



'08 MAYORS' ACTION FORUM ON ENVIRONMENT

# NATIONAL ACTION AGENDA ON ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Miami  
October 1-2, 2008

**Manuel A. (Manny) Diaz**  
Mayor of Miami  
President  
The U.S. Conference of Mayors

[usmayors.org](http://usmayors.org)



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October 2, 2008

## **An Open Letter to the Next President of the United States**

Cities throughout the United States are dealing with environmental and energy concerns on many fronts including climate protection, clean energy sources, air and water quality, solid waste and recycling, and more efficient development practices, among other challenges. Many elements of this work are undertaken in the absence of a federal partnership to promote more energy efficient, sustainable communities and a strong national economy.

On energy issues, the United States is in a position where it can no longer sustain its own energy needs. This has led to the unenviable position of relying on other countries to provide the energy that we need to fuel our cars, move our goods, and keep us economically competitive in the global marketplace. These environmental problems will further be exacerbated when the impact of climate change will cause further damage to our communities through the expected droughts, floods, and rising sea levels.

As mayors, we serve as the public CEOs of the nation's metropolitan areas that drive the United States economy. As CEOs, we understand all too well that our nation can not remain economically competitive with rest of the world if we continue down this path. We need to make sure that we have viable transportation options that utilize a variety of energy sources, maintain air and water quality at levels that protect human health, and utilize a diverse energy portfolio that addresses our future needs. We also believe that we must rebuild our nation's infrastructure in ways that are more energy efficient, less reliant on foreign oil, and more environmentally sensitive.

Although the situation is serious, the Mayors of this nation believe that with this challenge, opportunities also exist. The United States is known for its creativity and innovation and we believe that it is possible for us to solve our environmental and energy problems in a comprehensive manner that will create jobs and economic opportunity. That is why nearly 900 Mayors have signed The U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement where we have pledged our support to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our communities.

However, we can not do it alone. Actions are needed now if we have any hope to curtail the negative environmental impacts that climate change will have on this nation and the world. For too long, we have dealt with these issues in a piecemeal fashion and have not addressed our environmental and energy needs in a comprehensive manner. These are national issues that require national solutions, including increased federal investment and coordination.

More than 50 mayors and other leaders from across the nation met in Miami on October 1-2, 2008 to develop an action agenda outlining some of the necessary steps to deal with the environmental and energy crisis to the next President of the United States. This meeting was the fourth of five '08 Mayors' Action Forums which I convened to define for our next President the partnership that must exist between Washington and our cities if we expect to successfully confront the problems of crime, infrastructure, poverty, arts, and the environment.

This document is the product of that effort. It provides recommendations for a new and stronger relationship between the nation's mayors and the federal government. We look forward to working with you during your transition and after your inauguration to further develop and implement these recommendations. With your help, we can establish a working relationship that will begin to restore the values, principles, and sense of purpose that Washington has lost.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Manuel A. Diaz", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Manuel A. (Manny) Diaz  
Mayor of Miami  
President

## FOREWORD

When he was inaugurated President of The U.S. Conference of Mayors at the 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Miami Mayor Manuel A. (Manny) Diaz declared that “Washington has lost its values, lost its principles, lost its sense of purpose. They no longer invest in our cities; they no longer invest in our people.” Mayor Diaz strongly believes that national problems demand national investment and that the next President of the United States must understand why “an investment in America’s cities is an investment in America’s future.”

Addressing the National Press Club luncheon in Washington on August 4, Mayor Diaz announced the launch of a series of national forums on crime, infrastructure, poverty, arts, and environment he was convening in Philadelphia, New York City, Los Angeles, and Miami. The fourth of these, the forum on Environment and Energy, was held October 1-2 in Miami, with more than 50 mayors and others meeting in a working session to develop an environment and energy agenda that would be presented to the next President.

In Miami, and in other previous sessions for mayors, there was significant consensus on the environment and energy problems that cities face.

- The mayors expressed concern about the current energy crisis, its impact on our national economy and the need for immediate action. They discussed how prompt funding commitments to the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant – a program designed to accelerate local action to increase energy efficiency, expand renewable energy supplies and facilitate new employment opportunities – will reduce energy use and will also serve as a key component of responding to the energy crisis.
- With nearly 900 mayors signing the U. S. Conference of Mayors’ Climate Protection Agreement – an agreement whereby mayors pledge to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012 – the mayors discussed climate change and a variety of aspects of designing and implementing a regulatory system known as “cap and trade”, which would sets caps to reduce U. S. greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent below by 2050. Mayors also discussed investing revenues generated from a “cap and trade” program for deploying advanced technologies, creating green jobs, and protecting Americans from higher energy costs.
- The mayors discussed the role transportation plays in the overall U. S. contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. Mayors agreed that more investment in public transit will lead to a reduction in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The mayors also agreed that with the current federal transportation law due to expire in 2009 that Congress has an opportunity to promote climate and energy friendly transportation options, including adoption of federal procurement policies for alternative fuel vehicles.
- The mayors supported the need to “green” the U. S. tax code by passing tax reform that provides preferences to technologies and investments that reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, while eliminating or reducing those tax preferences that result in such emissions. The mayors agreed that there is an opportunity for Congress to adopt legislation that would establish renewable portfolio standards, modernize the U. S. electric transmission grid, promote “decoupling” by utilities, and create a new category of tax credit bonds for green community programs and initiatives allocated to states and cities.

