

Strong Cities...

Strong Families...

for a

Strong America

Mayors' 10-Point Plan

'08

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Mayor of Trenton
President



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

**Strong Cities...
Strong Families...
for a
Strong
America**



America's greatest resource has always been and will always be its people. Americans are innovative, bold and generous. And 85 percent of Americans now live in cities and metro areas.

Led by America's mayors, America's cities drive our national economy — the strongest national economy in the world. Metro economies now account for 85 percent of national employment, 87 percent of labor income, and 86 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). Of the largest 100 international economies in the world, 42 are US metro areas. Clearly, US metro areas are a dominant force in both the national and global economy.

But our nation faces many great challenges, and mayors welcome the opportunity to confront these challenges.

To keep US metro economies growing and to address critical domestic and international priorities — such as climate protection, job creation, security and education — there must be a stronger partnership between cities and the federal government that recognizes the leadership provided by America's mayors, and helps mayors continue to leverage private-sector investment.

Under the leadership of President Douglas H. Palmer of Trenton, New Jersey, The U.S. Conference of Mayors is taking this message directly to Presidential candidates, the media, and the voters.

We must invest wisely in our youth, our workforce, and our infrastructure in ways that spur creativity and competitiveness. Our national leaders — and those who seek to lead — must work directly with mayors on the 10 priorities identified by the members of The U.S. Conference of Mayors and contained in this document. Only by doing so can we have “Strong Cities, Strong Families, for a Strong America.”

1.

Energy Block Grant

CLIMATE PROTECTION

Mayors throughout the United States, working through The U.S. Conference of Mayors, are leading the nation on the critical issue of climate protection. Mayors, along with other leaders, are in a unique position to change human behavior and take local actions that will lead to significant and sustainable reductions in energy use, helping curb harmful greenhouse gas emissions. The American people deserve strong leadership on this global challenge, as the nation's mayors have provided.

Our national government has refused to take significant action, contrary to the leadership by other governments, to protect the planet by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In contrast, more than 730 mayors have signed The U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement and pledged to confront this mounting global crisis through local action. Led by mayors, these community-based, grass roots activities are a key part of a successful national strategy to reduce the nation's energy dependence and its greenhouse gas emissions.

To support these community-based initiatives, The U.S. Conference of Mayors proposes the creation of an Energy Block Grant that is modeled after the highly successful Community Development Block Grant. This initiative should provide funding directly to cities, counties and states to support local efforts to improve community energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse emissions, and stimulate the deployment of new technologies, practices and alternative/renewable energy supplies. Program funds should be distributed by a formula based largely on population as well as energy-relevant factors, and recipients should be held accountable for their performance in reducing energy use and curbing greenhouse gas emissions. The block grant program would help augment local program resources, which currently rely substantially on local property taxes. This new federal partnership with cities on energy and climate protection will also help advance other federal priorities, such as the attainment of federal clean air and water quality standards, the reclamation and reuse of brownfields and vacant properties where existing infrastructure already exists, and combating rising congestion levels and other demands on the nation's transportation sector through smarter local development practices.

In addition to general fund appropriations, this block grant initiative could also be supported by revenues from the elimination of recently-enacted tax preferences for the oil and gas industry, royalty payments from off-shore oil and gas leases, and allotments of auction revenues under pending "cap and trade" legislation.



2.

Fighting Crime

VIOLENT CRIME RISING – MORE COPS NEEDED

While the nation has been making progress on the fight against terrorism, street crime has been going up. The FBI's Uniform Crime Report for 2005 showed the largest single year percent increase in violent crime in 14 years. And this trend continued in 2006, with many cities seeing double-digit increases in murder, assault or robbery rates.

Mayors and police chiefs have identified a number of contributing factors for this rise in crime including a growing culture of violence among youth, gangs, a proliferation of illegal guns, drug activity, the prisoner re-entry, and social problems related to school truancy and a lack of jobs. Federal resources have been shifted to homeland security, and a failed national drug control policy continues to flood America's streets with illegal drugs from other countries. America's mayors and police must deal with the results.

The COPS hiring program (once funded at almost \$1.5 billion) and Local Law Enforcement Block Grant program (once funded at approximately \$523 million) have both been eliminated. And, Congress and the Administration ended the assault weapon ban and have allowed AK-47s back on the streets. That is why the nation's mayors are calling for a comprehensive crime initiative that restores the federal-local partnership on hometown security.

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COPS: As was done under the 1994 Crime Bill, mayors are calling for a federal trust fund to put more police on the streets, fight gangs, reduce domestic violence, and fund anti-crime technology. Specifically, funding for COPS and the local block grant should be restored, and mayors fully support strong accountability standards tied to these grants.

