



**Testimony
Of**

**The Honorable Manuel A. Diaz
Vice President, The U.S. Conference of Mayors
Mayor, City of Miami**

**On behalf of
The United States Conference of Mayors
and the City of Miami**

**Before the House Select Committee on Energy Independence
and Global Warming**

Seattle, Washington

November 2, 2007

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the select committee for the opportunity to testify before you here today.

Although the issue of climate change presents a global challenge, in the United States it has prompted a local response. This is what America's mayors have done

You will hear from Mayor Nickels how through his leadership, 700 mayors in this country (including nearly 70 Florida cities) have signed the Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement pledging to reduce emissions in our cities to pre-1990 levels. We have in effect have implemented the Kyoto Protocol in our cities.

In Miami, we are especially susceptible to the effects of climate change. The same geographic location that gives us year round sunshine also places us in the midst of "Hurricane Alley." Most of Miami is on average only 6 feet above sea level. And we are the only major U.S. city bordered by 2 national parks: Biscayne Bay on one side, the Everglades on the other. Any change in global climate has the possibility of negatively affecting where we live, possibly flooding our city, and eroding our natural resources.

Miami is responding to this challenge through a climate action plan, our blueprint toward sustainability. Through this plan, municipal government is changing the way it does business, placing environmental consciousness into every decision we make.

We have started by changing our city fleet. We currently have over 150 flex fuel vehicles and are in the process of converting our entire fleet to hybrids or other fuel efficient vehicles by the year 2012.

Last year I traded my City issued SUV for a hybrid. I have doubled my fuel economy, cut my gas consumption in half, cut greenhouse gas emissions by 40 tons, and I have saved taxpayers twice the amount of fuel costs for just one car. Just imagine how these savings can exponentially multiply when the city fleet goes hybrid.

Miami is home to the first LEED pre-certified green building in the state of Florida, the Brickell Financial Centre. Our new zoning ordinance will require all buildings over 50,000 square feet to be built green. We are training over 20 of our city employees to be LEED certified so that we can understand the process, and make it easier for builders to use it. And we are creating an expedited building permit process for green buildings. Speaking of green buildings, our city hall is currently undergoing greening including the installation of solar panels and a roof garden.

Currently, there is \$2 billion worth of green construction taking place in the City of Miami. The message is simple, you either build green, or you don't build at all.

Government is leading by example, and we are also coming up with ways to green all of our existing and future municipal buildings. And we have created a Green

Procurement Ordinance so the City's purchasing power is used to create a market for green and eco friendly products.

In a city where hurricanes and other forces have depleted our tree cover, canopy replacement is an issue of concern. We now have a tree master plan to increase the city wide tree canopy 30% by 2020. Our goal is to have 10,000 trees per year. We have a city arborist and are planting native species that provide ground cover, convert noxious gases to oxygen, and lower ground temperatures. Already, we have planted 5,000 trees this year and I am proud that for the first time ever, Miami has been named a Tree City USA.

We have also taken the ultimate step toward sustainability by increasing the density of our city, because bringing people back to the urban core is the ultimate antidote to suburban sprawl.

Next year, for the first time in history, over half of the world's people will live in cities. And, given predictions that a large majority of the world's future population will live in urban settings, with the United States currently having nearly 90% of its population in cities, the single most critical action we can take to help save our planet is to embrace smart growth, to design cities that make sense.

In Miami, way before there was a Climate Protection Agreement or a Kyoto Protocol, we decided to embrace smart growth on a scale never before seen in any major U.S. city - and this is the cornerstone of our Miami 21 project.

Miami 21 is rooted in the belief of the power of traditional neighborhoods to restore the functions of sustainable cities. It strives to achieve a unique sense of community and place, challenging old assumptions in urban planning by providing an alternative to urban sprawl, traffic congestion, disconnected neighborhoods, and urban decay.

For far too long, cities have been planned around cars and not people. Government policies have invested in sprawl by encouraging the use of cars. Instead, we need government policies that make it less convenient to rely on the automobile. Miami 21 achieves that.

Miami 21 brings sustainability through design. It re-imagines Miami in a way that makes sense to pedestrians, so our city is no longer subservient to cars. It will also offer transportation alternatives, including a return to streetcars like the ones Miami had several decades ago.

The idea is to make the city pedestrian friendly by building and designing around people, offering them great shared spaces of civic pride, so they may work, live, and play all within walking distance.

Finally, we recognize that while individuals want to take the initiative in reducing their carbon footprint, they often do not know how. This is why we have an outreach and

awareness campaign, starting with something we call one person, ten steps, ten tons. It is exactly what it sounds like, how one person can reduce their carbon footprint by 10 tons through ten easy steps. Common sense things like switching from incandescent to compact fluorescent bulbs, insulating your water heater, regulating the thermostat on your air conditioner, simple things that every single person can do to make a big difference.

Mayors are in a perfect position to act at the grass roots level – to interact with our business community and our citizens to change business practices as well as human behavior. As you can see, local government is acting. But local government cannot and should not act alone.

If we are to ameliorate the impact of climate change, there needs to be a multi-faceted and comprehensive approach, involving all levels of government. This is especially true when local governments are facing increased budgetary constraints and are being asked to do a lot more with much less.

The Conference of Mayors has called on Congress to provide local governments with the necessary resources to develop and implement comprehensive energy efficiency plans.

In both versions of the Energy Bill that were passed by the House and Senate, there is a provision called the Energy Efficiency Block Grant, the EEBG, whose passage is a top priority of the Conference of Mayors.

The Energy Efficiency Block Grant would provide local governments with the needed resources to develop and implement comprehensive energy efficiency strategies for our communities. Many of the activities that we have been implementing – energy efficient buildings, energy retrofits, and weatherization programs - would be eligible activities.

It is our understanding that House and Senate members and staff are in negotiations, trying to work out the differences in the energy bills including the block grant proposal. On behalf of the Conference, I would like to thank Congressman Albert Wynn of Maryland for spearheading our EEBG efforts on the House side.

We support many aspects of the House version including:

- Planning grants that will help us fully develop our energy efficiency strategies with goals and accountability;
- Formulas that utilize daytime and residential population to determine where people live or work which translates to where energy is being used;
- An authorization amount that will also hopefully be fully appropriated; and,

- A list of eligible activities that that will help guide the Department of Energy as they develop this program.

I would like to strongly urge to move forward in these negotiations and get this important piece of legislation passed. Every delay makes all of our efforts more difficult.

Let me leave you with an ancient Native American saying: “we do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.”

I want to thank you for joining America’s mayors, working with us to make the world we leave our children and grandchildren much better than the one left to us.

###