

Statement of Dennis J. Kucinich
Candidate for Mayor of the City of Cleveland
“Light Up Cleveland”

June 14, 2021

I love Cleveland. Our city that needs a steady, experienced, healing hand in these divisive times. As Mayor I will seek to unify our city by meeting the challenges to safety and security, which exist in every neighborhood.

Years ago, during my first term as Mayor, I set a standard for diversity and unity when half of my top appointments came from Cleveland’s African American community, including the city’s safety director, James W. Barrett, who was in charge of the police department. I understood then, as I understand now, the concerns that exist in the black community about the urgent necessity of fair and impartial enforcement of the law.

The people of Cleveland have a right to expect safe neighborhoods, free of the scourge of crime, supported by a police department that is ever mindful of the limitations on the use of force. Community groups who are working to achieve closer review of police work deserve to be heard and to be involved.

Ultimately, the charter of the City of Cleveland places the responsibility of chief conservator of the peace upon the Mayor.

I am fully prepared to assume these duties, to support the police when they deserve it, to reserve the right to question police action, and to take appropriate disciplinary action in the event that departmental rules or civil liberties are violated. Any abuse of authority by law enforcement personnel will not be tolerated.

We all know our beloved city is being overrun by crime. Every neighborhood is at risk. Murders, shootings, carjackings, street assaults, robberies, and break-ins have increased at an alarming rate. This didn’t happen overnight.

Our city has been enveloped by an attitude of hopelessness, where leaders lament rising crime but do little or nothing about it while our citizens fear walking the streets, sitting on their porch, going shopping in the city, even stopping at a gas station. Good intentions and good wishes are no substitute for good public policy and leadership. Cleveland has become one of the most dangerous cities in America. Working together we can change that.

As Mayor I will:

Hire 400 additional police; build up the homicide unit, the scientific investigation unit, and the gang unit.

Hire 100 safety assistants with special skills to deal with nonviolent disturbances and those suffering from mental illness, because not every 9 1 1 call requires an armed response.

We will increase police pay and attract quality applicants to law enforcement through providing college tuition for those who commit to five years service in the Cleveland Police Department.

We can and we will create a safe city, a peaceful city, where people are unafraid to walk the streets, sit on their front porch, where parents do not have to worry whether their children will be shot. We will reclaim the streets from violent gangs.

We will work to rescue neighborhoods that are besieged by criminal elements.

When violent felons know that simply by driving away they can escape justice, they will flee every time. We must permit police to enforce the law.

Violent felons must be pursued, and captured. The city will purchase two new helicopters to minimize the length of police chases and the danger to innocent civilians. We must send a message loud and clear to violent felons: A strengthened Cleveland Police force will pursue you. You cannot escape. You will be caught. You will face justice.

When Cleveland police, while facing the barrel of a gun, risk their lives, we must defend the police as they defend our community. The Mayor has a singular, crucial role in this regard. The Mayor must demonstrate to the community that fair, impartial and even-handed law enforcement is a top priority. The people have a right to expect no less.

Law enforcement, in and of itself, has its limitations. We must go deeper to address the root causes of violence and criminal activity.

That is why, as Mayor, I will create a cabinet-level **Civic Peace Department** which will identify trouble spots in the city and intervene, whenever possible, prior to an outbreak of violence and will create new policies that address safety, security, crime, and rehabilitation, establish and coordinate new community-based violence prevention programs and conflict resolution strategies.

Our Civic Peace Department will address all forms of violence within our community. We will create and coordinate new policies that reduce drug and alcohol dependence. We will promote racial, religious and ethnic tolerance, cooperation and human unity. Our ultimate goal is to create peaceful homes and neighborhoods through intensive community involvement supported by City Hall.

The Mayor is also in charge of Cleveland public schools. Violence is a learned response, so are peace and nonviolence.

I will bring to our schools **a new peace curriculum**, where, from the earliest years children will learn peaceful interaction with others. Cleveland schools will be more involved in counseling and peer mediation. In the weeks ahead I will unveil our education platform that will bring sweeping change to our schools so that they become ever-more innovative catalysts for restoring and regenerating our city.

These ideas, by the way, were brought forward 20 years ago, when I was a member of the United States Congress.

People have said, again and again, I was ahead of my time. Well, this is our time, this is the time for bold, visionary ideas that can transform our city.

Young people from across the city are already actively engaged in our efforts. They are bringing their talents and abilities to help our community and I welcome them with open arms.

I will mentor them, support them in their own vision and help them become the most powerful advocates, young leaders who will take a community-oriented approach to government and politics far into the future. Remember, I still hold in my heart the visionary spirit of youth, the determination to change things, to right wrongs, to create new forms.

Our desire for a truly peaceful community will be realized as we directly address the poverty in which many Clevelanders are mired. So many of our fellow citizens are suffering in substandard living conditions that make them vulnerable. Our campaign will address homelessness, adult illiteracy, food deserts, infant mortality, insufficient access to health care, and the ongoing consequences of lead contamination of water pipes.

I will have the brilliant assistance of my wife Elizabeth Kucinich, my wife and my teammate, who has worked on a national and global levels and will lend her considerable talents and vision to helping lift up our community.

Our Administration will take an all-encompassing, holistic approach to the economic and social challenges which confront all Clevelanders.

When I was growing up in Cleveland, my parents never had a home they could call their own. We were renters. As the family grew, we were forced to move. There were times we were the only Caucasian family in a community of color. I lived in 21 different places by the time I was 1, including a couple of cars. As a result of that experience, dealing with uncertainty, evictions and the social disorganization and vulnerability which comes from economic disadvantage, I understand what so many Clevelanders are experiencing today.

I have the life experience and the political independence to help to reclaim safe neighborhoods, to re-energize our local economy, and to transform Cleveland's city government into an instrument of public service.

Many Clevelanders will remember that during my 8 terms representing Cleveland in the United States Congress, my office handled over 11,000 requests for service each and every year. I believe government must be there when people need help.

Join with me to truly light up Cleveland with safety, security, a dedication to creating civic peace and new peace education programs in our schools. Cleveland can become a safe place where people want to remain, move to, keep and establish businesses, raise a family and celebrate community. We will literally bring more light to Cleveland by increasing our 61,000 LED street lights from 80% luminosity to 100%, in high crime areas.

Crime is the number one issue. Safety, security and a peaceful community is our goal. But I have made it clear today, that if we are to reclaim our city it will take careful attention to all of our challenges. In the days ahead I will roll out a comprehensive programs to address every single area of great concern in our city. I am ready from day one to take the city in a new, upbeat, can-do direction.

I am ready to work with you, the people of Cleveland to achieve this.

I ask for your support in the September 14th Primary election and the November 2nd, General Election.

Visit our website at Kucinich.com for more details on how to get engaged.

I look forward to us partnering to transform our beautiful city.

Thank you.