Gangs: Balanced anti-gang legislation must be enacted that strengthens local law enforcement and provides positive alternatives to gang participation.

Re-entry and Rehabilitation: 750,000 prisoners and juvenile detainees are leaving prisons and jails and coming back to cities every year. Mayors are leading locally on this issue, but **federal resources are needed to provide alternatives to ex-offenders and juvenile detainees, and address related housing, job training and placement, drug treatment, and education issues.**

Gun Violence: The federal government must address the growing violence caused by illegal guns by **restoring the assault weapon ban, closing the gun show background check loophole, and providing law enforcement with greater access to gun trace data by removing the "Tiahrt Amendment."**



3.

Community Development Block Grants

SUCCESSFUL RESULTS, DOUBLE RESOURCES

For 33 years, since 1974, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program has served as a vital resource to help cities, counties, and states meet their unique community development, affordable housing, and economic development needs. No other federal-local government program has been as successful as CDBG. Since its enactment in 1974, the program has been, and continues to be, a critical affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization tool for communities. While providing essential services to citizens nationwide, CDBG also improves local economies. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in Fiscal Year 2004 alone, CDBG provided funds for thousands of activities, assisting over 23 million persons and households.

CDBG funds a broad spectrum of activities including: expanding homeownership opportunities; eliminating slums and blight; improving infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer systems; and supporting libraries, fire stations, community and recreation centers, adult day care, after school care for children, homeless facilities, employment training, transportation services, crime awareness, and business and job creation. In fact, according to HUD, more than 78,000 jobs were created by CDBG in Fiscal Year 2004 alone.

But even with proven success, CDBG formula grants have been threatened and significantly reduced over the last several years. In Fiscal Year 2006 the program was cut by 10 percent, and in 2005 the cut was 5 percent, resulting in a 15 percent cut in two years. A survey released in March, 2006 by The U.S. Conference of Mayors and 20 other organizations found that the reduced formula allocations have had a substantial negative effect on entitlement communities and states. With inflation taken into account, the Northeast-Midwest Institute found that CDBG has been substantially reduced since fiscal 1981. Adjusted for inflation, the 1981 CDBG appropriation of \$3.5 billion would have been \$7.5 billion in Fiscal Year 2006.

The nation's mayors recommend that CDBG formula funding be doubled to \$8 billion. This additional funding would address the delayed projects and activities which have come about because of cuts to CDBG, and further build on the proven record of an effective affordable housing and revitalization program.

4.

Housing

National Affordable Housing Trust Fund: In October, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act of 2007. The bill would provide for the production, rehabilitation, and preservation of 1.5 million housing units over the next 10 years. The trust fund resources will not come from federal tax revenues, but from the Federal Housing Administration's mortgage lending surpluses and the portfolios of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. **The nation's mayors support a National Affordable Housing Trust Fund that would help address the critical shortage of affordable housing in our nation.**

Public Housing: Public housing is a national asset worth over \$100 billion and provides homes for 1.1 million low income families. Public housing operating subsidies, which supports public housing maintenance, security, and social services for residents, has been cut over recent years. The public housing capital fund, which supports the capital needs of public housing, has an estimated backlog of capital improvements needs estimated between \$18 and \$20 billion. **The nation's mayors support full funding of the public housing operating subsidies and of the public housing capital fund.**

HOPE VI: The HOPE VI program for severely distressed public housing has been targeted for elimination over the past several years, but has survived through nominal Congressional appropriations. **The nation's mayors support the restoration of HOPE VI to a funding level that returns the program to an effective national tool for public housing development.**

Mortgage Foreclosure: According to the Center for Responsible Lending, as a result of the subprime mortgage crisis over two million homeowners across the nation could lose their homes through foreclosure. Mayors are concerned about the economic distress of families, decimated neighborhoods, and the declining tax base of their cities. **The nation's mayors call for Federal Housing Administration (FHA) reform and modernization. Mayors also call for comprehensive federal legislative and regulatory policies that would combat predatory abuses in the mortgage lending market.**

5.

Rebuild and Modernize America's Infrastructure

TRANSPORTATION, WATER, WASTEWATER, BROWNFIELDS, TELECOMMUNICATIONS, SCHOOLS, AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Congested and deteriorating highways, crowded and outdated schools, transit demand outpacing available resources and services, and massive networks of aging water and wastewater facilities provide evidence of the escalating infrastructure crisis that is jeopardizing America's prosperity. Most visible reminders can be found in the recent collapse of the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis which resulted in the loss of 13 lives, the steam pipe explosion in New York City and its disruption, and of course the levee collapse and other infrastructure problems in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, costing the lives of thousands of Americans and untold billions in damage.

