



# Leadership for America: Mayors' Agenda for the Future

LOCAL RESULTS, NATIONAL VISION

# Contents



## Leadership for America: Mayors' Agenda for the Future

**Mitchell J. Landrieu**  
Mayor of New Orleans  
President

**Stephen K. Benjamin**  
Mayor of Columbia, SC  
Vice President

**Tom Cochran**  
CEO and Executive  
Director

LOCAL RESULTS, NATIONAL VISION

<b>Leadership for America</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The Agenda</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Guiding Principles</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Key Priorities</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Ensure the Safety and Security of Our Communities</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Fix Our Crumbling Infrastructure</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Expand Our Workforce to Create Economic Growth</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Build Equitable Communities to Increase Opportunity for All</b>	<b>31</b>





# THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

1620 EYE STREET, NORTHWEST  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006  
TELEPHONE (202) 293-7330  
FAX (202) 293-2352  
URL: [www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org)

## Leadership for America: Mayors' Agenda for The Future

While Americans look to Washington and see chaos and dysfunction reigning across our country, cities in urban, suburban, and rural communities are thriving and remain our greatest laboratory for economic growth, innovative public policy, and results-oriented government. In fact, the economic power of our metropolitan regions is driving our nation forward, and this must be recognized and strengthened if we are going to continue to compete in a global economy. From our largest cities and suburban areas to our smallest rural towns, mayors don't just talk and debate, they provide safer, stronger, healthier, and more inclusive communities. Successful mayors combine real results and transformative vision – delivered in real time. That's leadership.

As an organization, The U.S. Conference of Mayors represents 1,409 communities throughout America, from towns of 30,000 to cities with millions of residents. In every city, parents, police officers, teachers, small business owners and employees, factory workers, health care providers, service employees, laborers, and millions of working families are looking to our elected leaders to focus on their priorities and produce programs and policies that help secure their future.

Unfortunately, what Americans are seeing in Washington isn't leadership or results for our local communities. Too many in Washington have lost touch with the reality of life for people who live and work in our cities and the connected suburbs and rural areas that surround them.

Mayors, on the other hand, govern day to day, with a focus on delivery guided by transformation and common sense alike that impacts real life and pocketbook issues. And the proof is in the results. Year after year, mayors balance budgets and ensure the effectiveness of the basic government services they deliver each day. Mayors build partnerships, work beyond partisan divides, and work across sectors to find new solutions, remove barriers, and develop innovative responses to challenges of the day.

Mayors share the frustration of the American people with the inability of our leaders in Washington to tackle today's biggest challenges. We want our partners in Washington to work with us to make our country safer, stronger, and more focused.

In short, Washington could learn a thing or two from American mayors of all regions and all parties. With millions of Americans starved for leadership, they should look past Washington and instead focus on what's happening outside their kitchen windows.

We have an agenda for America's future that prioritizes community safety, recognizes taxpayer investment that will produce results that matter, and restores hope for families who want everyone in America to do better.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mitch Landrieu".

**Mitchell J. Landrieu**  
Mayor of New Orleans  
President



# The Agenda

## Policy, Collaboration, and Results for America's Working and Middle Classes



Our country is a diverse and resilient network of people who share the same dreams and hopes for their families. Unfortunately, for many Americans in our metropolitan regions across the country, there is a sense that federal policy makers have forgotten them in the shadow of Washington politics and special interests.

As mayors, it's impossible to not track the pulse of the local community. It's impossible to not know what the priorities and needs of average Americans are. Day in and day out, mayors are at the front line of getting things done and providing leadership. They know what's necessary to keep our country thriving, but they need partnership at the federal level.

### Ensure the Safety and Security of Our Communities.

- Invest in community policing and resources to build trust, reduce violent crime, prevent domestic terrorism, and make every neighborhood safe.
- Reform the criminal justice system.
- Pass comprehensive immigration reform.

### Fix Our Crumbling Infrastructure To Build Resilience.

- Pass a major infrastructure bill that invests in public infrastructure projects and prioritizes projects that make our communities more resilient.
- Support resilient and sustainable growth through investment and policies that recognize the impact our climate has on our collective health, safety, and economic future.
- Generate new jobs and career pathways while improving construction standards, worker training and safety, and efficiency.

### Expand our Workforce to Drive Economic Growth.

- Address the impact of technology disruptions in our communities.
- Invest in training and access to jobs that exist in today's economy.
- Guarantee equal access to financing and capital.

### Create Equitable Communities to Increase Opportunity for All.

- Invest in inclusive neighborhoods, affordable housing, and community development.
- Improve our public education from pre-k through college.
- Provide affordable and quality health care in every community and promote an environment of health and well-being.
- Increase equity and ensure civil and human rights.



# Guiding Principles

## America Cannot Be Strong Without Secure and Prosperous Cities

### **Americans in every community want a more secure nation.**

They want political leaders at every level to cooperate, collaborate, and innovate on public safety, economic opportunity, and quality-of-life issues that protect their families from violent crime, poverty, terrorism, and man-made or natural disasters, and to create healthier communities for everyone.

**Poverty has increased economic insecurity in far too many communities.** Income disparity across our country frustrates working- and middle-class families, deepens our divisions, and threatens long-term growth and prosperity. Americans of all income levels, races, and demographics deserve an economy that is inclusive and resilient in the face of disruptive technologies and economic shifts occurring with globalization.

**Policies that strengthen our urban areas can no longer be directed only to central cities.** The interconnectedness of cities to our suburban and rural communities mean they face the same challenges of concentrated poverty, violence, opioid abuse, crumbling infrastructure, lack of jobs and economic insecurity, and underfunded schools. Innovation, entrepreneurial spirit, and a focus on results are the only solutions to the challenges all communities face.

**American cities and their metropolitan regions remain the greatest laboratories for democracy and policy in the world.** Mayors are public service CEOs who drive innovation in government, deploy new tools and technologies, and work constantly to manage and make government more connected, engaged, and responsive to its citizens.

They are embracing data-driven approaches, entrepreneurship inside government, open data policies, and transparency around performance measurement strategies and results.

**Our people are resilient, diverse, and strong.** Divisive rhetoric and political divides create false choices and stall our ability to get things done. On the streets of America, outcomes matter, not politics. Mayors know that everyone does better when we honor our diversity and unite to address our biggest challenges. Every day, mayors work with broad coalitions to move beyond partisan, racial, gender, religious, or class divides and create stronger, safer, and healthier communities. Today's governing challenges require partnerships with the business, nonprofit and faith-based leaders, regional and state partners, and the federal government.

**The top-down approach to government no longer produces results for Americans.** For our country to be safe and for our economy to grow, our government must operate as an integrated delivery system that focuses on the efficient delivery of services through government investment at all levels. Because municipal government is closest to the people, mayors are best equipped to maximize outcomes for our communities; federal and state policy must not occur in a vacuum that creates unfunded mandates, preempts, limits or interferes with the constitution or statutory authority of local governments required to balance their budgets and provide essential services.



## Key Priorities

### Ensure The Safety And Security Of Our Neighborhoods.

In cities big and small, Americans of all races and backgrounds do not feel safe or secure. This anxiety leads to a sense of disconnectedness and hopelessness that affects all residents. Too many feel alienated and disenfranchised. Mayors and local law enforcement officials across America are currently dealing with three immediate and interrelated priorities: building trust between the police and communities, reducing violent crime, and preventing terrorism.

- Strengthen the bonds and trust between communities and police.
- Increase the number of community policing officers on the streets and enable police departments to invest in training and technology.
- Improve coordination between local, state, and federal law enforcement.
- Expand homeland security grants.
- Reduce gun violence.
- Increase investments in prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation programs for substance abuse and mental health.
- Pass meaningful criminal justice reform that will make the system more equitable and strengthen reentry programs and services.
- Pass comprehensive immigration reform that recognizes the impact on public safety and local communities.

### Fix Our Crumbling Infrastructure to Build Resilience.

Public investment in infrastructure must make the lives of all Americans – not just those living in cities, but those who work in them and the communities that surround them – better. Public investment in infrastructure makes communities safer, creates jobs, help small businesses expand, and grows our economy.

For too many years, underinvestment in our roads, bridges, transit systems, waterways, and drainage systems has resulted in additional deterioration or delayed maintenance that has cost local taxpayers money and hurt our economic growth.

- Pass a major infrastructure package that starts investment in the \$4.6 trillion shortfall in America.
- Allocate resources directly to cities and counties for priority infrastructure projects that will support low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, and provide the infrastructure improvements residents and businesses require.
- Create “Community Workforce Agreements” with business and labor groups to build partnerships through infrastructure investments that will promote local hiring, create career pathways through training and economic development, and improve construction standards.
- Reject any attempts to cap or limit tax-exempt municipal bonds.
- Reestablish a federal-state-city partnership to address the nation’s energy, resilience, broadband, and water and sewer issues in a comprehensive and affordable manner.
- Preserve and where appropriate improve land use planning at the local level to consider infrastructure priorities, identify a pipeline of priority projects, advance equitable development, and consider emerging technologies and economic trends.
- Support policy and investment at every level of government that will address climate change, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support renewable energy and new technologies that will alleviate the impacts of global warming and expand our economy.
- Develop community resilience programs for existing and new infrastructure projects that help cities prepare for climate-related threats, such as increased flooding, extreme heat, and drought.



