

**ELECT Edward  
FITZGERALD  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

**[Transcript: Announcement for Candidacy for County Executive 12/17/09 10:06 am]**

Ed FitzGerald: Good morning, and thank you for attending.

It's always good to begin an effort like this with a sense of history, and a sense of place. My great-grandfather moved to this neighborhood from Ireland 130 years ago, and started a small grocery store just down the road from here.

This county has been good to my family ever since that time. I love the Cleveland area, and I'm committed to it, and my wife Shannon and I decided to raise our four children here.

We have to be honest about what this county is facing. We used to be one of the economic drivers of not just the state but the entire country. We were known all over the world as a center of innovation and economic progress. That's why so many of our families came here in the first place.

But, at some point in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we began to rest on our laurels. The world economy began to move in new directions, but we didn't. We played it safe, and we lost. And so, when America has faced economic downturns, they have hit us the hardest, and when recovery came, it reached us last.

We know what the ramifications have been: unemployment, underemployment, residents and businesses fleeing to other regions, one of the worst foreclosure rates in the nation...

And that brings us to the last couple years here in Cuyahoga County. At precisely the time when we needed our county government to be at its best, it's most dynamic, it's most innovative, it's most effective, it has been paralyzed by the worst public corruption scandal in our county's history. At a time when we should be enacting policies to get us out of this economic mess, we have been the victim of a steady stream of scandals involving acts of outright bribery and fraud, and completely shameless greed.

The people of this county are fed up, and they should be. They need and they want a county government which is honest, effective, efficient, competent, and innovative.

We need to give them that kind of government in 2010, and that's why today I am beginning my campaign for County Executive of Cuyahoga County. [Applause]

There's never been a campaign for this office before. And we're going to run a campaign like no other in this county's history. In every community, in every neighborhood, we're going to tell our story and deliver our message. This isn't going to be a west side campaign, or an east side campaign, or a suburban campaign, or a city campaign, its going to be a unifying campaign that includes all of us, no matter where we live or what our station in life is. [Applause]

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Now, other campaigns are talking about spending millions and millions of dollars to buy this office, either their money or someone else's, and that's fine. I hope they do spend a lot of money; it's good for the local economy. We have to raise and spend money too, but as in my previous successful campaigns, it's going to be conversations from one resident to another that will ultimately win this campaign. [Applause]

So, what are we going to talk about?

We're going to talk about how to restore trust and integrity to county government. As a former FBI Special Agent with the Organized Crime Task Force in Chicago, I have experience in directing corruption investigations, and my first act as County Executive will be to order a review of every operation and function of county government to root out any remnants of corruption which remain.

As mayor of the second largest suburb in our county with a budget of almost \$100 million, I worked with my council to rescue the city from fiscal disaster, lowered expenses, streamlined government by integrating technology, launched a city-wide community policing initiative that reduced crime by double digits, implemented an environmental and energy efficiency strategy, and led an economic development policy that created jobs and grew our tax base even in the toughest of economic times.

As County Executive, I will use this combined experience in law enforcement and as a chief executive to overhaul county government and restore the people's confidence that county government can be operated with integrity, will provide the services it must to those in need, and act as a catalyst so that the economy of Cuyahoga County embraces the shift to the new economic growth sectors in medicine, biotechnology, clean and green energy, and arts and culture. [Applause]

But, we always must remember that we still have great wealth in this county, but also great need, and we can never forget that. Every citizen's concerns are equal to me, whether they work in a board room, a school room, a store room, or are looking for work. The first County Executive must understand that our futures are all connected to each other, no matter what part of this community we come from.

Now, I know it is fashionable to be pessimistic about the Cleveland area. We've had economic setbacks, our sports teams never seem to win any championships, etc. But I take the opposite view. I am optimistic and I am confident. We have incredible potential and assets that other areas could only wish for- our institutions of higher learning, our centers of medical care and research, our park systems, our rivers and lakefront, our cultural institutions, our economic building blocks, our entrepreneurs, the skill of our workers, and our refusal to quit, no matter what the obstacle- depressions, wars, recessions, scandals- we're still here, and we're never giving up on this county. [Applause]

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And as much as I respect those who came before us, the men and women who built Cleveland with their own hands, like my great-grandfather who settled in this neighborhood 130 years ago, I believe that we are their equal, that our accomplishments can outshine theirs, that we will rebuild our cities stronger than they were before, and that the setbacks of recent years will be seen by history as just a temporary reverse in the story of the rise of this great community.

Thank you for the confidence you have in my ability to lead, and thank you for the confidence you have in the future of Cuyahoga County.

Thank you very much. [Applause]

[End Transcript. 10:16 am]