



CITY OF SCRANTON

340 North Washington Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503 | (570) 348-4101 | www.scrantonpa.gov

2026 Inauguration Mayor Cognetti's Address: A City in the Light

Good morning, everyone. Looking out at all of you today, my heart is incredibly full.

To our neighbors and business owners from every corner of Scranton, our dedicated City Hall team, our first responders, our education, labor, and community leaders, including Superintendent Keating, our elected leaders including County Commissioner Bill Gaughan and City Controller John Murray, and everyone who believes in the promise of this city: Thank you for being here.

I want to start with the stained-glass windows behind me. What you see is an incredible work of art created by skilled artisans more than a century ago. For far too long, these windows were dimmed by time, by grime, and by a sense of neglect.

But today, the light is shining through again.

This is the third time I have had the privilege of raising my hand for the Oath of Office and committing to govern for the people of Scranton.

A lot has happened in six years. Sloane was just two weeks old when I first stood here. My mother-in-law was seated here with us. My grandmother was cheering me on from across the country. Mayors Connors and Wenzel were here to support. We didn't know what COVID was. We didn't have a President of the United States that grew up right down the street from City Hall.

Also, I didn't need reading glasses – the words printed here were a lot smaller.

Six years ago, I stood here as an outsider, committed to taking on a political culture notorious for serving the powerful and the well-connected. We joined together and committed to charge forward and make this city a model for how to

better serve people. We've made good on that promise. We took on the status quo, we worked hard, and the results are clear.

Gone are the days of breathless headlines about scandal and financial dire straits. Scranton is now a model our peers look to for *how* to succeed. We have received statewide municipal awards for two years running, and our finances are in a place that experts did not think we would ever achieve.

Today, as with the restored City Hall we stand in, we are committing to continuing to renew the heart of this city, proving that our history isn't a weight that holds us back. Instead, it's a source of light that guides us.

Before I talk about the work ahead, I want to talk about the people who make it possible for me to do this job.

To my parents, Rob and Lynda, thank you for raising me to believe that integrity matters, that fairness matters, and that when something is broken you do not complain about it from the sidelines. Those values guide the decisions I make as mayor.

To my husband Ryan, thank you for being my partner in every sense of the word. Thank you for your patience, your humor, and your strength through tough moments and hard choices. Public service asks a lot of the people we love, and I could not do this without you.

To Sloane and Brooke: You are my "Why." Every day, I think about the Scranton you are growing up in. Everything I do is about building a Scranton where you - and every child in West Side, South Side, Minooka, Green Ridge, Pinebrook, North Scranton, the Plot, the Hill - can feel safe, supported, and proud to call Scranton home.

To Sondra and Morey Myers, you encouraged my public service from the early days that I met you, and have remained steadfast supporters of our work. I am

grateful to know you and we are thankful for your presence in our city over the years.

To our city team: Thank you. You are the engine of this rejuvenation. You take a lot and keep smiling, keep working hard and doing the next right thing. This city works because of your professionalism, your heart, and your sacrifice.

To all of our senior leadership, and especially Business Administrator Eileen Cipriani, Solicitor Jessica Eskra, Chief of Police Tom Carroll, Fire Superintendent John Judge – we've been at this for a while now, and I could not be more fortunate to have the team that we have leading our city.

And to the people of Scranton, thank you for your support. Your hard work makes this city great and known throughout the world, and every day we strive to make our government honor your work. You push this city to be better. I am grateful for your trust.

I also congratulate our newly sworn-in City Council members. I look forward to continuing our important work together.

This moment is a deep honor. Being sworn in again as your mayor is not something I take lightly. I promised to do things differently. I promised that City Hall would stop working for insiders and start working for the people who actually pay the bills and have to live with the consequences. From day one, that promise has guided every decision our administration has made.

Since I was first sworn in as mayor, we have restored the city's financial health and completely changed the way we do business. That didn't happen overnight. It happened because we focused on transparency, accountability, and capability right out of the gate.

Six years ago, our team rolled up our sleeves and got to work. And there was a lot of work to get done. But once accountability was established, it was clear the old ways were out.

We added technology to modernize services and give residents access to information. We cut the cost of building and renovating. We fixed the city's finances and made our tax code more fair. We attracted new businesses. We invested in the equipment and training our first responders need to keep us safe and be safer themselves — including the guys out plowing our streets in the worst of conditions, and this year it seems to snow every day.

We made real reforms that changed how City Hall operates and who it works for.

As a result, Scranton's financial strength is at an all-time high. Businesses from other areas are coming here. Families and young professionals are relocating here, contributing to our tax base and future, and helping ease the burden on seniors. Children are filling our schools again.

Economic growth matters, but it only matters if people feel it in their everyday lives. That is why our administration has focused on lowering costs, standing up to unfair utility rate hikes, and advocating for essential safety nets like Medicaid, SNAP, and Social Security. Government should be a partner to working people, not another hurdle or an added burden.