- Reject regulatory efforts that seek to preempt or minimize the role of local government in areas such as drone regulation or wireless infrastructure deployment.
- Provide additional tools and incentives for redeveloping brownfield sites.
- Allow cities the flexibility to partner with private companies or deploy their own municipal broadband infrastructure.

#### **Expand Our Workforce to Drive Economic Growth.**

Economic development and job growth must be coupled with economic opportunity so that all Americans are equipped to participate in and contribute to the growth of new industries and the success of our economy. When communities target investment and workforce training to our most distressed communities, benefits accrue for everyone. Our economy and the nature of jobs are changing, yet wide gaps remain in job readiness in communities of color and for blue-collar workers. Our country must invest in training programs that help all Americans – whether they are in urban cores, the suburbs, or rural manufacturing communities – to develop the skills they need to compete for today’s emerging jobs.

- Create partnerships between local governments and the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Commerce, Labor, Education, Energy, and Agriculture, and the Small Business Administration to create new Opportunity Investment Zones that will look at our poorest communities and neighborhoods to develop strategies and policies that will support economic growth.
- Prioritize public projects where investment has a local job creation and training component that provides a pathway to quality jobs for the workers we train.
- Support neighborhood growth and investment.
- Invest in technology and research to ensure affordable broadband reaches every resident.
- Promote a living wage for all workers and pay equity for women.
- Preserve the federal deduction of state and local income, property, and sales taxes.

- Modernize trade agreements to create a more level playing field by lowering tariffs on U.S.-made goods and promoting universal adoption of American labor and environmental standards.
- Support inclusion and diversity through minority- and women-owned business programs that help with access to opportunity, financing, and capital.

#### **Create Equitable Communities to Increase Opportunity for All.**

Cities and the metropolitan regions that surround them are the epicenters of America’s diversity and the command centers of the global knowledge-driven economy – home to nearly two out of every three Americans, Fortune 500 companies, small businesses, innovative entrepreneurs, professional sports teams, cultural institutions, and the world’s best colleges and universities. For our nation and cities to thrive, we must ensure equity – just and fair inclusion into the fabric of a community, be it in jobs, education, criminal justice, or civic participation – guides our policies and investments. Through equitable growth strategies that ensure all residents and neighborhoods become more connected to their regional economies, we can increase economic security and mobility while strengthening growth and prosperity for all and encouraging community activities that celebrate diversity and educate city residents about the different cultures that compose a city’s population.

**Ensure civil and human rights:** Mayors must continue to be a beacon for inclusion, tolerance, and respect for all of their residents, in their cities, and in the nation – and cities need the federal government to support those efforts.

- Continue collective efforts to speak out against racism and other forms of discrimination and propose solutions, and join with national civil rights organizations in this effort.
- Examine and improve existing municipal policies and procedures that contribute to a lack of equity in our communities and work to create policies that embed the principles of equity throughout municipal government.

- Ensure that city policies and procedures promote inclusion and that employees are provided the training needed to implement them.
- Advocate for inclusion and nondiscrimination in all federal laws, policies, and programs
- Work toward sentencing and prison reform to reduce disparities between blacks and Hispanics and whites in sentences and incarceration rates and to improve the ability of people released from prison to reenter their communities.
- Continue advocacy for an expanded national effort to reduce poverty and create employment opportunities by increasing job creation, job training, child care availability, transportation availability, affordable housing, and other needed assistance.
- Work with school systems to promote education about differences, the importance of tolerance, and behavior that respects differences among people.
- Facilitate the integration of immigrants and other new residents into the community.

**Invest in inclusive neighborhoods, affordable housing, and community development:** To grow a strong middle class, we must provide stable and affordable housing to working families across the country.

- Maintain or increase Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to catch up to inflation.
- Allow cities with a high percentage of blight to use CDBG for economic redevelopment projects in partnership with private developers.
- Increase funding for HOME Investment Partnerships, Housing Choice Voucher Program, and National Housing Trust Fund.
- Help communities increase housing opportunity through timely implementation of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule.
- Include public housing in infrastructure priorities to modernize and fund necessary capital improvements.
- Reduce homelessness by enacting policies that help achieve self-sufficiency.

**Improve our public education from pre-k through college:** Our economic growth, our safety, and our community's overall success start with our ability to provide quality education from early childhood to postsecondary schools.

- Guarantee equal opportunity access to early childhood education starting with pre-k.
- Fully fund youth employment programs.
- Develop and pass a plan to make community college tuition free for all students nationwide.
- Make sure every child has access to computer science and technology that better prepare them for jobs in our modern economy, including the benefits of e-rate programs.
- Prioritize rebuilding schools in infrastructure packages.

**Provide affordable and quality health care in every community and promote an environment of health and well-being:** The continuing health care debate in Washington has brought into focus the fact that access to affordable, high-quality health care is not only a right, but is essential for us to become a healthy, caring, and vibrant country.

- Preserve patient protections included in the ACA, which have enjoyed bipartisan support and protected innumerable Americans from the catastrophic cost of illness.
- Maintain funding for Medicaid without block granting it to the states.
- Increase support for substance abuse prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery services.
- Invest in a broad range of mental health services that support diverse populations, including veterans and the homeless.
- Strengthen incentives and infrastructure to increase local food production, sustainable farming practices, and better access to affordable and healthy food options.
- Invest in medical research and biotechnology to lead the battle against disease.



## Ensure the Safety and Security of Our Communities.

Many Americans in cities big and small do not feel safe or secure. This feeling can lead to a sense of disconnectedness and hopelessness that can affect all city residents and how they relate to one another. Too many feel alienated and disenfranchised. Mayors and local law enforcement officials across America are currently dealing with three immediate and interrelated challenges: building trust between the police and communities, reducing violent crime, and preventing terrorism.

Local law enforcement is the front line in the country's effort to ensure security, justice, and opportunity for all Americans. Despite their best efforts, the nation's cities have neither the resources nor the capability needed to fully deliver on this pledge, without greater support from the federal government. Fulfilling these responsibilities constitutes a national challenge that requires a national response, and it is the obligation of officials at all levels of government to find solutions to these complex problems.

In order to stem the culture of violence in this country, we must identify policy solutions and coordinate investments that can bring our communities together to better utilize our police and address the root causes of violence in America.

**The nation's mayors and police chiefs are committed to keeping our people safe. We call on our partners in Washington to recognize their role:**

**Strengthen Bonds Between Communities and Police.** Our communities are safest when our public safety officers are part of the community, engrained in our neighborhoods with faith-based leaders, nonprofits, educators, and small businesses.

- Invest resources directly to cities to support police training in areas including implicit bias, de-escalation, and cultural sensitivity; hiring; technology and equipment; data collection and analysis; use-of-force policies; and officer safety and wellness.
- Expand the funding for and eligible uses of the COPS program.
- Increase Byrne JAG funding.
- Invest additional resources in proven programs that can help to prevent crime and provide hope, such as the CDBG.
- To facilitate a public health response to violence that focuses on prevention and intervention, provide direct federal support to local governments, particularly those with the highest need, so that they can undertake and expand violence interruption and other public health programming.
- Recognize, discuss, and improve the relationship between race and policing.





**Expand Homeland Security Grants.** The ever-changing threat of terrorism and violence inside our nation's borders is no longer confined to our largest cities. We must be vigilant every day in our efforts to protect our cities and our nation from the threats of domestic terrorism that continue to plague our country. For our communities to be safe, we must recognize the role local government plays in responding to and preventing terrorist attacks.

- Bolster and reform homeland security grant programs to provide funding directly and more broadly to local governments so that officials are better equipped and trained to prevent and respond to domestic acts of terrorism and violent extremism.
- Provide local officials the flexibility to use these funds to meet locally identified priorities, including hiring police officers and undertaking positive engagement with a city's Muslim population.

- Include domestic hate groups and others who promote violence against any communities in our definitions of terrorism and violent extremism.
- Expand FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces, standardize fusion centers, and improve coordination among local, state, and federal law enforcement.
- Provide the protection of federal hate crime laws to all citizens, and join mayors and police chiefs in speaking out against hate crimes and all discriminatory acts whenever they occur.

**Invest in Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.**

Mass shootings and daily incidents of violence across America are often driven by chronic mental health problems and substance abuse. An estimated 2 million people with serious mental illnesses are admitted to jails across the nation each year, and almost three-quarters of these adults have co-occurring substance use disorders. Once incarcerated, individuals with mental illnesses tend to stay longer in jail and are at a higher risk of returning to incarceration upon release.

- Treat violence as both a public safety and a public health problem, focusing efforts on violence prevention and intervention.
- Invest in mental health and substance abuse services: Increase investments in prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation programs.
- Enact bipartisan legislation that would improve and reduce the interactions between mentally ill individuals and the criminal justice system.
- Fully fund the recently enacted Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act.

