

**Honorable Richard Baker  
Mayor of St. Petersburg, Florida**

**U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's  
Florida and Caribbean Regional Meeting  
St. Petersburg, Florida  
February 22, 2002**

Good morning, Commission members. Welcome to the Sunshine City. I'm sorry the weather is not the way it normally is in February. We normally have, almost every day in February, sunshine. If you'll stay one more day, it will probably get a little better.

It's an honor to have you. The first thing I would like to say, I'd like to thank you for your work under appointment of our President on behalf of the country. It's a great service. I've read about what you're doing, and I appreciate the service that you are doing.

I'd also say that I thank you for being here in St. Petersburg. As I'm sure you're aware, St. Petersburg, and where you're located right now, is rapidly becoming the marine science center and marine science research and educational center.

I'm going to be thrilled this weekend to be breaking ground on another USGS facility that we're about to start construction on in our city. We already have a significant presence in the marine sciences with USGS, as well as the University of South Florida and at the College of Marine Science. So this is -- this is a very appropriate place to begin and to be working on the tasks that you have at hand.

I also encourage you if you can to try to visit and see the rest of our city. St. Petersburg is undergoing a renaissance right now. We've had an incredible amount of construction going on throughout our city in the business area, retail area, and in our downtown core. We've had six condominium towers built in the last two years. We have about a thousand other units under construction, and we're rapidly becoming one of the cultural centers in the southern United States, museums, dozens of galleries, and performance arts companies in our downtown area.

And, as I was remarking before, before we sat down, before I became Mayor of the city, I was Chairman of the Board of the Florida International Museum here in St. Petersburg. And the first exhibit that I helped put together to bring here was on the Titanic. And if you have any question about the interests of those sorts of things, in a six-month period of time we drew 830,000 people to our downtown to see the Titanic exhibit, which was the second highest museum exhibition attendance in the United States. So it was a thrill to participate in that.

So once again, I hope you enjoy your stay in our city. I thank you for coming, and I laud you for the great work you're doing.