



The United States Conference of Mayors

1620 Eye Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006
Phone (202) 293-7330 • Fax (202) 293-2352
E-mail: info@usmayors.org URL: usmayors.org

USCM PRESIDENT SACRAMENTO MAYOR KEVIN JOHNSON 82nd ANNUAL MEETING INAUGURAL ADDRESS DALLAS

Tuesday, June 20, 2014

I want to start by saying a big, Texas-sized THANK YOU to the more than 236 mayors who are here with us today. You represent the best and the brightest from around the country and are the leaders who are driving the change our nation so desperately needs. I'm so glad we have the opportunity to come together at this conference and am so grateful for the USCM.

The benefits we receive from the organization are clear: It helps Mayors build key relationships with the White House, Congress, and the federal government. It allows us to leverage relationships with the private sector, boosting public/private partnerships. And it brings national exposure and attention to our cities. We owe so much to this great organization, and I've made a pledge as mayor to grow our membership so that we can increase our revenues and grow.

The Executive Committee has led by example. And now I want to challenge all of you – each and every mayor here today – to recruit one other mayor to join. Mayor Brian Wahler from Piscataway, NJ is chairing the effort to do this, so thank you Mayor!

When I take a step back, and look at all the mayors here today, I can't help but be inspired by what is possible. Just 6 short years ago, our country faced a crisis. And while we've emerged from the Great Recession, we still face a dismal scenario by many measures. To make matters worse, Washington is gridlocked and dysfunctional, so we know the answer doesn't lie with our federal government.

What's abundantly clear is that it's mayors and cities that must drive the resurgence of our great nation. And people are coming to realize that. Being a Mayor has all of a sudden become the "in" thing.

The argument that mayors will lead the way has been written about three times recently. Bruce Katz and Jennifer Bradley from the Brookings Institute wrote a book called *The Metropolitan Revolution*. Renowned columnist Tom Friedman wrote a column called "I Want to Be A Mayor" and said kids growing up today won't aspire to be President of the United States. (Who would want THAT job?) Instead, they'll want to grow up to be mayors of their cities! And Benjamin Barber wrote a book called *If Mayors Ruled the World*. I kinda like the sound of that!!

In all seriousness, a lot of what I'm going to talk about today comes from what these thought-leaders have written. What these folks argue is that a city is where the rubber meets the road.

This isn't an opinion. It's a fact. Consider the following data; metro areas account for 86% of all jobs, 90% of GDP, and 92% of economic growth. A new report we put out today shows growth in cities will propel the nation to levels of economic activity not seen since early 2000. Next year, all metros are projected to grow, with half of them growing by more than 3%. What will this growth look like?

We are entering into a new era of cities that I call Cities 3.0. This new generation of cities looks very different than how cities have looked in the past.

See, the first generation of cities, or Cities 1.0, were built around ports, rivers and transportation routes. They served as centers of trade.

The second generation of cities, or Cities 2.0, came much later during the Industrial Revolution. These cities had factories and big industry smoke stacks and automobiles with electricity, transportation, and other modern services. They were the destination points for immigrants from around the world pursuing the American Dream.

Today, we are entering the era of Cities 3.0. In this era, the city is a hub of innovation, entrepreneurship and technology. It's paperless, wireless and cashless. In 3.0 cities we have more cell phones than landlines, more tablets than desktops, more smart devices than toothbrushes. This truly represents a new era of the American city. And what is the role of the mayor in the 3.0 city?

The mayor must practice what I call "open source leadership." What does that mean? It means we look for the best solutions regardless of where they come from. We don't care if they came from Democrats or Republicans, we don't get caught up in partisan politics. We believe the private sector can help solve public problems. And we believe business and labor can both be at the table. Being open-source leaders means we're proactive, pragmatic and problem solvers. We're not going to sit on our hands waiting for the feds or someone else to solve our problems. We roll up our sleeves and we get things done. We don't care about ideology or tradition, only about what's going to work best for our constituents. So, mayors of 3.0 cities are open source leaders, but what do the city governments look like?

The 3.0 city must be the "ultimate service provider." Why? Because 3.0 citizens operate in a new paradigm. In this generation, the world's largest music company has no record stores (Apple). The world's largest bookseller has no bookstores (Amazon). The world's largest taxi company has no cars (Uber). It's only a matter of time before the world's largest hotel will have no hotel rooms (AirBnB). And very soon, the world's largest university will have no campus. That means we need to provide city services on new platforms too.