**Reduce Gun Violence.** Many cities are seeing an increase in the number of guns on the streets. When shootings occur, more guns, particularly those with high-capacity magazines, are being used and more rounds are being fired, leading to more victims shot, some of whom are children and other innocent bystanders. Each year, nearly 12,000 Americans are murdered with guns. Mayors who deal with this issue in their communities are eager to get beyond the partisan and political issues that stall their ability to help find solutions that will reduce gun violence and keep our people safer.

- Develop a consensus around gun safety provisions that will keep guns out of the hands of terrorists, violent criminals, and others who would use them for illegal purposes.
- Recognize the impact of gun violence on victims of domestic abuse and violence, strengthen laws that require domestic abusers to relinquish firearms upon the issuance of a temporary restraining order, and ensure that all domestic violence prohibiting records are entered into the background check system.
- Treat violence – and in particular the extreme use of guns on the streets of America – as both a public safety and a public health problem that has a disparate impact on our minority communities, particularly young men of color.

**Reform the Criminal Justice System and Strengthen Reentry Services.** The disparate impact of the way we prosecute and incarcerate in this country negatively impacts our public safety, our economy, and the overall health of our communities. The United States has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, and according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, 37% of the current prison population is African American<sup>1</sup> and 34% is Latino.<sup>2</sup>

1. [https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics\\_inmate\\_race.jsp](https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_race.jsp)

2. [https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics\\_inmate\\_ethnicity.jsp](https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_ethnicity.jsp)

Compounding the impact these incarceration levels have on minority populations are policies – in both the public and private sectors – that make it difficult, if not impossible, for people leaving prison to return to their communities, secure employment and housing, and become contributing members of society.



In 2016, mayors were hopeful that Congress had started to find consensus around reforms that would make the system fairer, smarter, and more cost-effective, while keeping our communities safe and secure. That emerging consensus seems to have fallen by the wayside as “law and order” rhetoric and an emphasis on increased penalties and longer incarcerations have once again taken root.



- Partner with mayors to create a modern criminal justice system that addresses violent crime while supporting neighborhoods and youth most impacted by the current system through investments in community development, youth mentoring, after-school and summer jobs programs, and support services that will help intercept at-risk youth before they enter the system, and address recidivism.
- Establish a National Crime and Justice Commission to review and evaluate all components of the criminal justice system, identify the nature of crime in cities and metropolitan areas today, identify best practices and resources for cities and police departments; and recommend comprehensive reforms aimed at ensuring fairness and equity throughout the justice system.
- Enact bipartisan legislation that would reform some federal sentencing provisions, while preventing release of serious and violent offenders who pose a threat to public safety; help to reduce recidivism;

- increase funding for existing programs that support the reentry of released prisoners to their communities; and support programs that focus on education, workforce training, and economic opportunity.

**Recognize the Impact of Immigration Policy on Public Safety and Local Communities.** Our democracy was founded on certain principles that distinguish our country as a welcoming and open place where immigrants can secure protection, prosperity, and freedom. As a result, our country has reaped significant social, economic, and cultural benefits. Punitive and discriminatory immigration policies will make our country less safe and will hurt our ability to compete in the global economy. Our country is more compassionate and better than the rhetoric and divisive abuses of power that are coming out of Washington today. America's mayors will continue to foster welcoming and secure cities for all of our residents, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

- Immigration policies must not diminish our nation's standing in the world as a beacon of hope and a bastion of democracy, or our ability to compete and participate in a global economy.
- In conjunction with local law enforcement, mayors are committed to ensuring that all criminals, regardless of their immigration status, are properly adjudicated by the criminal justice system.
- Mayors and their cities oppose any efforts, either through executive action or legislation to deny federal funds to cities that aim to build trusting and supportive relations with immigrant communities.



We believe that the dignity, health, rights, and privacy of all our residents must be respected, and our cities must ensure that members of our immigrant communities are afforded an opportunity to thrive. The time has come for the federal government to pass comprehensive immigration reform that would:

- strengthen our borders while ensuring that state and local law enforcement can remain focused on community policing;
- establish a streamlined visa process to efficiently process seasonal, agricultural, less-skilled, and high-skilled workers;
- provide a uniform system of employment verification;
- implement a framework that enables people of goodwill currently living in the shadows to come out and fully pursue the American dream; and
- until immigration reform is enacted, continue programs that protect the temporary status of Dreamers, as well as the continuation of programs that protect the families of those serving in our armed forces, and that these groups be afforded the opportunity to fully integrate into our communities and our nation.



## Mayors' Plan to Fix Our Crumbling Infrastructure.

The United States faces and \$4.6 trillion shortfall in infrastructure funding, and our cities require major investments in our infrastructure to ensure public safety and continued economic growth.

Public investment in infrastructure must make the lives of all Americans – not just those living in cities, but those who work in them and the communities that surround them – better. Public investment in infrastructure makes communities safer, creates jobs, help small businesses expand, and grows our economy. For too many years, underinvestment in our roads, bridges, transit systems, waterways, and drainage systems has resulted in additional deterioration or delayed maintenance that has cost local taxpayers money and hurt our economic growth.

Federal infrastructure funding as a percentage of GDP is at one of the lowest points of the last fifty years. If we are to remain the leader of the global economy, a significant increase in federal funding is a critical first step. Working with our federal partners, Mayors are ready to maximize any federal funding and are eager to work with our partners in Washington to be innovative and efficient and to optimize the value of our combined investment in our nation's infrastructure.

As outlined in the Mayors' Agenda for the Future, The U.S. Conference of Mayors calls on President Trump and the United States Congress to:

- **Pass a major infrastructure package** that starts investment in the \$4.6 trillion shortfall in America;
- **Prioritize economic growth** by maximizing direct federal investments to cities and counties for priority infrastructure projects that will support low- and moderate-income neighborhoods and provide the infrastructure improvements residents and businesses require;
- **Foster more collaboration and partnerships** by creating "Community Workforce Agreements" with business and labor groups to build partnerships

through infrastructure investments that will promote local hiring, create career pathways through training and economic development, and improve construction standards;

- **Provide flexibility for cities** to partner with private companies to create innovative solutions to address energy, resilience, broadband, and water and sewer issues in a comprehensive and affordable manner;
- **Protect our communities** through policy and community resilience programs that will help prepare cities for climate-related threats, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support renewable technologies that alleviate the impacts of global warming and expand our economy; and
- **Generate new jobs and career pathways** while improving construction standards, worker training and safety, and efficiency.
- **Affirm existing federal infrastructure commitments**, especially ensuring the long-term solvency of the federal transportation trust fund supporting highway, safety, and transit investment.

### KEY STATS

#### **Metro areas are growing faster than ever before.**

- Total metro area population will grow by 24% (66.7 million) from 2016 to 2046 and will be especially fast in some of the nation's largest metro areas. For example, population will grow by more than 50% in the Dallas, Houston, Phoenix, Riverside, Austin, Orlando, and San Antonio metro areas.
- By 2046, 72 metro areas will have a population exceeding 1 million, compared to 2016, when only 53 achieved this threshold. And by 2046, five metro areas will have over 10 million people.



### Cities and metropolitan regions are drivers of economic growth for our country.

- Metropolitan regions contribute 91% of the production of goods and services that make up the nation's total gross domestic product (GDP).
- During the next 30 years, 93% of U.S. economic growth will occur in metro areas. Due to their density, investment in metropolitan regions lowers the costs of doing business, stimulating further business activity and economic growth.
- In 1980, only 56% of vehicle miles traveled in the U.S. were in urban and suburban areas, but with rapid economic growth in major cities and their regions, that share grew to 70% in 2015.
- The total congestion cost, which is the value of wasted time and fuel, is estimated to have cost U.S. urban areas \$160 billion in 2014, or \$960 per commuter. The total cost to the U.S. economy equals 0.91% of GDP.

### WHY INFRASTRUCTURE MATTERS

Public investment in infrastructure must make the lives of all Americans – not just those living in cities, but those who work in them and the communities that surround them – better. Public investment in infrastructure makes communities safer, creates jobs, help small businesses expand, and grows our economy.

For too many years, a lack of investment in our roads, bridges, transit systems, waterways, and drainage systems has resulted in additional deterioration or delayed maintenance that has cost local taxpayers money and hurt our economic growth. The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) has consistently graded this country's infrastructure as failing since 1998.

The 2017 grade of D+ comes with the estimate of an overall investment need of \$4.6 trillion by 2020 to rebuild our nation's infrastructure and protect our communities. According to ASCE's latest report, the annual economic impact from 2016 to 2025 is approximately \$3,400 in disposable income annually for each American household.

Washington, D.C., should be able to agree on the need to address our failing infrastructure. Yet mayors are

concerned at the lack of meaningful progress, and cities and metro areas are forced to carry the burden of the federal government's inability to act.

