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MAYOR EMANUEL'S REMARKS FROM THE SHAKMAN ACCORD HEARING

Judge Schenkier, thank you for the opportunity to address the court on this significant day for the City of Chicago and its residents. Today is about resolving what has happened in Chicago's past, and more importantly, pointing the way to Chicago's future.

For decades, city jobs that were supposed to be awarded based on merit were instead based on political clout – it was who you know instead of what you know. In many cases, the people of Chicago suffered the consequences -- through unqualified workers, no-show jobs, and abuse of taxpayer resources.

Most damaging – it eroded the public's faith and trust in its government.

That's why one of the first actions I took as Mayor was to sign an Executive Order requiring hiring to be based on merit, not politics, and to protect any employee who reported hiring irregularities.

This effort has been a priority for my administration since day one. We have been committed to reaching compliance with the Shakman Accord and living up to the promise I made when I took office. In that effort, we've worked closely and cooperatively with our city Inspector General, Joe Ferguson. I want to thank the Inspector General and his office for playing a critical role in achieving this milestone today.

I also want to thank Mr. Shakman and Ms. Brennan for their commitment and effort to ensuring the City reach this goal. We all recognize the significance of their agreement that the City of Chicago – after 42 years – is finally in substantial compliance with the Accord that bears Mr. Shakman's name.

I also want to recognize members of my administration who contributed to that effort – Stephen Patton, Leslie Darling, and Sue Choi.

And while I view this milestone as a significant accomplishment for our city, I want to be clear that today's action is not an end for Chicago – it's a beginning of a journey.

The people of Chicago are not naive. They know that attempts to influence city hiring won't magically disappear overnight.

We must remain vigilant, working cooperatively with Inspector General Ferguson and his hiring oversight team to help keep us on this path from which we must never stray again.

We want to make sure that Chicagoans from ALL communities have a fair shot at city employment. We want city workers to reflect the talent and diversity of our entire city -- not just the small world of the well-connected. And our city employees must always put service to residents and taxpayers first.

These changes we are making at City Hall are critical to ensuring the public trust, the City's image, and strengthening our city's future.

And even though we are in a courtroom, I would like to take this opportunity to now speak directly to the people of Chicago:

Today is your day. After living under a cloud of mistrust for decades, you can be confident that your city government operates in a way that keeps your interests, and only your interests, first. But you too have a role to play going forward. Always demand professionalism. Always demand transparency. Always demand a government that is honest – because you deserve nothing less.

Your honor, we still have a lot of work to do. But what today shows is that with collaboration and cooperation we can live up to our commitment to our great city.

Thank you.