



CITY OF SOUTH BEND

PETE BUTTIGIEG, MAYOR
Office of the Mayor

MAYOR BUTTIGIEG'S MOBILIZATION REMARKS

September 12, 2013

Thank you for coming here today.

I am now in the second year of the most important and rewarding job I could ever imagine, serving as mayor of our hometown, South Bend. Since taking office in January of 2012, about 90 percent of my time has gone into public service to our city.

As many of you know, I am also about to enter my fifth year of service as an officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve, currently holding the rank of Lieutenant, Junior Grade. In an ordinary year, I spend about 10 percent of my time serving the country, typically one weekend a month as well as one two-week period of duty each year.

Next year is going to be different.

I recently received orders to deploy to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom for a period of duty of approximately six months during the calendar year 2014.

In accordance with my orders, I will report to the Navy Operational Support Center Chicago on February 28, and after approximately one month of training in the United States, I will reach my duty station in Afghanistan in March. According to the orders I have been issued, my expected detachment date is September 30th.

My mission in Afghanistan involves work I have been training to do for years, and I was selected for this mobilization after my command determined I was a good match based on my training, experience, military specialty, and rank.

For a number of reasons, including operational security, personal safety, and military policy, I cannot discuss my assignment in detail.



Naturally, this news raises questions about what will happen in City government during my mobilization.

My first priority in managing this deployment is to ensure continuity of services and leadership in this administration while I am away.

Indiana law provides a clear procedure on what to do in the event an elected official such as a mayor is called to active duty in the military.

Pursuant to that procedure, laid out in state law, I will name current City Controller Mark Neal to the position of deputy mayor. In accordance with municipal and state code, he will have all mayoral authorities delegated to him during my time away, and he will lead the administration in my absence.

Mark has earned the respect of everyone he works with because of his integrity, his honesty, his demeanor, and intellect. He has agreed to take on this responsibility at considerable sacrifice to his personal and family plans, and the city owes him a debt of gratitude, as do I.

Mark will be leaving his post as controller by the end of this year. He is exceptionally well-suited to this role. He does not come from a political background, but he has been an essential part of this administration and commands the respect of everyone from Council members to the business community. I have every confidence that he is the right person for this job.

During my time in Afghanistan, I will remain in frequent contact with the Deputy Mayor and my administrative leadership team through telephone, email, and videoconference, to the maximum extent permitted by technology and circumstances. I will monitor day-to-day events in South Bend and weigh in on important decisions; but during my absence, all of my authorities will be exercised by the Deputy Mayor.

This year's budget proposal will be amended to fund the position of Deputy Mayor, which exists in city code but has not been activated, and I will work with Council to address this salary adjustment.

In order to prevent any added to burden to taxpayers, I will not accept my own salary during the time I am on active duty.

I have briefed department heads, members of the South Bend Common Council, and other local leaders on this situation, and I am grateful for the support they have shown me as I strive to balance my fidelity to the two different oaths I have sworn, one to our city and the other to our country.

I should note that in the current context, including drawdown of forces in Afghanistan, there is always a small possibility that these orders will be modified or canceled at any time between now and February.



However, we need to base our plans on the expectation that this will happen as stated in my orders, and so I have decided to disclose my mobilization publicly and set up a continuity plan sooner rather than later.

While I am away, the city administration will continue to function without skipping a beat. The roads will be plowed. The fires will be put out. The faucets will work. The 311 operators will still be friendly.

The momentum of our city's comeback is strong and accelerating, and my temporary absence will not reduce the vigor of our city's recovery.

I would like to point out that while this case is obviously unusual, in another respect I do not consider my case to be special. I am a sailor, and it's my turn. I am just one of thousands of reservists and Guard members who receive deployment orders every year.

Many of them live in places like South Bend; many of them have families; all of them perform their duties to the country faithfully, then come home and get back to work.

Their service and sacrifice is often not widely understood, and I hope that in some small way this development will mean that at least one community understands more fully that the wars we are fighting do not happen only on television; they affect families, neighborhoods, and communities throughout America every day.

Until my report date in February next year, I will work even harder and more energetically to advance our program for changing the way our City does business. And when I get back, I will continue to work every day to deliver change and improved services for the people of South Bend.

On a personal note—ever since I took my commission and later took office, everyone from my own parents to my staff and colleagues, Council members, and residents at large—everyone in this community has always been tremendously supportive of my decision to serve and my efforts to balance the two oaths I have sworn; one to our city and the other to our constitution and the country whose course it directs. I do not take that support for granted; I am thankful for it.

I have always believed that my service makes me a better mayor, and I expect to return home with even more enthusiasm and skill to apply to the exceptionally important work for which this city hired me, the work of leading our city into a brighter future.