- Schools, roads, bridges, transit systems, levees, dams, and sewer and water systems all are at risk in cities, towns, and communities in every part of our country.
- Local governments, big and small, spend \$115 billion a year (\$316 million a day) on water and sewer infrastructure alone, compared to only \$2 billion in loans from the federal government.
- Today, 65% of America's roads are rated in less than good condition, 25% of our bridges require significant repair or can't handle traffic, and 45% of Americans lack access to transit.
- By 2020, 70% of the dams in the United States will be more than 50 years old.
- The Federal Communications Commission's 2016 Broadband Progress Report found that over 30 million Americans still lack access to adequate broadband service and 40% of the people living in rural areas and on tribal lands do not have access to service at the FCC's speed benchmark.
- U.S. ports support more than 23 million jobs and \$321 billion in tax revenues annually, with \$4.6 trillion annually in economic activity related to our seaports.
- In 2014, 604 million tons of waterborne cargo transited our inland waterways, a volume equal to roughly 14% of all intercity freight and valued at nearly \$232 billion.

This goes well beyond the inconvenience of bumpy streets or worn-out airports. There are life-and-death consequences when we choose not to properly invest in infrastructure. In 2013, The U.S. Conference of Mayors Water Council issued a report estimating almost 100 million more residents are dependent on aging water systems than in 1972 when the Clean Water Act was adopted, and our levees, dams, and bridges are a public safety risk that could fail at any time.

Local government is modern, efficient, and adept at leveraging public investments. For every dollar in CDBG the federal government invests directly into local areas, mayors and other local leaders leverage \$3.65 in other

public and private sector monies.<sup>3</sup> When funds are directed locally, the \$3 billion annual budget currently allocated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development generates over \$10 billion in investments across America.

Better yet, technology has changed the way we operate in this country. Increasingly, we have access to more data that allows us to invest resources more strategically and measure performance of government in public safety, job growth and training, infrastructure and housing, and public health. By using data to select catalytic projects that increase health and resilience in distressed neighborhoods and create opportunities for struggling workers, mayors can leverage precious resources to create maximum impact on people, neighborhoods, and regional economies.

Our public infrastructure systems deteriorate year after year while more and more Americans move into cities and metro areas. Direct and flexible investment in local governments – both large and small – is the quickest and most efficient way to get ahead of the problem, put people to work, and grow our economy.

The nation's mayors are committed to investing in infrastructure projects that secure our cities, increase the resilience of our neighborhoods, and create jobs. The federal government must recognize its role:

[Pass a major infrastructure bill that invests in public infrastructure projects and prioritizes projects that make our communities more resilient.](#)

Mayors are ready to partner with the federal government in this challenge and prove that we still have the wherewithal to do big things in this country. Our country has a choice – we can make the necessary investments to rebuild our infrastructure, create jobs, and build stronger and safer communities, or we can continue to pass the burden on to future generations as the price tag and risks grow.

3. <http://www.coscda.org/documents/CDBG%20Coalition%20Transition%20Memofinal12-5-16.pdf>

We cannot push this on future generations. A minimum **direct and immediate investment of at least \$1 trillion** is necessary to start the process of rebuilding America's communities. This is essential if we want to make our economy stronger, our communities healthier, and our country more secure.

- **Allocate additional resources directly to cities and counties through the CDBG program**, stipulating that these additional funds be first used to invest in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods to accelerate infrastructure improvements and make neighborhoods more “investment ready.” Such commitments to address street safety concerns and expand mobility options can help address income inequality, specifically by improving access to jobs and lowering household transportation costs.
- **Direct additional funds beyond what the FAST Act provided to the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program – currently funded at \$11.4 billion annually.** Bolster the flexible surface transportation funds available to local leaders in their urban and local areas and the states as they work to undertake needed bridge, road, transit, and technology projects to expand mobility options and combat growing congestion in local areas, especially those areas expected to absorb a disproportionate share of the nation's future population growth in urban/metro areas, as well as those rural and suburban areas that have experienced economic decline.
- **Prevent any efforts to cap or limit tax-exempt municipal bonds:** depend on tax-exempt municipal bonds to finance critical infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, water and sewer facilities, roads, mass transit systems, and public power projects. Proposals to cap, limit, or eliminate the deduction of interest earnings from tax-exempt bonds would significantly increase the cost on state and local government for borrowing on these critical projects.
- **Support the use of public-private partnerships to develop public buildings:** HR 960 and S 326, the Public Building Renewal Act of 2017, will spur private investment in rebuilding our nation's unsafe and dilapidated public buildings by making them eligible for exempt facility bonds.



- **Increase funding commitments to support continued research.** Studying construction product longevity and environments will help mayors and local leaders maximize resources, plan and build better more sustainable and durable roads, and create investment-ready plans for new technologies and opportunities, such as autonomous vehicles.
- **Increase the size of the TIFIA program** to meet all projected eligible demand and significantly reform the program to create response times comparable to private-sector lending institutions and to improve efficient administration and borrowing flexibility.
- **Accelerate delivery of transit projects** by making the Federal Transit Administration’s Expedited Project Delivery for Capital Investment Grants Pilot Program universally available to all transit projects receiving federal funds.
- **Increase capital commitments to the nation’s airports** by increasing funding for the Federal Aviation Administration’s Airport Improvement Program (AIP), capital grants which have been held mostly constant since 2001, and allow airport operators more flexibility to raise capital locally through fees and other charges to support airport maintenance and expansion projects.
- **Reestablish a federal-state-city partnership to address energy, resilience, affordable broadband, and water and sewer issues in a comprehensive and affordable manner.**
  - Direct and flexible financial resources will help cities become more resilient to a multitude of natural disasters by making energy infrastructure systems more resilient to withstand catastrophic events while maintaining critical city services.
  - Local governments should be allowed to develop comprehensive (or integrated) water and wastewater plans that balance public health and environmental needs with long-term spending and financial capability/affordability limits.
  - Reject efforts to preempt local government property management and proprietary rights.
- **Expand the State Revolving Loan Fund by directing at least \$5 billion in additional funding to low- or no-interest grants to State Revolving Fund loans for local priorities.** Direct and flexible funding will allow cities to leverage more private sector partners and address the most critical infrastructure needs of our communities.
- **Fully fund the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act at its authorized level.**
- **Increase the Army Corps of Engineers funding** to upgrade and modernize the nation’s inland waterway system and annually spend the full amount of fees collected through the **Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund** on port modernization and maintenance activities. In addition, unlock the \$9 billion surplus in the HMTF to modernize port infrastructure nationwide.
- **Target significant new funding and streamline project delivery** for ports and multimodal infrastructure that deliver significant economic impact for the nation and unlock key export centers underserved by existing facilities. Projects could include road and rail connectors, on-dock rail, upgrading and maintaining berths, and digital industrial infrastructure.
- **Fully fund the Port Security Grant Program.**
- **Ensure adequate Customs and Border Protection staffing at port facilities.**
- **Develop a national broadband strategy to ensure that every community across America has access to high-speed broadband service.** Access to high-speed broadband service in every community is essential to our ability to provide quality education, create more jobs, increase small business growth, and compete in the global economy. The U.S. has plenty of broadband capacity in the “long haul” routes, but fiber connections rarely reach homes and small businesses. Local governments are central players in ensuring that the “last mile” connection to homes and businesses is achieved. Local communities must have the option to own and operate public broadband networks. Broadband is the essential foundation for our digital economy – taking its place alongside other municipal utilities such as water, sewer, and power. Any existing prohibitions on local government communications



initiatives must be abolished.

- **Prioritize investments in the security, resilience, and increased efficiency of our nation's energy supplies and distribution.** To ensure that cities and their regions remain the nation's economic drivers, local infrastructure and buildings must function efficiently and effectively, and energy is at the heart of this system. Electric power, liquid fuels, and natural gas are all required to operate buildings, transportation systems, communications systems, and water and wastewater treatment facilities. As cities face dangers, from extreme weather events and natural disasters like earthquakes and wildfires to technological and human-caused hazards, resilience measures must be incorporated into plans for economic development, zoning, and emergency management, with a growing emphasis on increased local energy production and energy efficiency.
- **Direct additional resources to local government** to support job growth and workforce training programs with the business, community college, and nonprofit communities to ensure that all available federal transportation and infrastructure dollars reach the communities with the most need.

In guiding public infrastructure investments, The U.S. Conference of Mayors supports the principles outlined by the American Society of Civil Engineers in its 2017 report card, including:

- Create incentives for state and local governments and the private sector to invest in maintenance, and to improve the efficiency and performance of existing infrastructure.
- Develop tools to ensure that projects most in need of investment and maintenance are prioritized to leverage limited funding wisely.
- Streamline the project permitting process across infrastructure sectors, with safeguards to protect the natural environment, to provide greater clarity to regulatory requirements, bring priority projects to reality more quickly, and secure cost savings.
- Identify a pipeline of infrastructure projects attractive to private sector investment and public-private partnership.
- Develop active community resilience programs for severe weather and seismic events to establish



communications systems and recovery plans to reduce impacts on the local economy, quality of life, and environment.

