



The United States Conference of Mayors

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230 U.S. MAYORS MEET WITH PRESIDENT OBAMA, CABINET OFFICIALS ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT IN CITIES, STRUGGLING LOCAL ECONOMIES

78th Winter Meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors January 20 - 22, 2010 – Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. – More than 230 of the nation's mayors, led by U.S. Conference of Mayors President Burnsville, MN, Mayor Elizabeth Kautz, have convened for the 78th Winter Meeting of The U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) at the Capital Hilton in Washington, D.C.

Over the three-day session, which runs from Wednesday, January 20 to Friday, January 22, U.S. mayors will meet with President Obama in the White House, House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Cabinet members and Congressional representatives to advocate for a national bipartisan agenda that confronts the persistent unemployment, often in double-digit numbers, that still exists on MainStreet America (13.9 in Long Beach, CA; 13.4 in Las Vegas, NV; 14.9 percent in Providence, RI and 11.9 in Milwaukee, WI).

At their opening press conference on Wednesday, the mayors unveiled The 2010 Metro Agenda for America, which focuses on five key policy areas: job creation through direct funding to cities; a more balanced transportation bill next year that recognizes the necessity to modernize the current transportation system in order to daily move goods and people in our metro areas of the nation; energy independence and climate protection through green, sustainable jobs and the mayors' Energy Efficiency Block Grant; improved airport security; and continued funding for proven, working programs like Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants, and Summer Youth Jobs.

With unemployment in this country concentrated in cities and metropolitan areas (in Texas, the Dallas, Houston, San Antonio and Austin metro areas account for 65 percent of the unemployed), mayors maintain that supporting these policies will put the American people back to work and help the nation emerge from the recession with a stronger, more thriving economy.

"Despite what national economists are saying, the recession is not over for MainStreet America," said Mayor Kautz as she presented the Mayors' Metro Agenda. "Everyday, mayors hear from constituents who have lost their jobs and people who are desperately afraid of what lies ahead. We are here to let the residents of our cities know that we hear their calls for help and we are responding."

The mayors' urgent call for a metro jobs agenda was underscored by a major economic report also released today forecasting job recovery and unemployment rates in the nation's 363 metropolitan areas, where 85% of the people in this country live. The report, prepared by IHS Global Insight for the USCM, indicated that over 105 metros will still have unemployment rates above 10 percent; and 214 metros will have unemployment rates higher than 8 percent by the end of 2011.

According to the report, even as recovery in the labor markets pick up steam in 2011-2013, unemployment rates will not return to pre-recession levels during that period for any metro area. Further, half of all metros (185) will not achieve pre-recession peak employment levels until 2013 and beyond.

"This data is solid proof that we need the Senate to pass a MainStreet jobs package now," said Kautz. "We are in the middle of a 'jobs emergency' that demands decisive and swift action."

The report also indicates that in 2009 the nation's cities and metro economies generated 90.1 percent of gross domestic product, 90.3 percent of wage and salary income, and 86.2 percent of all jobs. Of this data, Mayor Kautz noted, "These numbers show that without a robust recovery in metropolitan areas, there can be no national recovery. Our cities and our metro economies are centers of our national economy. We ignore them at our own peril."

On Thursday, the mayors will visit the White House to meet with President Obama and his Economic Advisory Team to make the case for their Metro Agenda, as well as the need for a stronger federal/city partnership. "All levels of government must work closer together to build a bold vision for what cities and metropolitan areas will look like in the coming decades," said Kautz.

During their meeting, mayors will also hear from several Cabinet members and other top officials. Confirmed speakers include:
Wednesday: First Lady Michelle Obama, Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, AK Senator Mark Begich, FL Congressman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, White House Urban Affairs Director Aldofo Carrion, U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk, Hiroshima, Japan Mayor Tadatoshia Akiba, Florence, Italy Mayor Matteo Renzi, and National Urban League President and CEO Marc Morial
Thursday: Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, WA Senator Patty Murray, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski
Friday: Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Attorney General Eric Holder, U.S. Treasurer Rosie Rios, and Mexico City Mayor Marcelo Ebrard.

The 78th Winter Meeting is the first USCM meeting over which Mayor Kautz is presiding. As the new President of The Conference of Mayors, Mayor Kautz is serving the balance of former Seattle Mayor Greg Nickel's term, which would have ended in June 2010, and then serve a full term of her own until June 2011. (Greg Nickels was defeated in the most recent mayoral election and his term ended on January 2.) Mayor Kautz was previously the Vice President of The Conference and under the rules of the organization's Constitution, when the current President is no longer a mayor, the Vice President automatically becomes President.

Mayor Kautz was first elected Burnsville's Mayor in 1994 and has been re-elected six times since. Mayor Kautz is the fifth woman President in the history of The U.S. Conference of Mayors, and due to her succession last week, Mayor Kautz will be the longest serving woman President in the organization's 78-year history.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today. Each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. More information about the Conference is available at usmayors.org.

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