Public Utilities to Sustainability, HR and IT to the airport, Police and Fire to the Library, our own brilliant City Council Staff and so many more. It is a humbling and dynamic experience.

I want thank my campaign manager, Michael Iverson. My amazing children, Everett, Mila and Cash, for their love, patience and support of my work. I thank my husband, Kyle, for your first-hand understanding, your love, and for keeping your opinion out of my work, and I thank my brothers Liam and Blake and our parents: Mom, Toni, Sue, John and Lisa, for your all love and so much child care!

Four years—that’s what we’re offered to do our best for our neighbors, for our city. I’ll end by echoing Vice President Joe Biden who said: “Do nothing – Or, take history into our own hands and like few generations are given the chance, bend it, bend it, in the service of a better day.”

Thank you.