- Consider emerging technologies and shifting social and economic trends – such as distributed power generation and storage, autonomous vehicles, and even larger ships – when building new infrastructure, to ensure long-term utility.
- Improve land use planning at the local level to consider the function of existing and new infrastructure, the balance between the built and natural environments, and population trends in communities of all sizes, now and into the future. Ensure that communities – especially marginalized and disadvantaged communities – are engaged in the development process.
- Support research and development into innovative new materials, technologies, and processes to modernize and extend the life of infrastructure, expedite repairs or replacement, and promote cost savings.



Support resilient and sustainable growth through investment and policies that recognize the impact our climate has on our collective health, safety, and economic future.

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to our coastal communities, nation, and world, and we need coordinated action at all levels of government to meet the scale of its challenge. To ensure that cities and their regions remain the nation's economic drivers, local infrastructure and buildings must function efficiently and effectively, and energy is at the heart of this system. Electric power, liquid fuels, and natural gas are all required to operate buildings, transportation systems, communications systems, and water and wastewater treatment facilities. In short, the security and resilience of these energy supplies, distribution, and the efficient use of these resources are essential to a city's resilience.

As cities face dangers, from extreme weather events and natural disasters like earthquakes and wildfires to technological and human-caused hazards, resilience measures must be incorporated into plans for economic development, zoning, and emergency management, with a growing emphasis on increased local energy production and energy efficiency. Transition to renewable energy and

new energy technology, such as energy storage, will help to enable a more reliable energy grid for the nation and improve energy security within our cities.

In December 2015, 464 mayors from 115 countries gathered in Paris, France, to affirm their commitment to address climate disruption. Mayors across the country have vowed to continue to support efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and work for stronger and more resilient communities by recognizing the economic and health benefits of stronger climate policy. Investment and policies that support the country's infrastructure should prioritize resiliency and sustainability, through:

- strong federal action to achieve the U.S. commitments under the Paris Agreement;
- local action to achieve the targets in the Paris Agreement;
- expanded federal funding to transform transportation systems to be clean and low carbon, including funding for expanding transit and electrifying mobility for people and goods through strategies that prioritize equitable outcomes;
- federal tax credits for solar, wind, and geothermal renewable energy resources to grow high-wage American jobs and reduce air pollution; and
- federal action, including funding, to help cities prepare for the impacts of climate change, such as increased flooding, extreme heat, and drought.

Reestablish a federal-state-city partnership to support the transition to renewable energy: The transition to renewable energy (solar, onshore/offshore wind, geothermal, and wave energy) cuts across the entire city agenda (safety, infrastructure, workforce, and equitable and resilient communities). Indeed, renewable energy represents an enormous economic opportunity for our nation and our nation's cities to create jobs in an emerging industry, increase economic security, expand prosperity for local residents, reduce air pollution and associated public health risks, reduce strain on water resources, save households and consumers money, improve the resiliency of our nation's cities, and address environmental justice challenges in communities. Cities and mayors have been at the forefront of public policy innovation related to renewable energy and must

continue to lead in this area. Nevertheless, mayors will need a strong and innovative federal partner to ensure that our nation completes the transition to renewable energy and fully reaps all the benefits of that transition, which should include new innovations such as energy storage, which will help to enable a smarter, cleaner, and more reliable energy grid for the nation and improve energy security within our cities.

- **Renew investment tax credits for solar and the production tax credit for wind.** Develop new tax incentives for energy storage and other technologies that promote grid stability.
- **Support transportation electrification and investment in charging infrastructure.**
- **Increase Department of Energy and other agencies efforts to work with utilities on protecting the grid from cyberattacks.**
- **Recommit resources to the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program.**

**Generate new jobs and improve construction standards, worker training, and safety and efficiency.**

Public investment in infrastructure must benefit every community, promote workforce development, create more efficiency, and increase overall economic growth. In communities across America, mayors will continue to work with business and labor partners, faith-based leaders and nonprofit communities, and high schools and community colleges to create Community Workforce Agreements that will:

- Create apprenticeship and job-training programs that prepare our underserved populations (women, people of color, transitioning veterans, disconnected youth) for jobs that exist today and put them on a pathway to a successful career.
- Support efforts to grow the economy by investing in broadband coverage for every community and tailoring our workforce development to support industries that exist in our cities and understand how technology disruptors, population growth, and social needs of our community will impact future workforce participants as well.

- Insist on worker safety and productivity to improve construction standards, avoid costly over-runs, and complete publicly funded projects on time and within budget.

Across the country, there are shovel-ready projects that will help our most distressed neighborhoods compete for new jobs and businesses, and will make our residents safer. Smart and targeted investments in infrastructure can create more opportunities for those in poorer neighborhoods to access jobs and will bring metropolitan and other local communities together to help bridge urban, suburban, and rural cultural and economic divides. More importantly, investing in the infrastructure of neighborhoods and places with the greatest need will have the strongest impact on entire communities. The federal government can do more to generate job growth from infrastructure investment by directing additional resources to local government to support job growth and workforce training programs with the business, community college, and nonprofit communities to ensure that all available federal infrastructure dollars reach the communities with the most need.



## Expand Our Workforce to Create Economic Growth.

**Our metro areas are thriving places of success and the backbone of the nation's economy.** Of the 2.3 million jobs added to the U.S. economy in 2016, metro areas generated over 2 million – more than 95% of all gains in the United States.

Today, our metro areas account for:

- 86% of our population in the United States
- 88% of employment
- 88% of real income
- 91% of wage income
- 91% of overall GDP

**Metro areas are growing stronger and faster than ever before.** Employment growth through 2024 will be faster than the previous 10 years in 307 of the 381 metro areas.

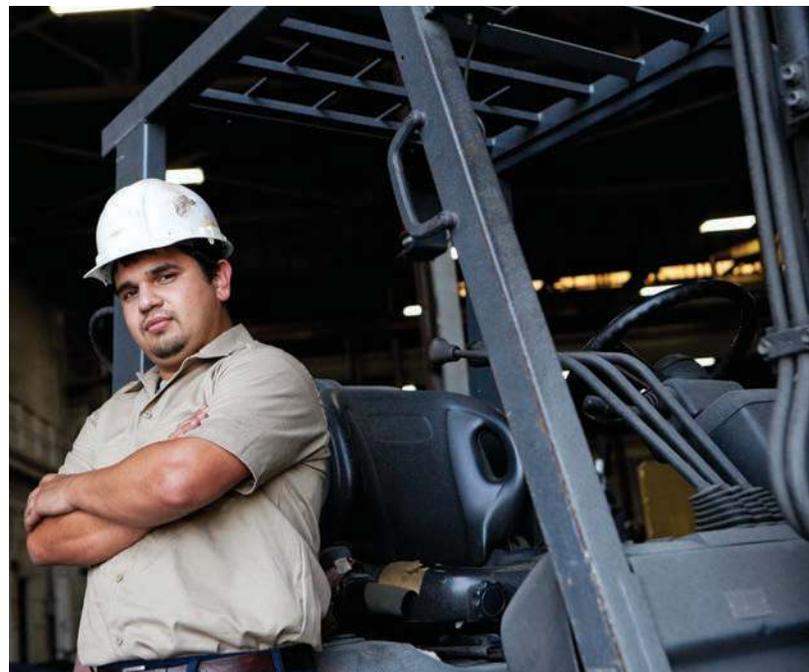
America will not be strong if the working and middle classes of our country are not economically secure. Over 86% of the nation's population lives in a metro area. Cities drive the U.S. economy and are the key to the nation's future prosperity.

It is crucial that economic opportunity reaches every neighborhood in America. Rebuilding America's workforce and creating opportunity for all needs to focus on where job creation will occur in the future. A stronger middle class will grow when public and private investments prioritize those who have fallen behind in our modern economy. We must also recognize that advances in technology have enabled disrupters to change the nature of our employment needs. These changes have increased opportunity for skilled labor and professional positions that our workforce must be prepared to fill.

To keep our communities safer and build a stronger workforce for tomorrow, we also need to invest in our youth.

Approximately one in every seven residents ages 16 to 24 in our cities is neither in school nor has a job. Disconnected youth exist in every community in our nation – rural, suburban, and urban; native and immigrant – and come from middle-class and poor families of every race.

A recent report from Measure of America showed that the percentage of disconnected youth in rural areas is now higher than in suburban and urban centers. Of disconnected youth, 20% live in extremely rural areas (counties with no cities larger than 10,000 people) compared to 14% in urban centers and 12% in suburban counties.





