

*Statement of Matthew Cutts, Chairman
DC Sports and Entertainment Commission
FY 2008 & FY 2009 to Date Budget Oversight
February 24, 2009*

Good morning Chairman Brown (Councilmembers and staff). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. For the record, my name is Matthew Cutts and I serve as Chairman of the District of Columbia Sports and Entertainment Commission Board of Directors. Since we last appeared before you, the Commission had a change in leadership. Sitting beside me is Erik Moses who was hired as Chief Executive Officer in June 2008 and will be presenting testimony on the Commission's performance for fiscal year 2008 and fiscal year 2009 to date. He replaces Greg O'Dell who is now at the Washington Convention Center. Greg did a great job for the Commission during his time and we thank him for his service and leadership. In addition to Erik, I am joined by Wilma Matthias, our Chief Financial Officer and Maurice Henderson, our Chief Operating Officer.

2008 saw Nationals Park open to great fanfare and accolades befitting one of the nation's great cities and ended with the international debut of the EagleBank Bowl, Washington, D.C.'s first-ever college football bowl game. D.C. is the only city in the United States that hosts a Bowl game and has a team in each of the top six professional sports leagues and we're proud to be a part of that success. 2009 opened with a bang for the city of Washington with the Inauguration and the Commission played an integral role. The Stadium-Armory campus welcomed the

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First Family for three straight days ending with a jammed pack gratitude performance by Jay-Z at the Obama Staff Ball at the DC Armory. Since completing the baseball ballpark on schedule, we at the Commission have reenergized our efforts in attracting top-flight sports, entertainment and special events to the Stadium-Armory campus and in venues around the city. We continue to produce great events for local residents and visitors to Washington, D.C. and have connected with the community through our various outreach programs and involvement in youth activities.

Involvement in Youth Activities

Since its inception, the Commission has been involved in youth sports and I am proud to say that in 2008 and 2009, we have expanded our involvement to include non-traditional sports and will continue to do so. We will host the Congressional Bank High School Baseball Classic for the second consecutive year this May and recently hosted competitions in football and wrestling and are making strides to get involved with lacrosse, basketball and track and field. As part of a larger goal, the Commission seeks to be at the forefront in increasing opportunities in youth sports and supporting existing programs and organizations in the District. For example, last December, the Commission worked with the DC

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Coaches Association to host the All City Bowl, an all-star game featuring football players from all D.C. high schools, including public, private and charter schools.

In addition to hosting youth events, the Commission gave away hundreds of tickets to the Congressional Baseball Classic and the AT&T National Golf Tournament hosted by Tiger Woods, as a way of exposing DC's youth to sports and events they may not normally have experienced. It is part of our mission and in general, it's the right thing to do.

The Commission maintains a proactive approach to fostering academic excellence as well as personal and professional development through its ongoing internship program. Again this year, the Commission will participate in the District's Summer Youth Employment Program, hosting a number of interns from local high schools and colleges. From public relations to event operations to financial oversight, District youth have the opportunity to explore the world of sports and entertainment from the inside out at the DCSEC. In addition, the Commission has forged a partnership with local colleges that have Sports and Entertainment Management degree programs to involve students with an explicit interest in the industry in all aspects of event management.

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Grants Program

In fiscal year 2008, the Commission awarded \$100,000 in financial support to 24 District-based non-profit organizations. These funds helped sustain and grow a variety of projects, programs and initiatives ranging from arts to education to sports. In an effort to continue supporting recreational activities within the District, especially during these economically challenging times, the Commission has decided to restructure the existing grant program. Once finalized, we believe the new Community Outreach Grant Program, will better serve the needs of the District by utilizing the many resources available through the commission to maximize the reach and impact of each award. This new structure will also serve to raise awareness of the Commission and its dedication to the community through the development of active, ongoing relationships with each of the grant recipients. The new program will be announced in early Spring.

New Opportunities

As we forge ahead, the Commission is excited about the opportunities ahead. The EagleBank Bowl is set for RFK Stadium next December and soon, D.C.'s newest professional sports team will debut at the DC Armory, giving us our second regular tenant in the storied building. For those of you needing a football fix, the

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DC Armor, an indoor football team from the American Indoor Football Association, opened their first training camp yesterday and begins play on March 13. Their first home game at the DC Armory is April 4 against the Reading Express. We are excited about having them join the professional sports landscape and look forward to having them for years to come. And of course, we look forward to seeing all of you there for opening night.

The DC Armor is one example of how we are bringing more affordable family entertainment options to the District. As I stated earlier, the DC Armor are the second tenant in the DC Armory. For the last two years, the DC Rollergirls, an indoor roller derby league, have been calling the DC Armory home. The league is enjoying record attendance this season, bringing a wide spectrum of people to the campus from families and college students to sports enthusiasts and curiosity seekers. The action on the rink is great but it is also the fun-filled atmosphere that keeps people coming back and bringing in even more new fans.

More Than Sports

In addition to great sports properties, the Commission remains active in hosting large-scale concerts and festivals. The DC101 Chili Cook-off moves to the Stadium-Armory campus this year joining such storied events as the Shamrock

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Festival, the Stone Soul Picnic and the Ethiopian Soccer Federation of North America Tournament and Festival. Each of these events attract more than 20,000 people to the campus and have become must-do dates on the social calendar. The campus also hosted new entertainment events including the Radio One Spirit of Praise Gospel Concert and the Budweiser Reggae Summer Fest.

Closing

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks. I will be happy to answer any questions after Mr. Moses completes his testimony. Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify.