

The United States Conference of Mayors

MAYORS' VISION FOR AMERICA: A 2020 Call To Action

Focused on:
Infrastructure, Innovation, & Inclusion

December 2019



THE UNITED STATES
CONFERENCE OF MAYORS



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The United States Conference of Mayors is the official non-partisan organization of cities with each city represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor.

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As the 2020 election puts our nation's priorities into focus, America's mayors call for all presidential and congressional candidates to recognize the important role cities play in shaping America's future.



Cities bring people together, drive economic growth, create culture and spur innovation. They are the center of American life.

The **Mayors' Vision for America: A 2020 Call to Action**, drafted by The U.S. Conference of Mayors, outlines **12 strategic priorities** that will improve the quality of life for all U.S. residents in 2020 and beyond.

Our nation's cities matter more today than ever before. Why? Because cities and their metropolitan areas dominate U.S. economic growth and continue to drive our economy.

- **Cities are the Center of U.S Population.** They represent 86 percent of the nation's population and 91 percent of real gross domestic product (GDP).
- **Cities are Home to More Jobs and More Job Creation.** The U.S. Metro/City share of total employment increased to 88 percent in 2018, as metros added 2.1 million jobs, accounting for 94 percent of all U.S. job gains.
- **Cities are Home to the Highest Share of Personal Income.** The metro share of U.S. total personal income stands at 89 percent and wage income at 92 percent.
- **Cities are the Incubators of Talent.** The best and brightest talent is flocking to cities because they prefer the accessibility, infrastructure and vibrancy that cities provide, and they want to be where innovation thrives.

But despite the economic growth over the past 10 years, many residents still lack opportunity, fear for their safety, and feel disconnected from their broader community and the nation. These concerns extend to middle class families who feel their economic security threatened.

The questions many Americans ask remain:

- "What does the future of our country look like?"
- "What's the future of the middle class and how do we help lift up those living in poverty?"
- "How do we help workers transition to a new economy?"
- "How do we make sure that a growing economy benefits all?"
- "Will the next generation have a better quality of life than I did?"

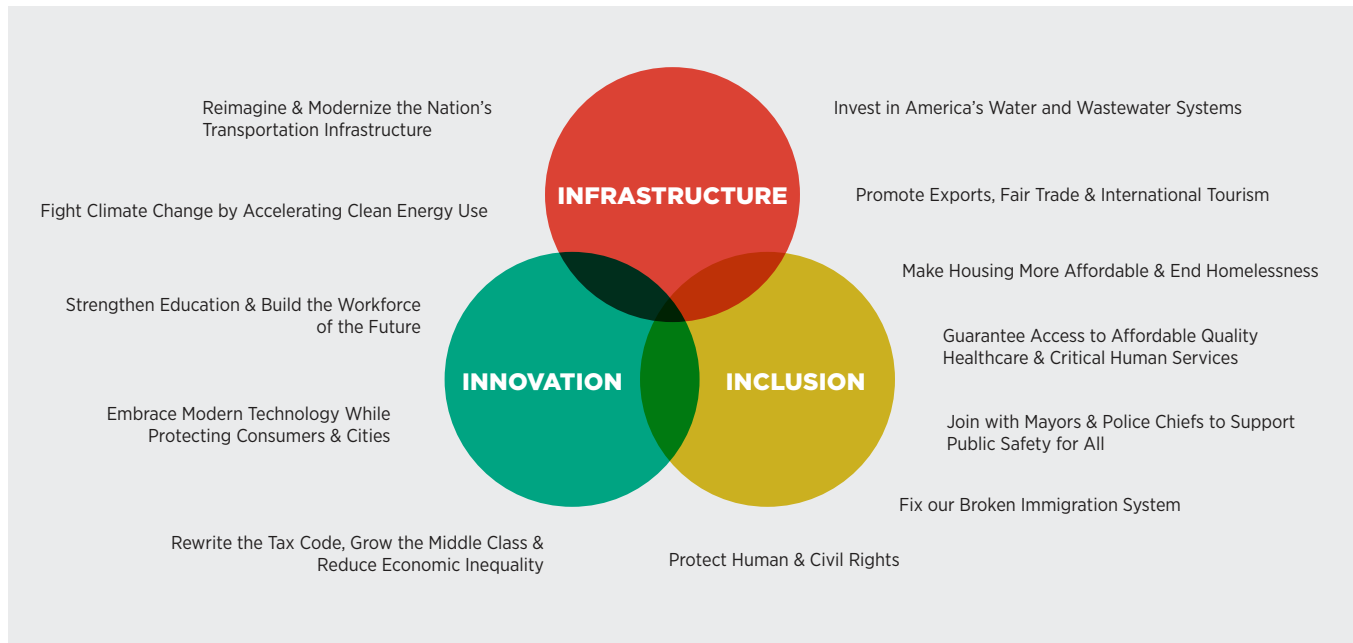
Across our country, too many Americans have not benefited from the recovery, are underemployed, or are saddled with student loan debt. Economic forecasters project that income inequality will remain a long-term problem that will worsen unless addressed through national policies.