Many of our young people are actively seeking employment but are often unsuccessful because they lack the skills necessary to compete in today's job market. Without adequate education and training, our young people are at a higher risk of experiencing chronic unemployment. Disconnected youth often lack the stable support systems they need to thrive, and too often find themselves homeless or in the justice system and adrift at the margins of society. Yet our society bears the burden of this disconnection. Opportunity Nation says that there are 5.5 million disconnected youth in America who cost taxpayers \$93 billion a year in lost revenue and increased social service spending.<sup>4</sup>

Every person in America – young or old; black, brown, or white; from a big city or living in a small town – deserves the dignity of a job that pays them enough to provide for their family. Despite the gridlock in Washington, mayors and their cities are driving the economic resurgence of this nation. Mayors know that building and sustaining an economy starts with the following principles:

- **Everyone must participate.** While our markets are strong and some in this country are doing very well, the American economy has not reached blue-collar workers, workers of color, and women who still face structural barriers to economic security. Small and rural businesses, as well as minority- and women-owned businesses, need more access to capital, less red tape, and equal opportunity to compete.
- **Government at every level has a role.** Mayors across the country are required to be CEOs, working with their counterparts in county and state government and the business and nonprofit community; mayors must craft policy, direct investment, and address the challenges of creating good-paying jobs in our modern economy.
- **It starts with safer, cleaner, and healthier neighborhoods.** The economic security of our working and middle classes is tied directly to public safety, access to good schools, quality health care, and environmentally safe and clean neighborhoods. The investments in community policing, public health, and infrastructure that cities need have a direct impact on the number of jobs we create and the overall economic prosperity of this country.
- **We must recognize how technology disruptors are shaping the future and impacting our workforce.** Technological advances that change our economy are coming quicker and having more profound impacts on our workforce and businesses. Our role as policy and civic leaders is to make sure that institutions are educating our current and future workforce so that those who are entering the job market – or who have been displaced by technology – are equipped with a career pathway and the ability to compete in today's economy.
- **The federal government can catalyze economic growth and help local communities create jobs.** There is historic precedent for stronger partnerships in which the federal government has worked directly with local leaders to create growth by relaxing certain rules and regulations to spur economic activity in targeted enterprise and empowerment zones. Tax incentives and targeted job training and investment in local neighborhoods helps address blight, create jobs, and rebuild economic infrastructure.
- **Tax policy should support families and communities.** A comprehensive tax reform package must prioritize support for communities and working families that need it. This would include expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit, as well as making the New Markets Tax Credit permanent.

4. <https://opportunitynation.org/disconnected-youth/>

Cities are cultivating innovation and entrepreneurship, but market forces alone will not maximize economic participation or provide the incentives for the business community to include neighborhoods or communities of people that have been disproportionately left out of the economy.

**The nation's mayors are committed to increasing the economic security of our working and middle classes by expanding our workforce and creating economic opportunity for all Americans. The federal government must partner with cities to:**

**Ensure the federal budget invests appropriately in infrastructure, housing, transportation, and education programs that will support workforce training and job development.**

- **Pass an infrastructure package** that will make a significant investment in public infrastructure, including airports, bridges, roads, levees, ports, broadband, and sewer and water projects that will create local jobs by including a local hiring and training component and a ladder of workforce opportunity by incorporating apprenticeships and internships for young people in college and career pathways into every project.
- **Understand the importance of arts and culture to the economy** by recognizing the importance of and supporting tourism, arts, parks, and sports to increase the economic and cultural success of our communities. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Activity (BEA) calculates the arts and culture sector's contributions to the U.S. GDP at \$704 billion (4.2%).
- **Invest in technology** by supporting policies, incentives, and public and private investment that will help ensure broadband and digital technologies reach every community in America.

**Create economic opportunity for all Americans by generating new jobs and investing in training across the continuum of workforce development.**

- **Broaden the Work Opportunity Tax Credit** and other incentives to promote investments in the skills pipeline, like work-based learning, and to provide additional tax incentives for businesses that invest in targeted job training for displaced workers and in neighborhoods that need the most support in addressing public safety, blight, and neighborhood infrastructure.
- Create partnerships between local governments and the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Commerce, Labor, Education, Energy, and Agriculture, as well as the Small Business Administration, to **create new Opportunity Investment Zones that will work with our poorest communities and neighborhoods** in a holistic way to develop strategies and policies that will support neighborhood development, public safety, and economic growth.

The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) has called for an investment strategy in which federal agencies commit 10% of their budgets to explicitly address places where 20% of the population has been living below the poverty line for the past 30 years. Mayors want to work with the CBC and to explore the best way to maximize these investments in our most distressed neighborhoods and cities.



Working together, we can use Opportunity Investment Zones to look at policy, regulatory, legal, and financial barriers to universal work-based learning opportunities, linked to academic and career education, for American high school students, and to broaden the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and other incentives to promote investments in the skills pipeline, like work-based learning.

- **Prioritize investment in distressed neighborhoods** by retaining CDBG, which help local governments to work with the business community, labor organizations, and nonprofits to prioritize investment in distressed neighborhoods when possible and by leveraging federal job training programs through the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA), which serves over 23 million workers in the United States and enjoys bipartisan support.
- **Tie education to business development** by forgiving a percentage of student loan debt for entrepreneurs and small business owners who are investing in new and expanding businesses that will create jobs and grow the economy.
- **Promote a national living wage**, overtime protections, wage theft protections, paid sick days and family leave, and pay equity for women.
- **Increase America's exports to world markets.** One way to help cities grow their economies and increase jobs is to help local businesses sell American-made products overseas. Modernizing trade agreements to create a level playing field by lowering tariffs on U.S.-made goods and promoting universal adoption of American labor and environmental standards will help American businesses compete in expanding global markets.
- **Support small business growth, inclusion, and diversity** through public and private minority- and women-owned business programs that help with access to opportunity, financing, and capital. The

federal government can stimulate the economy by expanding the Small Business Administration's microloan programs and partnering with Community Development Financial Institutions, which are investing in small businesses in our most distressed and financially insecure neighborhoods.

- **Preserve the deduction of state and local income, property, and sales taxes on federal income.** States and local governments use revenues from state and local property, sales, and income taxes to help finance long-term infrastructure projects, local law enforcement, emergency services, education, and many other services. Proposals to eliminate or cap the federal deduction of these taxes would represent double taxation and upset the balance that has existed since the imposition of the federal income tax. Such changes could also effectively increase marginal tax rates for certain taxpayers and shrink disposable income, potentially harming the U.S. economy.
- **Enact the Marketplace Fairness Act** to promote fair competition between local merchants, who are required to collect state and local sales taxes, and Internet retailers, who are not required to collect these taxes.





**Invest in our youth to keep communities safe and build a stronger workforce for tomorrow.**

Our sons and daughters deserve a more secure future. This starts with the dignity of feeling qualified to compete for jobs in the workforce.

- **Create pathways for America's youth** by reauthorizing the Higher Education Act with an emphasis on technology and innovation, increasing access to student loans, and investing in career and technical education opportunities.
- **Invest in STEM training and education.** Across the workforce, through the year 2020, almost 5 million jobs will go unfilled because of skills gaps, particularly in the growing fields of healthcare and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). Today's students need tomorrow's skills, so it is critical that students get exposure to hands-on learning that challenges them to think critically and creatively, and lets them apply important content knowledge in meaningful ways. Educators should focus on STEM in their integrated learning systems, so that today's students are able to solve tomorrow's problems.
- Partner with and support mayors as they **produce robust systems of work-based learning, integrated with college and career pathways** in their cities by:
  - Building upon important investments by the federal government in national service and AmeriCorps
  - Linking summer jobs and other youth employment to student pathways, so that work is relevant to what students are studying and so that return on investment for both employers and students is maximized
- Ensuring that work-based learning is a component of school accountability and student outcomes as the selection of metrics is devolved from the federal government to local communities
- Connecting employers, schools, students, and colleges through comprehensive systems that optimize the benefits to students from work-based learning, such as NAFTrack and the Cities of Learning
- Articulating work-based learning programs directly into pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs through local workforce investment boards



# Build Equitable Communities to Increase Opportunity for All.

## Poverty has become more concentrated and diverse.

- Decades of research show how neighborhoods matter when it comes to the health, well-being, and economic security of residents, as well as the strength of local and regional economies. Yet while our metro economies have grown stronger since the recession, we also saw a rise in the number of poor individuals in highly concentrated neighborhoods of extreme poverty.
- Poverty is more concentrated and still too high, but it has spread from the urban centers of our country across our suburbs and rural areas across the Sunbelt, the Midwest, and the South.
- While minority residents continue to make up the largest share of the population living in poverty, more residents of extreme-poverty neighborhoods are likely to be white, native-born, high school or college graduates, and homeowners.

**Across the country, municipal leaders are adjusting to address the challenges of today and the growth we expect.** We need a stronger partnership with the federal government to enact policies that will create balanced and sustainable economic growth at the regional level, and create more connections between growing clusters of low-income neighborhoods and regional economic opportunity in cities, suburbs, and rural areas.

Cities and metropolitan regions are the epicenters of America's diversity and the centers of our country's economy. Yet many communities in America are still working to rebuild and refashion their economies to put them on a path toward growth.

And high inequality, stalled mobility, and persistent racial inequities in health, income, wealth, and opportunity ultimately place long-term growth and prosperity at risk.

For our nation and cities to thrive, we must build equitable communities. Just and fair inclusion must be incorporated into the fabric of our communities and across all policy areas, including economic development, education, criminal justice, civic participation, housing, and health care. Through equitable growth strategies that ensure all residents and neighborhoods become more connected to their regional economies, we can tackle poverty, lift up our most distressed neighborhoods and residents, and increase economic security and mobility for all.

