

CORRECTED COPY

Statement on Vote to Not Hear Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's 2008-2009 Budget Address

By Kenneth V. Cockrel, Jr.
President, Detroit City Council
April 14, 2008

In a historical move today a majority of Council members voted not to hear Mayor Kilpatrick's Budget Address for the 2008/2009 Fiscal Year. I joined with the majority of Council in voting not to hear the Mayor's Budget Address.

Not allowing the Mayor to speak was actually something that some Council Members suggested weeks ago in view of the fact that this Council previously voted 7-1 to ask the Mayor to resign. In fact, as recently as last week those Council Members argued that to remain consistent with the intent of that resolution, the Mayor should not be given free reign to address City Council at will or any other matter. However, at that time I did not support that argument and in fact argued in support of allowing the Mayor to present his budget address as has traditionally been done. However, shortly after that Mayor Kilpatrick launched what can only be called a public relations assault on City Council for conducting a series of legislative hearings that were aimed at investigating the facts and circumstances surrounding the settlement of the Brown and Nelthrope v. City of Detroit and Walt Harris v. City of Detroit cases. It is of critical importance to note that Council was not "playing politics" by conducting these hearings but was doing a necessary investigation into a matter that has cost Detroit taxpayers \$8.4 million in tax dollars and which has now resulted in the Mayor and his chief of staff being charged with a combined total of 12 felony counts.

Council has an obligation to investigate this matter and charges that Council was neglecting its other duties to conduct these hearings were inaccurate and deeply insulting to me and other Council Members. Furthermore, the Mayor has also recently criticized the Council for taking a recess effective today until Thursday, April 24th.

This recess is a working recess that occurs every year so that Council, its individual staffs, and staff divisions can analyze the budget and prepare for a six-week period of all-day, five day a week budget hearings which begins on April 24th. It is not a paid vacation. Many Council Members, myself included, will be in their respective offices everyday during this period preparing for the budget and handling other council business which includes meeting with constituents, researching legislation, and addressing citizen complaints.

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Some have speculated that this move was politically motivated by me and me alone. It is important to note that the decision not to hear the Mayor today was a majority decision that was the result of a vote to adjourn today's meeting rather than hear the Mayor. While I may be the President, City Council, like all legislative bodies acts through majority vote. It is also important to note that City Council is not mandated by either the City Charter , its rules of procedure, or any other document to hear the Mayor's budget address.

This document and more importantly the proposed budget itself have been received by City Council and Council will move forward with the budget process and will assure that all city services are considered. As a Legislative body we stand firm in our commitment to the citizens of Detroit to return a balanced budget to the Mayor by June 30, 2008.

Again, this Council has asked the Mayor to resign. He has chosen not to. In the meantime, myself and my colleagues stand ready to work with him on any necessary business that requires our attention. But cooperation must come from both sides and the Mayor must respect the City Council and not levy undue and unproductive criticisms at us if he wants to expect an open door in our chambers.

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