



NEWS The United States Conference of Mayors

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THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS UNVEILS COMMUNITY POLICING RECOMMENDATIONS

Mayors and Police Chiefs Monitor Proceedings of President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing Following Release of Report Calling for Outside Investigations of Police-Involved Deaths

Washington, D.C. – The nation's mayors are playing close attention today to the proceedings of the Second Listening Session of President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing in Cincinnati.

Under the leadership of U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) President and Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, who participated in the first public listening session of President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing in Washington, D.C., mayors last week released their recommendations on improving community policing, during the Conference's 83rd Winter Meeting in Washington, D.C. in a session titled "Strengthening Community Policing in the 21st Century."

Gary (IN) Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson, who chairs the USCM Working Group of Mayors and Police Chiefs, unveiled the recommendations following a four-month review by the Working Group of policing policies and best practices nationwide.

The full report of recommendations, which will inform the work of President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, is available at <http://www.usmayors.org/83rdWinterMeeting/media/012215-report-policing.pdf>. The recommendations are grouped into the following topic areas of focus:

1. Building police-community trust;
2. Improving police department practices;
3. Assuring timely and accurate communications;
4. Conducting independent investigations;
5. Addressing racial and economic disparities;
6. Providing national leadership.

Participants in the mayors' Community Policing session included Mayor Freeman-Wilson, Director of White House Intergovernmental Affairs Jerry E. Abramson; President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing Co-Chairs Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey and George Mason University Professor Laurie Robinson; and Task Force Executive Director and U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services Office Director Ronald L. Davis. The session, which can be viewed at usmayors.org, was moderated by Mayor Johnson and included an open question and answer period with hundreds of mayors in the audience.

During the session, Johnson said, "Mayors stand at the crossroads of their communities. We are the leaders best positioned to bridge the gaps in trust and understanding our residents, all of whom want what is best for our cities."

The Conference's working group was formed following the tragedy in Ferguson and an October meeting in Little Rock, AR where nearly 100 mayors and police chiefs met at the William J. Clinton Center in Little Rock, AR to discuss different community-policing strategies, lessons to be learned from the situation in Ferguson and ways to build trust between law enforcement and city officials. The group was charged with developing a series of recommendations for local and national actions intended to improve policing in America.

Commenting on the work of the USCM Working Group, Mayor Freeman-Wilson said, “Mayors and police chiefs know full well that effective community policing is practiced in a constitutional manner by many police departments, and the vast majority of police officers have developed trusting relationships with the communities they serve. But, we also know there ought to be full confidence with the public in our law enforcement. ... If our quest is to achieve a sense of justice in our communities, we have a responsibility to address these issues whenever there is a police-involved death. ... This an opportunity for mayors to lead and we can choose to navigate around these issues, or we can create a new landscape in our communities to create a better future for our children.”

Of the mayors' recommendations, Task Force Co-Chair Chief Ramsey said, “We will use this document to help us in our work moving forward. We need the support of the nation’s mayors to help us meet our deadline.” The Task Force’s preliminary report is due to be delivered to President Obama March 2, 2015; the final report is to be released in early April.

Task Force Executive Director Davis spoke of his office’s on-going work with The Conference of Mayors saying, “The COPS office is tasked with supporting the work of the President’s Task Force. We know that trust is key to public safety and requires strong relationships. It is a great honor to serve in this capacity and we appreciate the work of the nation’s mayors.”

During the USCM Winter Meeting, mayors also released the public safety findings results of a Zogby poll, which surveyed public perceptions of local, state and federal government officials in late December. The poll (at usmayors.org) found that:

- On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being no trust of local governments to provide public safety and 5 being the highest trust, 54% of Americans polled gave a “trust” score of 4 – 5, while only 19% gave a 1 – 2.
- Cities’ police departments received even higher ratings in protecting the safety and rights of minorities —62% high and 32% low. This was something—to varying degrees—that all races and ideologies agree upon by majorities, though, minorities’ ratings are lower. Whites offer a 66% high to 29% low performance for the police; Hispanics 60% to 34% and African Americans 50% to 43%. Liberals offer 54% to 39%; conservatives 73% to 24%; and moderates 60% to 35%.

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The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are nearly 1400 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. Like us on Facebook at facebook.com/usmayors, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/usmayors.