We invested in infrastructure because quality of life matters.

We didn't just pave roads, we changed our system to track utility work and hold those companies accountable. We built a 311 system to take your feedback so we know where repairs are needed - some roads haven't been paved in a generation. And while we are not done, we are at a point where I got stopped at a diner over the holidays by someone whose mother is overjoyed that her court is no longer a hazard and she can get to the store in the winter.

We replaced over 5000 street signs. It sounds easier than it was. But we got it done, and now our system works better so we can track and replace in real time.

We fixed long standing stormwater issues that flooded neighborhoods year after year. The most prominent Christmas card on our table at home is from a household that no longer stays up all night when it rains, bracing for flooding. The message in that card means the world to me. It's a small but powerful proof point that what we are doing in the city matters.

We invested close to \$30 million in parks and pools so our kids have a place to be kids. And in the case of our skate park, Gen Xers are emboldened to relive their glory days from the 90s and make sure the LVHN Orthopaedics stays in business.

These are all investments in dignity, pride, community, and strengthening our economic future.

Public safety is always our top priority. As a mother of two young children, I understand how important it is that we have a community where people feel safe. That's why we've invested millions of dollars in the Scranton Police Department, setting a new regional standard for law enforcement.

We strengthened recruitment, expanded training, upgraded equipment, and invested in modern technology. We put more officers on the beat because safe streets are the foundation of a strong city. We will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with our brave men and women in law enforcement, and ensure they have the resources they need to keep our community safe and secure. And importantly, our *officers* are safer because of the investments we are making.

With the work of our fire department, we've saved lives by getting thousands of homes working smoke detectors, and having SFD and Code Enforcement work more closely together to prevent tragedies. We've made it easier and less expensive to build in Scranton, without compromising our high standards.

As we begin this new year, we are doubling-down on our focus on a safer, more affordable Scranton.

We are creating safer streets, beginning with our downtown streetscapes project that will further transform our city center and better reflect our energy and our momentum. We are looking to replicate the new sidewalk project on Cedar Ave, and are improving intersections on Main Ave in West Side, and advocating for grants for Pittston Ave, Green Ridge Street, and South Washington.

We are standing up a community violence intervention (CVI) organization that works with law enforcement, school districts, and across our community to help prevent violence by better connecting families to resources, expanding opportunities for young people, and working together to analyze patterns and solve issues.

We are pushing housing innovation – in five years, we've facilitated nearly 1000 more places for folks to call home, with more in the works, and have identified parcels that can be built as housing again - more units means more kids in our schools, more customers for local business, and less pressure on cost of living.

We are fighting utility company rate hikes and preparing for impacts of data center speculation on our city and our region.

We are working to preserve our great healthcare -- our work includes supporting the Geisinger Community Medical Center hospital expansion that will keep lifesaving healthcare close to home; and advocating for Regional Hospital to not just stay open, but to rebuild and thrive.

At the very core of all the work we have done in Scranton over the past six years is the idea that there is no limit to what we can accomplish when our leadership works for those it serves, and not to serve itself.

Whether you've lived here for 80 years or 80 days, you deserve a government that fights for you.

This year marks the 250th anniversary of our great nation, and the 160th anniversary of Scranton's incorporation. I can say, at a time when many have a great deal of unease and uncertainty about what's to come, I have great hope for Scranton's future.

As we begin this new chapter, we will lead as we always have, with a foundation of values under us, and aspirational, but achievable, goals for our city front of mind::

We work together - independent of the powerful and the way things were done.

We work as hard as the people we serve and know their trust is sacred.

We fight for the people - we know that an economy only works if those who work can feel the benefits.

We balance budgets, live within our means, and respect your tax dollars.

We keep our families safe and make this great place to live.

We go after corruption whenever we see it.

We constantly reform, revise, and improve.

We run a government that you don't have to think about. One that works for you, every day, with respect, with efficiency, without frills, without drama.

More than anything, **we keep doing the next right thing** — even when - *especially when* - when it's not easy. Yes, there is still more work to get done.

There always will be. And serving as your mayor is fun *because* there is no end to the hard work, *because* the days are full of challenges, *because* we have a team

that solves problems – and has a sense of humor – and *because* the work we do has a material impact on your quality of life.

The light is shining brightly through these windows again. Our future is unlimited, and it is ours to build together.

Writing these words and standing here with you is deeply moving. I look back on our first years here and feel immense pride for how far we've come. And I look to the time ahead as an incredible gift -- an opportunity to solidify Scranton's evolution as a city that folks are curious to come to and want to build a life in.

Together, we turned Scranton around. Together, we turned the page on the politics of the past and built a city government that serves the people.

This year, we will celebrate the history and promise of our great nation and of this tremendous city, and together we will keep moving Scranton forward into the light.

Thank you.