The recommendations contained in the national action agenda which follows are direct responses to these and other challenges, describing how the federal government can act to support needed reforms and changes. We are indebted to all of the mayors who participated in our Miami Action Forum on Environment and Energy and set the direction for this agenda. Their efforts have produced an agenda that sets forth how Washington can join with mayors and other local elected leaders to expand our nation's commitments to our many critical environmental and energy needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Cochran". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Cochran  
CEO and Executive Director  
The U.S. Conference of Mayors



## American Investments

*Addressing our nation's environmental and energy challenges require an expanded partnership between Mayors and the federal government, especially in metropolitan areas which can have the most significant impact on the climate change issues that face the nation.*

These investments will not only help solve our environmental and energy challenges but they will also serve as a catalyst for new jobs in America. According to research conducted by Global Insight and The U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Center, in 2006 there were more than 750,000 Green Jobs in the U.S. economy. However, it is estimated that by 2038, 4.2 million new jobs could be created, if certain policies and investments were made in the United States. This could provide as much as 10% of the new job growth in the economy over the next 30 years.

Mayors urge the new President and Congress to commit new resources to accelerate improvements to the nation through these actions:

- Fully fund the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program at the authorized level and move toward a \$4 billion annual funding level.
- Increase federal funding commitments to public transit and non-motorized travel options and allocate available transportation resources directly to metropolitan areas.
- Green the U.S. Tax Code (e.g., incentivize energy efficiency and conservation, renewable energy supplies, and transit-oriented development as well as commercial and residential development resulting in lower carbon emissions).

## Climate Change

*Throughout the nation, mayors are leading their cities and the nation on the issue of climate protection through implementing policies and programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in their communities and metro areas.*

While progress is being made in the area of climate change, the goal for the nation must be to create a comprehensive solution to solve this problem. One of the solutions is to utilize cities with the tools that ultimately will have the greatest environmental impact and undo the causes of global warming and climate change. The Mayors have increasingly called attention to the need for global climate protection, focusing on: renewable energy sources; national standards for climate change; building standards and practices; and alternative transportation options. With world scientists warning of the serious implications caused by climate change in the near future, U.S. mayors are leading the national charge to meet the goals of the Kyoto Protocol but action and a partnership with the federal government must take place in order to decrease the impacts of climate change locally and globally.

Mayors urge the new President and Congress to do the following:

- Establish a national emissions target of 80 percent by 2050.
- Enact "cap and trade" legislation that supports local government initiatives and reduces greenhouse emissions.
- Participate and ratify the United States' commitment to the next Climate Change Accord in Copenhagen 2009.



## Transportation Policy

*The U.S. transportation sector – its systems and practices – has played a significant part in growing the nation’s energy dependency on foreign energy supplies, principally petroleum, and in contributing to higher oil prices and other energy price increases. In 2007, 69 percent of the nation’s total petroleum products were consumed in the transportation sector, with petroleum products powering more than 98 percent of the nation’s transportation mobility.*

This nation can not deal with our energy and climate challenges, without confronting the transportation sector. This means that, going forward, all federally-assisted transportation investments must address energy and climate concerns, through a series of dramatic shifts in federal policies and programs that emphasize electrification of cars and transit facilities, substitution of alternative and renewable energy fuels for petroleum-based fuels, and increased attention to the design and development of cities and regions to promote more efficient mobility patterns, including increased reliance on non-motorized travel options. To accelerate the achievement of these outcomes, federal policy must empower local elected officials, especially in metropolitan areas, to make the decisions on how federal transportation resources are invested, a shift this is especially crucial to change energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions in this sector.

Mayors urge the new President and Congress to do the following:

- Adopt a metropolitan mobility program, ensure that investments reflect energy and climate challenges, and eliminate program silos.
- Adopt procurement policies, at the Federal level, that would require plug-in vehicles, plug-in hybrids, and/or other alternative fuel vehicles.
- Accelerate investment in rail transportation, both freight and passenger rail.

## Energy

*Federal energy policies need to be updated to meet the future economic and environmental needs of our metro areas and the nation.*

The United States needs to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and develop cleaner methods to utilize its carbon-based energy sources and away from its dependency on foreign oil. New technology needs to be developed, alternative energy sources need to be encouraged, and energy conservation needs to be promoted in order to help the nation and its metro economies find new ways to strengthen its economy.

Mayors urge the new President and Congress to do the following:

- Adopt legislation to promote “decoupling” by utilities (i.e., changes that ensure utilities are indifferent to sales volatility and removing the disincentives to energy efficiency).
- Modernize the nation’s electric transmission grid to support the introduction of new renewable energy supplies.
- Establish a national renewable portfolio standard to accelerate the development of alternative energy sources.
- Modernize and streamline the Department of Energy to reflect the importance of today’s city in the nation’s energy priorities.



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*Tom Cochran*

Tom Cochran, CEO and Executive Director

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