In Cities 2.0, city crews would drive around looking for reported potholes to fill them. It could sometimes take weeks or months for a response. In Cities 3.0 here's what it would look like: That pothole on my street? I should be able to take a picture of it with my phone, and upload it through a city app that will tag it with its GPS location. Providers throughout the city could instantaneously be dispatched to fill the pothole on the same day. It's quicker, easier, and more efficient. And active, connected citizens become part of the city's network to solve problems

In addition to services, the other thing a city provides is infrastructure. In Cities 2.0 the infrastructure was things like roads, bridges, and schools. But 3.0 Cities must provide a NEW kind of infrastructure, like citywide wifi networks and turnkey operations for start-up companies, from office space to high speed communication lines. The bottom line is cities must provide services and infrastructure that residents and businesses need and do it quicker, faster and cheaper.

And last, 3.0 cities are focused on building “Next” Economies. We know that in order to keep up in the modern era, have to be innovative. If cities are going to drive the revitalization of this nation then we need to become the laboratories and incubators of change. We must be the engines driving the local and national economy. We have to have a resilient economy, able to weather the storms of recessions and depressions. But how do we do that?

We accomplish this by adopting an aggressive, pro-growth agenda. There are 5 major pieces to this.

The first is infrastructure. Investing in our infrastructure not only creates construction jobs in the short term—it lays the foundation for sustained economic growth in the long term. Key areas for infrastructure growth are transportation and water. In transportation we have to modernize our ports, freight rail, and airports because they add to the economy and connect our cities. The Mayors of Miami, Jacksonville, Chicago and Dallas have begun to do this work. And to do it, we’re not waiting for handouts. In cities like Los Angeles and Denver voters are putting up tax dollars for large-scale transit investments.

And that brings us to sustainability. Mayors have been leaders on climate protection, whether it’s cutting carbon emissions or preparing their communities for the effects of climate change. In the 3.0 era, mayors are innovating, working with the best and the brightest, to lead on climate. Mayor Ballard from Indianapolis said his city was too dependent on oil so he developed a policy to convert his entire fleet of cars to electric vehicles.

By working on a pro-growth agenda, we also address income equality. Because through economic prosperity comes social transformation. The whole purpose of cities is to lift up residents and build a community and economy that works for everyone. That means having a higher minimum wage, expanding the supply of affordable housing and ensuring every child has access to Pre-K.

I’m pleased to announce that the USCM is tackling these issues head-on by forming a taskforce called “Cities of Opportunity” that will be chaired by NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio. But our efforts can’t stop there. For decades, opportunity has lagged behind for boys of color. That’s why President Obama launched the My Brother’s Keeper Initiative earlier this year. He issued a strong call to action to America’s leaders to help provide young men of color with the skills they need to reach their full potential. I’m proud that the US Conference of Mayors is answering that call. To help lead the charge, I’ve created the My Brother’s Keeper Task Force, which will be co-chaired by Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter and Birmingham Mayor William Bell.

Next, I want our Pro-Growth Agenda to focus on trade. We live in a global economy. That means that in order to succeed locally, we must engage globally. Exports are a proven job creator, so in a Cities 3.0 era, we need advanced manufacturing to create products and services that other people can’t. After all, the global economy is simply a network of cities trading with one another because of natural links between their industries, products, and services.

Mayor Nan Whaley of Dayton gets it. Mayor Whaley rebuilt the manufacturing base in her city by developing an advanced manufacturing center at a leading community college to train employees and provide state of the art technology. This led to a \$200 million investment in transitioning a closed-down GM plant and brought 800 manufacturing jobs back to the Dayton metro area.

And you know I’d end on this one; education. Our obligation to provide children with a quality education looks very different in a 3.0 city. Because 3.0 kids live very different lives and there are things that they will NEVER do. They’ll never check out a library book. They’ll never go to a video

or record store. They'll never subscribe to a newspaper. They'll never have a landline in their house. And they'll never get lost! They WILL glance at their cell phones 400 times a day and probably live to age 100.

So our education system has to be ready to prepare these children for the new world we are living in. You can't grow your economy without a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. Currently, American students rank 17th, 21st, and 26th in international reading, science and math rankings. We are about to see the first generation of children that are less educated than their parents. That's unacceptable. We have to be competitive as a nation and enable every child, regardless of their race or income level to be a productive member of our global economy

Education will be the top priority during my Presidency. We'll look at education across the continuum, from early childhood education, to K through 12, to college and career pathways. This is an issue where all mayors can take a leadership role.

The bottom line is, it truly is a great time to be a mayor in America. It used to be that the federal government and states set the agenda, and the cities were the children, waiting for their allowance. We've flipped that construct on its head, there's been an inversion of power. Cities are now the leaders in the nation: experimenting, taking risks, making hard choices.

We don't want to wait on Washington to solve our problems. We don't point fingers. We don't have time to deal with the bickering that goes back and forth between Democrats and Republicans. We don't have that luxury; we have a responsibility to get things done at the local level. Mayors are the ones who have to make it happen.

I am truly honored and humbled to have been elected by the inspirational leaders in this room to serve as president of the Conference for the coming year. I look forward to ushering in this exciting new era of cities 3.0 with all of you. With mayors leading the way – the future is now and the future is bright.