From transit to energy, this critical infrastructure has been neglected for far too long by the federal government. Today, our national government directs a smaller share of its budget to these investments than at any point in recent memory. And, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers' 2005 Report Card

for America's Infrastructure, the nation's overall infrastructure received a D grade with the Report Card, calling for \$1.6 trillion to alleviate our nation's infrastructure needs.

Financing: To address this growing infrastructure threat, the nation's mayors are calling for funding increases, tax incentives, bonds, and other measures to support local and state efforts, and stimulate private sector participation to improve infrastructure including transportation, water, wastewater, bridges, brownfields, energy, telecommunications, and schools. There must also be related policies that support the more efficient use of the nation's existing infrastructure through reclaiming brownfields and vacant lots, and by providing affordable housing options in America's cities. These tax incentives and bonds would help create hundreds of thousands of family-wage jobs (which cannot be exported to other countries), while revitalizing our critical infrastructure across the country.

Deferred Maintenance: In addition to funding new capacity projects, it is just as critical that our nation focus available resources on deferred maintenance, a strategy that can help preserve the performance and functionality of existing assets, sustain economic productivity, and often save lives.

Capital Budget: The federal government should adopt a capital budgeting system that could provide for substantially higher federal commitments to infrastructure investment in the near term, consistent with state and local standards and practices.



6.

Competitive Workforce

In response to intensified global competitive pressure, American companies are required to enhance performance by innovating and adopting process and product improvements. This requires a skilled workforce with the knowledge and ability to adapt to ever-changing business needs.

And yet, with baby boomers retiring at increasing rates, the next generation of workers does not have the required post-secondary degree attainment or the necessary technical skills to replace them. More importantly, our emerging workforce is increasingly disconnected from educational pathways and the world of work. High school dropout rates in some cities are as high as 50 percent, and the youth unemployment rate is at its highest level in decades.

Promoting Youth Development and Employment: By 2010, the largest segment of the nation's labor force will be teens and young adults as 41 million new workers enter the workforce to replace the 76 million retiring workers. Yet the overall teen employment rate in the past three years (2004-2006) is at a historical low. Addressing this problem demands strategies which create jobs, make school learning more relevant to the labor market, provide expanded opportunities for out-of-school youth to gain work competencies, and help at-risk youth envision career advancement opportunities. As such, **the nation's mayors call for a new summer youth employment initiative** to provide funding directly to cities and urban counties to create paid subsidized employment in local, state and federal government agencies and the private non-profit sector, and to subsidize wages for youth in private for-profit firms.

Strengthening Workforce Development: It is crucial to support a sustained commitment to the demand-driven local workforce development system, and to programs that help people acquire the knowledge and skills needed to become competitive workers in a 21st century global economy. As such, **the nation's mayors call for timely reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act, and full funding of its programs to ensure a significant investment in lifelong learning for every American citizen.**

Green Jobs: For tens of thousands of Americans who have been left behind in the global economy because of barriers to employment, limited education, or a prior history of incarceration, "green jobs" can also create "green pathways out of poverty." **The nation's mayors call for a partnership with the federal government to connect formerly incarcerated adults, along with urban youth, formerly homeless people and/or those with other barriers to employment, with progressive green businesses and clean technology companies.**

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7.

Children and At-Risk Youth

There is a high school dropout crisis in America. Every school day, nearly seven thousand students drop out. That means up to 1.2 million students annually will not graduate from high school with their peers. Only about 58 percent of Hispanic students and 53 percent of African-American students will graduate on time with a regular diploma. Unless high schools find a way to graduate students at higher rates, more than 12 million of them will drop out over the course of the next decade, resulting in a loss to the nation of \$3 trillion. With each dropout a community suffers the loss of tax revenue and employment, higher costs associated with increased incarceration, gang membership and social services, and increased poverty. In order for our nation to begin to address the growing poverty crisis in our cities, our suburbs, and our rural areas – we must invest in childhood development, health and education.

Early Childhood Development: Mayors recognize that student achievement is inextricably linked to early childhood programs, health and nutrition, social service supports and parental involvement. As such, it is crucial that **funding for the Head Start, Early Head Start, In and Out of School Meal and Food Stamps programs** be increased to reach all eligible participants.

