



Response to Mayor Fulop's State of the City 2016

If there is one thing Steve Fulop is good at doing, it is distorting reality - and that is what his State of the City address has done. Jersey City is a great place to live, and it has enjoyed steady development for more than twenty years, but the best thing that can be said about the Fulop Mayoralty to date is that it has managed not to totally derail Jersey City's steady growth.

We love the City's mural program, but being Mayor is about more than applying a coat of paint. When you scratch past the superficial PR veneer, you see the real Fulop record: higher taxes, higher crime, incompetent political appointments, and a mass of taxpayer-funded contracts in exchange for political favors.

"Incompetence" and "Cronyism" are the two words that most accurately describe the Fulop Administration. Perhaps the most important thing a mayor can do is appoint competent and ethical people to run a city's various departments, but two-and-a-half years into his mayoralty, Steve Fulop has had to fire or compel the resignation of five of his top appointees - and a couple more are holding on by the skin of their teeth, largely because the Mayor realizes that if he continues to dismiss directors and high-level appointments, it will become even more obvious what a comedy of errors his administration truly is. For example, the Mayor fired his Chief of Police, whom he appointed primarily - if not exclusively - due to the Chief's political support, after the Chief was on the job less than a year. But the damage of this appointment was substantial, as it devastated morale in the ranks of the JCPD. Can we thus be surprised that homicides have gone up substantially under Mayor Fulop? Incredibly, though Councilman Steve Fulop belittled crime statistics from the year before he became mayor that evinced the lowest homicide rate in the history of Jersey City, now, as mayor, he has impotently attempted to explain away *dramatically higher* homicide numbers with excuses - the worst and most callous of them, his intimation that certain homicide victims had engaged in criminal conduct, as if they had it coming to them.

Mayor Fulop also hollowly champions the City's stable tax rate over the past couple of years. However, the Mayor conveniently forgets that he unnecessarily raised taxes over 7% shortly after coming into office, as he made the sly political

calculation that voters would forget something done so early in his administration, when he would be able to impose a huge burden on taxpayers to generate a large amount of recurring revenue, while unfairly putting all the blame on his predecessor. Mayor Fulop should not be cheered for keeping City taxes flat, he should be chided for artificially raising them, then politically profiting off both the revenues and the false optics his excessive tax hike engineered.

The Mayor also illegally canceled the City's property tax revaluation, and squandered millions of dollars in the process. Putting off the property tax reval not only contravenes state law, it causes the lowest-income homeowners to pay disproportionately high property taxes, while the City wastes thousands of dollars on outside counsel to fight hopeless property tax appeals.

This said, the greatest reality distortion of all is the fading image that Steve Fulop created of himself as a "reformer." Not only has the Mayor shamelessly rewarded campaign contributors with massive no-bid contracts and ballooned the City's payroll with patronage hires of campaign workers, but he is now using taxpayer dollars to give out contracts and jobs to advance his goal of becoming Governor. It is an outrage that Mayor Fulop thinks he can hand out jobs and contracts – and thereby burn hundreds of thousands of Jersey City taxpayer dollars – to endear himself to Democratic Chairs in key counties, all while he spends so much of his time running around New Jersey trying to win all-important county lines. Jersey City should not be the Mayor's personal political piggy bank, nor should it be such an afterthought on his agenda: The City's welfare should be his first and only focus.

Paid sick leave and a \$15 minimum wage for some City workers are good things, but we know that the motivation, as always, is the Mayor's political ambitions. Just as it was important to establish himself as a reformer to become Mayor, he wants to establish himself as a progressive to become Governor. But fighting for these measures, which, while good, impact a limited universe of people, do not absolve Mayor Fulop from his failures to exhibit the competency and ethics necessary to his Office.

So, regardless of how he tries to spin it, shape it or explain it away, here is the Mayor's real record:

- Dismissed Five high level appointments
- Raised property taxes over 7%
- Substantially higher homicide rate every year of Fulop Mayoralty
- Ballooned the budget with patronage hires
- Rewarded contributors with millions of dollars of taxpayer funder contracts
- Gave out jobs to the politically connected to secure support for gubernatorial bid
- Spends massive amounts of time out of the City campaigning for governor

The Jersey City Civic Committee advocates for an equitable, ethical and quality City government. We are an independent voice and the loyal opposition. Learn more at jcciviccommittee.com