

# Fitzgerald addresses year's first PowerBreakfast

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By Christian Morrow



**PACKED HOUSE**—Allegheny County Chief Executive Rich Fitzgerald addressed chamber members at the year's first PowerBreakfast. (Photo J.L. Martello)

For the fifth year in a row, Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald kicked off the African American Chamber of Commerce's PowerBreakfast season as the year's first speaker.

Chamber President and CEO Doris Carson Williams said that is because he has delivered.

"He's doing a tremendous job on diversity with 30 percent of his appointees being African Americans," she said. "But more importantly, you can call him. And when you do, he gets the message and he follows through."

Fitzgerald told the command-performance crowd he is excited starting his second term by the optimism he sees, especially from young people—who are no longer leaving in droves to build lives and careers where there are greater opportunities.

**Those opportunities are here, now, and young people are staying or moving in to take advantage of them, he said, as evidenced by the drop in the county's median age to 41. Less than a decade ago it rivaled Dade County, Fla. as the oldest in the country**

"But we have a lot of opportunity here, but we have to make sure we provide access to those opportunities to those who haven't had them in the past," he said. "Diversity isn't just political, it's an economic necessity as we look to replace 200,000 workers slated to retire soon and the 20,000 jobs we're creating every year."

Fitzgerald touted his record along those lines noting that in addition to his departmental appointments, 18 percent of the county's new hires were Black, as were 20 percent of his appointments to authority boards.

And as far as increasing minority contracting opportunities, he said the county is doing that. In purchasing, he said 20 percent of the dollars have gone to Black firms; in Economic Development,

23 percent; in Public Works, 17 percent; in Human Services, 30 percent, at the Airport, 16 percent, in Housing, 40 percent, at ALCOSAN, 21 percent, and at the Sports and Exhibition Authority, 30 percent.

“We want to make sure it’s not the same-old-same-old,” he said.

He also noted that his policies—and the team he’s put in place to implement them—are paying off. For instance, he noted that thanks to his increasing the surplus “rainy day” fund to \$40 million allowed them to continue funding human service providers during the prolonged state budget impasse.

“We kept the doors open when other counties couldn’t,” he said. “We were actually about two months from running out. But now that those funds have been released, we’ll be reimbursed.

“And thanks to the deal we made with CONSOL we’ve lowered costs at the airport three times,” he continued.

“We just announced expanded service to Paris, and of the three low cost carriers in the country, two of them, Allegiant and Frontier, fly out of Pittsburgh, and they just announced new flights. So, yes I’m excited. It’s a good time to be here.”

After thanking Fitzgerald again, Williams announced new members and reminded everyone of upcoming events including a networking mixer on Jan. 28, a new member orientation Jan. 29, and the next PowerBreakfast Feb. 19 with state Director of Economic Development Dennis Davin.