



CITY OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
Office of the Mayor
Thomas M. Menino

**Remarks of Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino
President The United States Conference of Mayors
May 7, 2002**

Thank you, Tom, and thanks to all of you who have joined me here today for my first day as president of the United States Conference of Mayors. I've often said, "the job of mayor is the best job anyone could have", so to be chosen for this honor to lead my colleagues is a truly special opportunity.

Let me also thank my predecessor, Mayor Marc Morial of New Orleans, for the work that he did on our behalf. Several months after he became president of the conference, the world changed and the job of mayor changed, perhaps forever. Our role as guardians of the public safety increased, and, thanks to Marc's leadership, we put together a comprehensive plan to strengthen homeland security in America's cities. This plan, which includes a Homeland Security Block Grant to bolster local preparedness, still awaits Washington's full consideration. It is unfortunate that eight months after 9/11, most of America's cities have not received one dime of support from Washington. What are they waiting for?

But mayors must be concerned with far more than homeland security. We must also be strong advocates for economic security. For putting Americans back to work. For

giving our children a quality education. For giving families the support they need to thrive. And for helping our newcomers add to the richness of our cities -- a richness that comes from our growing diversity.

Those will be my priorities as president of the conference. I will focus on a "Campaign for Working Families" that will promote economic opportunity for all who live in our great communities. People look to cities for their shot at the American Dream, and it is our job to help them achieve and sustain their dreams.

Today, I want to announce my first initiative as president of the United States Conference of Mayors. On May 21st and 22nd, I will convene a National Housing Summit in Washington, D.C. This summit will bring together mayors, housing advocates and what I call, "new partners" -- from business, labor, senior citizens groups and others. Together, we will put forward a plan to provide quality housing for working Americans and together, we will go to Congress and the Administration to get the job done.

Housing has already helped pull our nation away from recession -- but we can do more. In some communities, this means production, in others, this means preservation, but in every case, investing in housing is the right medicine for a sluggish economy. It puts people to work, builds stronger communities and bolsters families.

Congress recently voted to increase farm subsidies by \$31 billion, but in pursuing a new national housing agenda, we do not seek massive new federal subsidies. Yes, we need a new housing production program and we need to reinvest in our great asset of public housing, but we want to unleash the capital that is out there and put it to work

building housing. Everyone can and should play a larger role, whether through employer-assisted housing, new partnerships with our unions or creative initiatives by our banks, mortgage companies and intermediaries such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

We all need to think outside of the proverbial "box." Here's one idea I will bring to the summit -- let's find more ways to create "wired" housing in our cities and give more families a window to the world of 21st century technology. Our "Tech Boston" and "Technology Goes Home" initiatives have been ladders of opportunity for needy families. Let's figure out how we can integrate these programs with our housing initiatives, both public and private.

Next month, at our Annual Meeting in Madison, Wisconsin, I will lay out more details of our agenda. We are presently meeting with several national foundations that want to partner with us in the year ahead. In particular, they want to help to promote best practices. Boston has much to share with other cities and we can learn from what others do as well.

The people in this room today represent the successful partnerships we have built in Boston with business, with labor, with the clergy and with some of the most innovative non-profit organizations in the country. With your help, I will work to establish the same types of partnerships nationally that can benefit Boston as well as all of our great American cities.

Again, thank you.

