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REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Good afternoon.

Public Advocate Gotbaum, Congressmen Nadler and Rangel, Borough Presidents Carrion, Markowitz, and Stringer, Senator Duane, Assemblymen Lopez and Rivera, Congressman Manton, former Speaker Vallone, Public Advocate Green and Controller Holtzman. Former members of the Council and other distinguished guests.

Let me say thank you first to all of my colleagues. I am honored to have your support and promise that I will work as hard as I can every day to prove worthy of your trust.

Leroy, Melinda, David, Joel, Bill, and Lew, we had an honorable and spirited race, you are all a credit to your districts and to the City Council and I look forward to working closely with you in the years to come.

Let me also thank my entire family - all of the Quinns, Catullos, and Dellerms here today.

To my father Lawrence and my partner Kim, your patience and unwavering support mean so much...I love you both more than words can say.

It would take too long for me to thank everyone else who played a role in making today possible but you know who you are and I will never forget your help.

Finally, I want to take a moment to thank my great friend and a great Speaker of the City Council, Gifford Miller. When Gifford took office four years ago, the scars of 9/11 were still raw, there were thirty-five new members of the City Council and everyone questioned whether this 30-something kid could do the job...whether he could fill the big shoes of the remarkable speaker before him, Peter Vallone - a man who served this City with distinction and integrity and whose presence we are honored with today.

Well, for four years Gifford Miller led the Council with strength, courage and thoughtfulness...He leaves a City stronger than he found it. For that we are all grateful.

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As one enters this wonderful building and sits in this remarkable chamber, you can't help but feel awed by the responsibility that our constituents have given us.

Whether it's oversight of the Mayor's policies, passing budgets that protect vital services, or laws that protect the health of New Yorkers or helping constituents with important everyday problems, we have the power and the responsibility to improve the lives of millions of people.

And we get to do this in the most vibrant, diverse and the greatest city in the world.

It is truly an honor....and it's an honor that is worth reminding ourselves of, and each other of, everyday.

As Speaker I will be guided by principles that will make our government even more responsive to people's needs and more effective for all New Yorkers.

I am committed to being a five-borough Speaker. Whether you speak Spanish in the South Bronx, Chinese in Flushing, Yiddish in Borough Park, Creole in Flatbush, Bassa in Park Hill or English in Chelsea, we work for you...we serve you...our job is to make your life better. It doesn't matter where you live, this Council and I are here to answer your needs.

I know that I will only be as good a Speaker as I am a listener. So my message to my colleagues, to our constituents and to all New Yorkers is simple: My door is always open...the more people we hear from, the more good ideas we get, the more effective we will be as a legislature...the better Speaker I will be for everyone.

For eight million New Yorkers, we are the People's House. We are in every neighborhood, every day and every night. It is our responsibility to connect our government with the needs of the people.

And for many of the over one million New Yorkers who recently entered this country, we are the lifeline to needed services.

As Speaker I will work with all of our colleagues to make it easier to address the problems of our constituents. And this means using technology to find patterns of problems across the City. If multiple neighborhoods cannot get stop signs installed in a timely fashion, we should know that this is a systemic problem...and treat it as that. If some neighborhoods are saddled with higher unemployment than others, we should quantify it and then direct economic development money to help those communities that need it most.

The Mayor's job is to focus on the needs of New Yorkers on a macro-level from the top down...our job is to focus on their needs from the bottom up. To listen and learn from our constituents one neighborhood block at a time.

Yet, our goals and the mayor's goals are the same.

Too often this body acts as a report card on the Mayor...he makes an announcement in the Blue Room and journalists run over to us to give it a grade.

I believe that our job, first and foremost, is to work with the Mayor - whatever his party affiliation - to make the City a better place. That's why as Speaker I am committed to putting progress ahead of partisanship.

Yes, we will oppose the Mayor when we believe we must - I have done so in the past and I will do so in the future...but I sincerely hope - and believe - that we can agree more often than we disagree...and that both sides of City Hall can work together with a renewed sense of trust and teamwork.

The truth is, the stakes are too high to do it any other way.

We must work together on a more rational budget process that improves long-term planning and fixes the annual dance over cuts and restorations.

We must work together to continue to keep to our City safe from terror attack and our streets safe from crime.

Mr. Mayor I will go anywhere you need to stop the flow of illegal guns into this City. I'll go to Washington DC or to Albany to work hand-in-hand with Speaker Shelly Silver...anywhere...to help us in the fight to keep these weapons off our streets.

And we must work together to help the millions of working class people for whom the City has become simply unaffordable. While grade schools are getting better, middle schools are simply not improving fast enough.

We face a housing crisis that is pricing too many tenants and homeowners out of their neighborhoods.

It is unacceptable that people who work here and who want to live and raise a family here cannot afford to do so. It is our job to help change that.

And, most importantly, we must work together improve the lives of the least fortunate.

To give everyone the opportunity to have a job that offers dignity and respect...and that pays a living wage... to make the delivery of social services more effective... To make our public hospitals better... and to offer smarter preventive care for our children.

To accomplish these goals, the City Council must become an incubator of big ideas...the creator of innovative policies that help people across the economic spectrum and across the City.

We will look to cities and states throughout the country and to neighborhoods and communities throughout New York for the smartest solutions to people's everyday problems.

Let me end on a personal note.

My father was watching the local news at my office two days ago and the reporter came on to talk about my selection as Speaker.

The reporter talked about my being the first woman speaker...and the first openly gay speaker.

And without missing a beat, my dad stuck out his chest and proudly yelled at the TV -you forgot Irish, you bum!

Let me say that I am incredibly proud that in the most diverse City in the world, that diversity is seen as a strength - not an impediment.

For that I owe a debt of gratitude to all of you in this chamber and to all of our constituents in our districts.

Thank you for your support...thank you for your trust...I won't let you down.