**Housing:** To build safe, healthy, and equitable communities, we must start by making it easier for families to live with the security and dignity of a home in a safe neighborhood. The public policy decisions we make at every level of government have a profound impact on the fabric of our neighborhoods. If we are going to address poverty in America, we need to recognize the impact of housing policy on families, local communities, and the nation.

**Education:** Our economic growth, safety, and overall prosperity also rely on our ability to provide quality education from early childhood to postsecondary schools. We must recognize that the success of a neighborhood is directly tied to the state of its schools. Every child in America deserves the opportunities that come with a quality education in a safe and modern school.



**Health:** Quality health care in this country should be viewed by all as a human right, not as a privilege for those who can afford access to it. We must not go back to the days in which millions of Americans with no access to health care resorted to using emergency rooms as their primary health care option. Health care in Washington has become too partisan and too political. We need to reorient the debate and stay true to the promise of quality coverage at the lowest cost possible for all Americans.

We must also acknowledge that the recovery of our economy has not reached every community, and many distressed neighborhoods in cities, suburbs, and rural areas are still experiencing the negative effects of poverty and lack of investment in these communities. According to research from the Brookings Institution, “The rapid growth of the nation’s poor population during the 2000s also coincided with significant shifts in the geography of American poverty. Poverty spread beyond its historic urban and rural locales, rising rapidly in smaller metropolitan areas and making the nation’s suburbs home to the largest and fastest-growing poor population in the country.”<sup>5</sup>

Since 1975, the federal government has funded communities through CDBG, and today nearly 1,200 grantees receive direct allocations. CDBG is not just a government spending program; for every \$1.00 of CDBG investment, \$3.65 in private and public dollars are leveraged. Bringing together private sector and public sector investment is the best way to revitalize our communities, and CDBG investments have provided an important tool for mayors across the country.

Unfortunately, while the wealth disparity in our communities has grown, the CDBG program has been cut by nearly \$1 billion since fiscal year 2010, from \$3.9 billion to \$3.0 billion in fiscal year 2016, despite the fact that every year, in communities across the country, the program has assisted businesses, created jobs in low- and moderate-income areas, improved

housing stock, and funded important public improvements in our most impoverished neighborhoods.

Finally, to build safe, healthy, and equitable communities, mayors rely on allocation of federal resources to state and local communities based on the most current and accurate data to ensure that federal funds reach their intended populations. Hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funds are allocated each year to address federal priorities in areas such as housing and community development, transportation, health care, law enforcement, education, and workforce investment. Without current and accurate data, it is impossible to ensure that federal funds will reach the intended populations.

The U.S. Census Bureau is the leading source of quality data about the nation’s people and economy. The Census Bureau conducts a host of surveys to collect and distribute data to policy makers at all levels of government. Full funding of Census Bureau efforts to collect and distribute current and accurate data must be supported, including the American Community Survey, Economic Census, Census of Governments, and other relevant surveys.

### **Increase equity within our communities and ensure civil and human rights for all Americans.**

For decades, America’s mayors have taken a strong position in support of civil rights and in opposition to racism and discrimination of all kinds. In the 54 years since the murder of Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi, the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, which killed four young girls, and the March on Washington led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., much progress has been made in addressing past grievances and in ensuring the civil and human rights of all Americans.

<sup>5</sup> “U.S. concentrated poverty in the wake of the Great Recession,” Brookings, March 2016

Federal civil and voting rights laws have been passed, and to a great extent, implemented. But much remains to be done.

Hate speech is increasing in our nation, and we are now seeing efforts in our states and at the highest levels of our government to weaken existing civil rights policies and reduce their enforcement. We have seen an increase in hate violence, xenophobic rhetoric, and discriminatory actions that target Muslims, Jews, and other minorities. Anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. surged by more than one-third in 2016 and have jumped 86% in the first quarter of 2017, according to new data from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2015 increased by 67% over the previous year, according to the FBI.

Mayors and their cities must continue to be a beacon for inclusion, tolerance, and respect for all. Mayors will continue their efforts to eliminate a broad range of discrimination in housing, employment, education, health care, city services, contracting, procurement, and other vital areas. And mayors will continue to seek to create stronger cultures of kindness and compassion in our communities, recognizing that this will help to build up the social infrastructure and make our cities more resilient, happier, and healthier.

Across the country, many mayors have spoken out against discrimination and injustice when it has occurred and have undertaken efforts to build tolerance and understanding within their communities. In recent years, cities have undertaken efforts to integrate immigrants into their communities and have adopted a variety of policies to include fully and treat equitably their LGBT residents.

Again, much progress has been made, but much remains to be done to continue to oppose racism and discrimination in every community in America:



- Continue collective efforts to speak out against racism and other forms of discrimination and propose solutions, and join with national civil rights organizations in this effort.
- Examine and improve existing municipal policies and procedures that contribute to a lack of equity in our communities and work to create policies that embed the principles of equity throughout municipal government.
- Ensure that city policies and procedures promote inclusion and that employees are provided the training needed to implement those policies.
- Advocate for inclusion and nondiscrimination in all federal laws, policies, and programs. Work toward sentencing and prison reform to reduce disparities between blacks and Hispanics and whites in sentences and incarceration rates and to improve the ability of people released from prison to reenter their communities.
- Continue advocacy for an expanded national effort to reduce poverty and create employment opportunities by increasing job creation, job training, child care availability, transportation availability, affordable housing, and other needed assistance.
- Work with school systems to promote education about differences, the importance of tolerance, and behavior that respects differences among people.
- Facilitate the integration of immigrants and other new residents into the community.



- Encourage community activities that celebrate diversity and educate city residents about the different cultures that compose a city's population.

### **Invest in inclusive neighborhoods, affordable housing, and community development.**

Housing plays a critical role in determining life opportunities. Your house not only impacts your living space and household budget, it determines the quality of your schools, the safety of your streets, the length of your commute, and more. All communities struggle to ensure that low-income families can live in healthy homes in neighborhoods that connect them to opportunity amid rising housing costs and stagnant wages. And we must ensure that those families are not displaced from those neighborhoods once they start coming back.

Home ownership should be attainable for any family that wants to plant roots in their community. The benefits of homeownership are numerous. A December 2016 paper, "Social Benefits of Homeownership and Housing," by the National Association of Realtors concluded the following:

- Owning a home embodies the promise of individual autonomy and is the aspiration of most American households.
- Homeownership allows households to accumulate wealth and social status, and is the basis for many positive social, economic, family, and civic outcomes.
- Homeownership boosts the educational performance of children, induces higher participation in civic and volunteering activity, improves health care outcomes, lowers crime rates, and lessens welfare dependency.

Our housing policy must also provide rental housing for our citizens, especially those in tight rental markets where low- and moderate-income renters need housing they can afford. Just as important is inclusive housing policy that helps first-time home buyers and renters, upgrades and

preserves subsidized and "naturally affordable" housing, increases mixed-use areas and diversity in our neighborhoods, and strengthens our economies.

Across the country, mayors and other local leaders focus on community development and housing policy because small business development, education, public safety, and economic growth are all tied to the success of our neighborhoods. Through low-income housing tax credits, inclusionary zoning and developer incentives for mixed-use and affordable housing, mayors and local leaders are working in their communities to build thriving neighborhoods and rebuild a stronger and more diverse middle class.

**Our nation's mayors are committed to building equitable communities and understand that investments in affordable housing and smart housing policy are critical components of safe, healthy, and vibrant neighborhoods. The federal government should support our efforts to build stronger neighborhoods:**

- Fund CDBG at no less than \$4.1 billion. If adjusted for inflation, CDBG would be funded today at approximately \$8 billion.
- Allow cities with high percentages of blighted structures to use CDBG for economic redevelopment projects in partnership with private developers.
- Implement the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule to help communities increase housing opportunity.
- Increase funding for the HUD Homeless Assistance Programs and the HOME Investment Partnerships program, and support increased funding for the National Housing Trust Fund.
- Increase funding for the housing choice voucher program and fully fund the existing project-based rental assistance program.
- Continue federal funding programs that help

residents control utility and transportation costs that impact housing affordability, such as DOE's Weatherization Assistance Program, HHS's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and FTA's Rural Transportation Assistance and Urbanized Area Formula Funding programs. Broader programs such as CDBG should allow local communities to allocate money toward holistic housing affordability improvements.

- Modernize and preserve one of the nation's largest infrastructure investments – public housing – through funding increases geared toward capital improvements.
- Expand funding through the COPS program directly to cities to support greater community building, including community policing divisions, de-escalation and sensitivity training, and other resources that will help build and maintain a trusting relationship between police officers and the community they serve.
- Guarantee affordability and protection of flood insurance and fair access to home ownership by reauthorizing the National Flood Insurance Program, which is scheduled to expire in September. This essential program fills a gap in the market that would otherwise leave homeowners and small businesses vulnerable to financial ruin in the face of a natural disaster.
- Target support for emerging neighborhoods that are on the cusp of success, but still need support in certain areas of community development, affordable housing, blight mitigation, or small business development. We can do this by increasing the Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, which is intended to bring and leverage more lending capital to businesses and individuals in these neighborhoods and promote more economic inclusion, build stronger local tax bases, and continue impact investment in areas the community has identified as a priority.

