



Edition 151 – February 2017

Good News: Budget Surplus

Surprisingly, the State of Berlin ended the year 2016 with a budget surplus of 1.25 billion euros! The reason for the high increase is markedly higher tax revenues in December as well as higher federal payments on integration costs for refugees. This means that large parts of the significantly higher investment in infrastructure, education, and transport planned by the new red-green-green coalition can be financed. The supplementary budget 2017, drafted by the Senate on January 24, provides much more funding for the renovation of schools in particular. In addition, the social ticket for local transport will be cheaper and the modernization in the Senate and district administrations will be accelerated faster. The budget still needs to be passed by the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

- **Thank God for the surprising surplus**
- **Pray for a wise and socially just distribution of the additional finances**
- **Pray for effective and quick use of funds**

New Senator of the Interior Andreas Geisel

In a small series in the next editions, we will introduce the senators who are new to the Berlin government.

We start with the Senator of the Interior, Andreas Geisel, SPD. He was born in Berlin-Lichtenberg in 1966, and continues to live there with his wife and two daughters. Following practical vocational training, he worked in the field of telecommunication. Later, he studied economics and business administration at the Humboldt University and worked briefly as a management consultant. Mr. Geisel joined the SPD in 1990 and is currently one of its deputy chairmen. Since 1995, he has been the district councillor in various departments in Lichtenberg-Hohenschonhausen. While serving in one of these departments, he spoke a well-received word of welcome at the Transform conference 2014 sponsored by Together for Berlin.

When Michael Müller became a governing mayor in 2014, Geisel followed him as a Senator for Urban Development and the Environment. In the new government he is now a Senator for the Interior and Sports. The large department also includes the responsibility for internal security, which is currently so important

and includes the police, fire brigade, homeland security, cybersecurity, etc., as well as the areas of aliens and asylum law and supervision of the administration of the twelve districts.

Shortly after entering office, Senator Geisel was confronted with the attack on the Christmas market at the Gedächtniskirche - a really hard beginning. Even though he was a newcomer, he acted very level-headed. He has won Torsten Akmann as State Secretary, who is a proven expert on constitutional protection, right-wing terrorism, and public security. He is said to be well-connected nationwide and is organizing the coordination between the federal government and the state, which greatly needs improvement.

Senator Geisel recently presented a new security package, which still needs to be coordinated with the coalition partners. This is about issues such as the expansion of video surveillance and prevention in the area of radical Islamism. No question, Andreas Geisel especially needs our prayers.

PRAYER

- **Pray for a quick orientation and effective co-operation in the administration**
- **Pray that effective internal security measures will be put into place**
- **Pray for God's protection and for success for Andreas Geisel personally**

The new Coalition: Start-up Problems

The three-party coalition of the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party, which has been in power since the beginning of December, had a difficult start. In the first few weeks there was a lot of dispute, for instance about the expansion of video surveillance in public places, which many have demanded. Video surveillance had recently brought rapid successes in the apprehension of violent persons at subway stations. Hurred suggestions made by individual senators were understandably not well received by the others. The agreed-upon "partnership on the same level" does not seem easy to implement. But the biggest test of the coalition was dealing with the Stasi past of Andrej Holm. Nominated by the Left party, the specialist for urban ecology and outspoken gentrification critic was slated to become the secretary for housing construction. There were intense discussions all over the city. After long hesitation, the Governing Mayor announced the dismissal of Holm. It was not the fact that he had

been part of the Stasi as a young man that was the determining factor, but rather that he had not been transparent about it. However, Holm himself immediately resigned. A successor to this important area of city policy was not yet known by the editorial deadline.

PRAYER

- **Pray for a satisfactory clarification of the disputes**
- **Pray for a competent secretary for the urgent questions concerning housing construction**
- **Pray that the Senate would be able to work without personnel quarrels**

The Attack and its Consequences

After the terrible attack in December on the Berlin Christmas market at the Gedächtniskirche, questions about the work of the police and security forces came up. It became clear that there are mosques in Berlin which are known by homeland security to be places where Muslims are being radicalized. One of these mosques is located in the Perleberger street in Moabit. The assassin Anis Amri was a regular visitor there. Although an application had been made long ago to ban this mosque association, this and other prohibitions had not been processed yet. So far there is only one official who can legally review the results of investigations by the police and the evidence of other authorities as to whether they are in favour of an association ban, and this person is chronically ill. Now the plan is to hire three new employees.

This is only one of the weak points that have been made clear by the attack. The red-red-green coalition has nothing in its programme on how to deal with Salafists and the mosques which gave them a platform. In addition, there are major disagreements within the coalition concerning video surveillance in public places.

Prayer for protection is important. But as Christians, we have yet another prayer mandate: We are to pray in love for those who are hostile to us and bless them - God wants to save them too.

Are we taking this responsibility seriously?

PRAYER:

- **Pray that God would shine His light on fanatical Muslims so that they have an encounter with His saving love**
- **Pray for political measures to better protect the city against attacks**
- **Pray that further plans for terrorist attacks will be detected in advance, thus preventing them from occurring**

Too Little Space in Delivery Rooms and Day-care Centres

Berlin has a pleasant problem--as more and more women are becoming pregnant, the delivery rooms in clinics are overloaded. For instance, the Neukoelln clinic had to close the delivery room completely for a few days. This clinic is one of the largest birthplaces in Germany. Pregnant women also have great problems finding a midwife. There are not enough for the ever-increasing numbers of births. One must register very early for the birth at the clinic, but it is just as hard to find a place in day-care for the children.

The number of day-care teachers required will increase by one-fifth by 2020. But because there are not enough teachers in the free market, some children's day-care centres must now reduce their groups. With significantly more births than deaths, the city is now at the top of all federal states. This positive growth is causing problems, because it was not previously politically calculated. In the next few years, this will be particularly noticeable for young parents in relation to birthplaces, day-care centres, schools, etc.

PRAYER:

- **Thank God for every new-born baby in Berlin**
- **Pray for more help for pregnant women and mothers**
- **Pray that the policy-makers will quickly discover how these bottlenecks can be overcome**

Keeping On: BER Airport

Following the embarrassing new shift of the opening date to an unknown date in 2018, there are new quarrels about the construction of the airport. Apparently, some companies have failed to meet their targets. Also, the project planning and supervision seem to still be insufficient. The cost for the delay in opening is around one million euros per day.

Let us pray for drastic measures on the part of those in charge in the management, project management and the supervisory council (or, if necessary, their replacement). Let us continue to pray for the next steps of the construction and for God's protection of this obviously contested project.

Dates:

- **Feb. 6, 7pm: Birthday-prayer evening of the Waechteruff, Lukas-Gemeinde Schoeneberg**
- **Feb. 15, 6-7pm: Prayer for City Politicians at the Rote Rathaus**
- **Feb. 24, 5-7pm: Prayer for the Kotti, Adalbertstraße 97, Gebetskeller am Kotti**