

**DANIELLA LEVINE CAVA, COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 8  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
INSTALLATION SPEECH 11-24-14**

**INTRO: Hope and Promise**

Thank you to my dear family, my endlessly supportive husband, my friends new and longstanding, and the amazing coalition that made sure I was elected. Thank you as well to my campaign team, manager Matt William, finance director Andrew Nelson, operations director Olivier Erin-Agot, treasurer Rasha Cameau, field director Martha Ochoa and engagement officer Rick Morgan who are joining my new team, and strategist Christian Ulvert.

For me, and for the many who worked so hard to help me arrive at this place and time, today is filled with hope and promise. Hope that we CAN build a community and economy that will work for all our residents. Hope that we will increase the trust and engagement of our residents in our local government. Hope that we can achieve our full potential as a world class city for those who live here as well as those who visit or invest in our many treasures.

**RESTORE TRUST:**

For too long, trust in our government has been declining. We see that in our low voter turnout, our dismay about public corruption, and our increasing frustration that leadership cannot solve our most daunting problems: traffic, job development, income inequality, escalating housing costs, protection of our green spaces and management of our precious water.

**MY CHOICE TO SERVE:**

I have served from outside government for over 30 years in Miami-Dade and many more before I ever moved to this paradise we call Miami-

Dade. I will take my lifetime of experience serving people and communities into my new role, and I will continue to lead through collective intelligence, drawing upon the knowledge, input and priorities of my constituents and the many who share my vision for a more resilient county, where smart growth (which I will start calling “right growth”), inclusion, care for our natural resources and diverse cultures and cultural institutions, and equality of opportunity are the norms.

It was a fitting reminder to wake up this morning to hear the news that three young men were being honored on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Freedom Summer. They were murdered their first day in the South, fighting for racial equality. It reminds us that there is much work still to be done, and I will be fighting to ensure that nobody is left behind.

### **LEARNING CURVE:**

Since I was elected three months ago I have learned all that I could from our county departments, business and community partners. All have greeted me with open arms. It was an honor to meet with all 12 of my county commission colleagues, the mayor and department heads, and a dozen county attorneys, to learn about the passions and proudest accomplishments of each. I enter ready to collaborate, while adding my own insights.

### **LEGISLATION:**

I have some legislation in the wings; hopefully it will be warmly received. I know that my first job is to count to seven if I am to achieve my colleagues’ support to pass legislation. On the hopefully few occasions in which I tilt at the windmill, it will be to build a case for the future. I think you will find that I am both an idealist and a realistic. And I am persistent, very persistent.

I plan to tackle some very tough issues without fear, and to be a voice for the people, many of whom feel voiceless. NO MORE!

## **OPEN AND TRANSPARENT:**

I will also be developing open processes in my district, for starters, to help the public better understand our budget, our programs and our choices. I aim to help restore trust in government and I plan to measure it: how many more vote, donate to civic causes, volunteer and participate in community meetings. Those are the measurements of the US Census and the annual American Community Survey.

Working in partnership with area universities and civic organizations, including Catalyst Miami, the organization I proudly founded and which is so well represented here today, we will be creating leadership programs and community conversations with the potential to change our ranking from 50<sup>th</sup> among 50 major cities to 1<sup>st</sup>!

We launched our first “Keeping it Great in District 8” Day of Action on Saturday in Cutler Bay, to restore a fragile wetland habitat, the only Everglades Restoration project within an urban area. Coming soon, I will offer youth leaders the opportunity to serve as commissioner for the day. My own Youth Commissioners and the leaders in the YMCA Youth in Government Program will be the first to participate.

## **GROW THE GOOD:**

And perhaps most important I plan to showcase the good that our county is already doing and the many fine individuals who comprise our workforce. Morale is low after much publicized budget and management crises and challenges. Our employees are of the highest caliber. They know where we can improve effectiveness and efficiency. I hope to find ways to help them feel more comfortable to share what they know, while holding up what works best for all to see.

## **MY TEAM:**

I have assembled a magnificent staff. They bring a diversity and wealth of knowledge and experience. They are the Team of 8 for District 8. Sean McCrackine, Chief of Policy and Planning, and Maria Levrant, Chief of Constituent Services, previously served with my predecessor Commissioner Katy Sorenson. Adele Bagley will join as Chief of Engagement. In addition to Martha Ochoa (Executive Assistant) and Rick Morgan (Community Liaison and Special Projects Coordinator) already mentioned, we bring on Jason T. Smith (Legislative Director), Johanna Cervone (Communications and Outreach Coordinator) and Rahel Weldeyesus (Community Services Coordinator). They will all be on board by January 5 and most will occupy offices in our newly configured space at the South Dade Government Center, where we will host thousands of constituents for hundreds of conversations.

## **MY AGENDA:**

Whether addressing sea level rise (thanks to Chairwoman Sosa and our Clerk Harvey Ruvin); the health of our farms and farmworkers; protecting our Everglades and other fragile ecosystems (thank you Commissioner Diaz for being our steward on the federal task force overseeing those efforts); advocating for improved public transit, bike and walking options (thanks to Commissioners Moss, Suarez, Monestime and Diaz among others); championing the great work of the Mom and Pop, Walking One Stop and affordable housing programs (thank you Commissioners Jordan, Edmonson and Moss); bringing more services to those languishing in pre-trial detention or needing mental health services (thanks Commissioner Heyman and Judge Steve Leifman, who swore me in today, for leadership on these alternatives); co-sponsoring the enhanced HRO (thanks Commissioners Edmonson and Barreiro for allowing me to serve as Prime Co-sponsor); watching our funds like a hawk and assuring we collect all revenues due (thank you Commissioners Bovo, Suarez and Zapata for being strong fiscal fiduciaries); championing our cultural institutions and parks (Commissioner Souto, you can be counted on); working with the county's SEDC, Social and Economic Development Council, to combat

our growing income divide and closing the gap through job training and workplace standards, as outlined in the CDMP, Comprehensive Development Master Plan, and Strategic Plan; working with the Ethics Commission and Office of Inspector General to strengthen whistleblower and false claim laws; protecting our animals and strengthening programming for our seniors; and championing our outstanding first responders, military, veterans, and health care providers, so well represented here today.

## **CLOSING:**

For the next four years I promise to listen, learn and serve as steward for our people, planet and profits. All three are important as we create win-win-win solutions across the three legs of society: business, government and civil society comprised of residents and their communities.

In partnership with our mayor I hope to help the county to clarify its goals and then to achieve them. The County Commission is accountable to the public and to the county employees to work wisely and maximize impact. We have many fine plans; implementation is sometimes challenged by lack of resources, resourcefulness and focus.

I long for an active citizenry to guide us in our choices and to hold us accountable. Please do not wait for a private invitation. You are all now a part of this journey. Thank you for giving me this amazing opportunity to earn your trust.

I close with these words in Hebrew, “Hineini”, God here I am.

Thank you.