### **Improve our public education from pre-k through college.**

America will never be great if we fail to invest properly in public education. A child without an early childhood education is 25% more likely to drop out of school, 40% more likely to become a teenage parent, and 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.

Over 50 million students and 3.1 million teachers attend and work in public elementary and secondary schools in America. Under-resourced schools in poor communities deny the children who attend them a fair pathway to success.

Each dollar invested in quality early childhood education results in a \$7 return as quality preschool helps combat crime, teen pregnancy, and high school dropout rates. In today's economy, education policy and investment must embrace a cradle-to-career strategy that uses data to identify where we are falling short and directs resources to the neighborhoods and communities that are falling behind.

If we want every child in this country to have an equal opportunity, we must start with equal access to quality education, in a safe and modern school with a teacher who has the resources and technology to prepare children for their future. And this practice continues beyond high school. In today's economy, nearly every family-supporting job requires "middle skills" for which a diploma is not enough. To succeed, every American needs education beyond the diploma, whether a university or college degree, military training, a vocational certificate, or an apprenticeship. Mayors have been leading the way with local initiatives to ensure that every young person is ready for postsecondary education and training, and that tuition ceases to be a barrier.



The nation's mayors are committed to education policy and investment that build stronger neighborhoods and brighter futures for the next generation of Americans. The federal government must partner with mayors to ensure that our public education investments are working for every neighborhood in this country and that our education system creates opportunities for all by integrating workforce training and retraining with our public education investments.

- Provide universal, high-quality preschool for all children. Providing publicly funded preschool will help close the achievement gap by giving every child a head start. Dedicated tax credits, pretax flex accounts, and direct funding to local school districts in poorer counties and neighborhoods can help families who are not able to afford the high cost of quality preschool.
- Increase funding for Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act youth employment programs. The recent Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) includes numerous measures to provide support for high school dropouts. WIOA now requires the youth formula program to spend at least 75% of funds on out-of-school youth, compared with 30% under its predecessor, the Workforce Investment Act. Funding for these youth employment programs must be increased, and at the bare minimum funded at authorized levels.
- Develop and pass a plan for making community and technical college tuition-free for all students nationwide.
- Increase Title I and Title II funding to provide more grants to state and local agencies to recruit, retain, and develop quality educators.
- Make sure every child has access to a complete curriculum, including science, technology, arts, and entrepreneurship, that will prepare them for careers in our modern economy.
- Include and prioritize the rebuilding of schools in cities and rural communities, within any infrastructure investments and infrastructure tax incentives by the federal government.

- Renew and expand the federal government's commitment to community service and AmeriCorps with a dedicated expansion of the investment in after-school programs and mentorship opportunities in our low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.



**Provide affordable and quality health care and promote an environment of health and well-being in every community.**

Mayors share a responsibility for the health and well-being of our communities, which includes ensuring access to comprehensive and affordable health care; a robust and coordinated system of care that aligns community health centers, hospitals, local health departments, and other providers; walkable/bikeable neighborhoods; easy access to public transit; and affordable healthy foods.

**Our nation's mayors are committed to creating healthy communities and ensuring access to high-quality health care for all Americans. The federal government should do its part:**

**Preserve patient protections that have bipartisan support.**

The American people don't want Congress to take away people's health care, they want Congress to move beyond

the partisan bickering and entrenched positions to move this country forward. Millions of Americans have gained insurance under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and the law has been instrumental in bringing about insurance reforms from which we all benefit. The ACA has improved the lives of many Americans, and more should be done to strengthen the program and guarantee affordable health care coverage.

Any new proposal must protect the millions of Americans who rely on Medicaid or state exchanges without passing the cost on to the state and local government, and must include increased mental health and substance use disorder benefits.

Mayors want to work with Congress and the president to make sure that any health care proposal will reduce the long-term growth of health care costs for businesses and government; protect families from bankruptcy or debt because of those costs; guarantee choice of doctors and health plans; invest in prevention and wellness; improve patient safety and quality of care; ensure affordable, quality health coverage for all Americans; maintain coverage when someone changes or loses a job; and end barriers to coverage for people with pre-existing medical conditions.

There are important provisions of the ACA, which have bipartisan support, that are working well and should be retained in any legislation related to our health care system. Such legislation must:

- guarantee coverage for those with pre-existing conditions and the elderly;
- maintain funding for Medicaid without block granting it to the states;
- eliminate lifetime and annual limits;
- include coverage for essential health benefits, including ambulatory patient care, prescription drugs, emergency care, mental health services,

rehabilitation, prevention and wellness, lab services, pediatric care, and maternity and newborn care;

- allow children to remain on their parents' health plan through age 26;
- support efforts to prevent infectious diseases and chronic illnesses by fully funding the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF); and
- provide coverage for preventive services at no additional cost.

#### **Increase Support for Substance Abuse Prevention, Intervention, Treatment, and Recovery Services**

The opioid epidemic is a national emergency, and cities need a strong federal/local partnership to meet the challenge at all levels to address this growing epidemic:

- Develop naloxone training programs, ensure first responders have access to naloxone, and urge physicians to follow new CDC guidelines on opioid prescribing best practices.
- Fully fund the recently enacted Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (115-198).
- Pass criminal justice reform legislation that would improve and reduce the interactions between mentally ill individuals and the criminal justice system, and divert nonviolent drug offenders into treatment instead of prison.
- Maintain the Office of National Drug Control Policy as a focal point for federal efforts to address the growing problem of substance abuse in our nation's cities.
- Implement the recommendations found in the Surgeon General's report, "Facing Addiction in America."
- Fully fund SAMHSA's Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grants and HRSA's substance abuse prevention and treatment programs.
- Convene a National Task Force on Addiction Recovery to identify the gaps in recovery services, examine and



share best practices, and make recommendations for action at the federal, state, and local levels for the provision of prevention, treatment, social supports, and long-term care needed to keep residents in recovery from addiction healthy.

### **Invest in a Broad Range of Mental Health Services that Support Diverse Populations, Including Veterans and the Homeless**

The mental health and well-being of its citizens is the mandate and responsibility of every level of government. Someone with a mental illness should never be afraid to seek treatment and support in their community, and they should be able to do so without fear of stigma or ridicule.

The 21st Century Cures Act, bipartisan legislation passed in 2016 by Congress, created a strong road map to increase the tools we need to better identify those with mental and emotional health needs.

Mayors would welcome the opportunity to partner with leaders in Washington to better serve our veterans, homeless residents, and others in our community who need access to mental health services and treatment. Immediate actions mayors support:

- Develop clear processes and protocols for data collection around mental health and the criminal justice system.
- Ensure that any health care reform includes parity coverage for mental health and substance abuse treatment.
- Establish grant programs for initiatives with a record of support for veterans, the homeless, and others in our community with mental health needs and programs that specifically address trauma and suicide prevention.

- Include diversion initiatives in criminal justice reform legislation that will prevent incarceration of those with mental health problems who don't commit violent crimes.

### **Strengthen Incentives and Delivery Systems for More Local Food Production, Sustainable Farming Practices, and Better Access to Affordable and Healthy Food Options**

According to the CDC, more than one-third (36.5%) of U.S. adults suffer from obesity, which is a risk factor for heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. The medical costs for people who are obese are almost \$1,429 higher annually than those of average-weight people. Obesity has a disparate impact on minorities and lower-income families.

Mayors across the country are leading healthy community initiatives that address food access, health, and economic issues holistically. Removing stigmas in the community, focusing on our most distressed neighborhoods, and using data to drive healthy solutions is key to our success. Mayors support the development of a comprehensive national food policy strategy that:

- feeds the hungry, supports small farmers in urban and rural areas, and promotes access to healthy and affordable foods for all residents;
- strengthens incentives and delivery systems to encourage more local food production and distribution, environmentally sustainable farming practices, and better access to fresh food;
- invests in programs that help communities develop retail markets, food-based businesses, increased access to farmers markets, and farm-to-cafeteria programs that bring locally grown food into school lunch programs and hospitals;



- supports healthy local and regional food systems, including sufficient levels of funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which has helped lift 4.6 million Americans out of poverty in 2015;
- reauthorizes school breakfast and lunch programs;
- improves access to affordable healthy foods and eliminates food deserts in cities; and
- fully funds the CDC's Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH), which addresses tobacco use, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity.



### **Invest in Medical Research and Biotechnology to Lead the Battle Against Disease**

Across America, city health departments are engaged in educating citizens, supporting public health care providers, and conducting prevention activities and health screenings that keep people healthier and save lives.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is an important partner for cities and their universities that have medical research facilities, and for the growing biotechnology industries in many of our communities. Mayors strongly urge Congress to increase investment in NIH to support ongoing and important research against chronic diseases.



## **Leadership for America: Mayors' Agenda for the Future**

**LOCAL RESULTS, NATIONAL VISION**

 [@usmayors](https://twitter.com/usmayors)

 [com/usmayors](https://www.facebook.com/usmayors)

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