Children's Health Insurance: It is critical that all children receive access to quality healthcare from the earliest moments of their lives in order to develop into productive and strong members of society. **Mayors call for a comprehensive children's health insurance benefits package that will provide quality medical, dental and mental health services for all eligible low-income children.**

Teacher Quality: Significant federal resources are required to train, recruit and retain highly qualified teachers in school districts with a disproportionate number of at-risk students. In addition, teachers who work with at-risk youth require continued opportunities for skills development in order to learn about innovative strategies to engage students in learning.

Quality After-School Programming: Mayors call for an increased funding commitment to cities for quality after-school and summer enhancement programs to eliminate knowledge loss and inspire student interest in a variety of areas. Most specifically, it is crucial to strengthen and fully fund the 21st Century Learning Centers and other after-school programs intended to increase the academic achievement of at-risk students.

Parental Involvement: Research consistently finds that parental and community involvement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school. **Federal education policy should reinforce parental involvement programs and encourage community members to interact with neighborhood schools.**

8.

Homeland Security

FIRST RESPONDER FUNDING, TRANSIT SECURITY, COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

As called for in the 2007 Mayors' 10-Point Plan, the 110th Congress enacted recommendations made by the 9/11 Commission to authorize funding increases for high-risk urban areas, emergency management, and transit security. And, the new law creates a stand-alone Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program as called for by the nation's mayors.

However, more can and should be done to make sure that our nation's first responders are prepared to prevent, respond and recover from either attacks or natural disasters. We need a comprehensive federal policy on transportation security. And it is well past time that the federal government enacts comprehensive immigration reform.

First Responder Funding: Congress and the President must make sure that newly authorized programs for urban areas, block grants, interoperable communications, transit security and port security are **fully funded. And, we must fix the flawed delivery system and continue to make improvements in the grant application process for federal homeland security resources to make sure that funding quickly reaches cities and is flexible to meet local needs.**

Transit Security: With more than 7.8 billion trips taken on public transit in the first nine months of 2006, securing this critical infrastructure and protecting riders from terrorist attacks must be a major priority. **The nation's mayors are calling for a flexible Federal transit security initiative to improve security in the areas of communications, surveillance, detection systems, personnel and training. As we have done with aviation, securing public transit is a Federal responsibility and should not require a local or state match. Furthermore, security funds should go directly to the operator of that system or the jurisdiction providing the security.**

Immigration Reform: The nation's mayors urge enactment of comprehensive immigration reform that would improve border security, bolster economic prosperity, and provide the approximately 12 million people already in the U.S. without legal authorization an opportunity to earn their permanent residence and citizenship, provided: they have not committed serious crimes; have learned, or are in the process of learning English; and pay taxes and social security on their earnings.

9.

Tourism and Arts

Tourism: Travel and tourism is a driving force for America's economy and diplomacy. Protecting our nation must remain paramount, but a better balance is needed between homeland security and economic vitality. Since 9/11, while the world tourism market rapidly expanded, the U.S. share of international travel declined 17 percent. Foreign visitors are increasingly deterred by America's unwelcoming visa and entry processes. Unless these problems are corrected, Chicago's bid for the 2016 Olympics may be adversely impacted. **The nation's mayors call for travel and tourism to be a national policy priority. We must enhance national security, while at the same time, increasing international travel to the U.S. through visa reforms, entry improvements and promotion. There must be full participation of the federal government in Chicago's pursuit to win the 2016 Olympics.**

Arts: The arts, humanities, and museums are critical to the quality of life and livability of America's cities. It has been shown that the nonprofit arts and culture industry generates over \$166 billion in economic activity annually, supports over 5.7 million full time jobs, and returns over \$12 billion in federal income taxes annually. Governments which support the arts on average see a return on investment of over \$7 in taxes for every \$1 that the government appropriates. Furthermore, federal, state and local governments, private foundations, corporations and individuals provide access to artistic activities for peoples of all races, creeds, and income levels. Recognizing the importance that the arts play, many countries throughout the world have established national cabinet level positions for culture and tourism. **The nation's mayors urge the creation of a Cabinet level Secretary of Culture and Tourism charged with forming a national policy for arts, culture and tourism. Federal resources must also be invested in nonprofit arts organizations through their local arts agencies with full funding of the federal arts and culture agencies.**

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10.

Unfunded Mandates/Preemptions

The passage of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 was a positive step towards restricting the ability of Congress to impose new, costly unfunded mandates on state and local governments, or preempt their ability to fund critical local programs. However, the issue of unfunded federal mandates remains a major problem. For example, members of Congress continue to propose legislation that would preempt local governments in areas such as internet access fee collection and wireless telecommunications services.

Therefore, mayors call for new legislation to strengthen the federal-local partnership and further restrict the ability of Congress to impose unfunded federal mandates or preempt local authority.

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