The United States Conference of Mayors: Advocating for America's Cities and Their Residents

As the leading voice of America's cities, The U.S Conference of Mayors is uniquely suited to recommend a strategic vision for America. Since its founding in 1932, the Conference remains the place where America's mayors – Democrats, Republicans and Independents alike – come together in a collegial, bipartisan manner to **get things done**.

Within the Conference, the mayors of cities of all sizes, across all regions and all manner of demographic and socio-economic composition, are working side-by-side to solve problems, improve conditions, and create and cause positive change.

Our **Mayor's Vision for America: A 2020 Call to Action** platform of **12 priorities** is organized under the Conference's bipartisan focus on **Infrastructure, Innovation and Inclusion**. Together they represent a compelling way forward.



Our intentional focus on the Three I's – Infrastructure, Innovation and Inclusion – is fundamental to the advancement of every city in America. The pages that follow provide substantive background on each of our 12 priorities, along with specific action steps for each.

The 2020 Election: The Need for Partnership and Action

The 2020 Election must be about solidifying the partnership between the federal government and America's communities to better serve the American people. And the federal government must be an engaged, active and collaborative partner. People need to hear how all candidates are going to address the future, embrace change and work together to address our common challenges.

In the midst of challenges and opportunities, our partnership with the federal government is threatened by dysfunction in Washington that must be addressed.

Washington has ignored the national affordable housing crisis, has inadequately addressed immigration reform and has underfunded programs for distressed neighborhoods. It has also failed to address climate change, has not developed a comprehensive approach to public safety, and has struggled to find the ways and means to fund our federal government.

America needs a federal government that works with its cities and metro areas today on an agenda for the American people – an agenda that is needed for future generations.

Our Invitation

We're starting the conversation by offering our strategic platform, the **Mayors' Vision for America: A 2020 Call to Action**. We invite all presidential and congressional candidates to outline their vision for strengthening our nation's cities and metro areas with a platform that allows all residents to thrive.

We look forward to a positive and productive partnership with those elected in 2020 as we work together to move America's cities and our nation forward.

Sources for Economic and Demographic Data: U.S. Metro Economies, GMP and Employment 2019-2020; HIS 88 Markit; USCM

MAYORS' VISION FOR AMERICA: A 2020 Call to Action

Focused on: Infrastructure, Innovation, & Inclusion

Protect and Advance Human and Civil Rights

Reimagine and Modernize the Nation's Transportation Infrastructure

Invest in America's Water and Wastewater Systems

Fight Climate Change by Accelerating Clean Energy Use

Embrace Modern Technology While Protecting Consumers and Cities

Strengthen Education and Build the Workforce of the Future

Join with Mayors and Police Chiefs to Support Public Safety for All

Fix our Broken Immigration System

Make Housing More Affordable and End Homelessness

**Guarantee Access to Affordable Quality Healthcare and
Critical Human Services**

**Rewrite the Tax Code, Grow the Middle Class,
and Reduce Economic Inequality**

Promote Exports, Fair Trade, and International Tourism

Protect and Advance Human and Civil Rights

Our nation's strength lies in the fact that cities are home to diverse residents from all over the country and globe: it's why our regional economies are the engines that power the largest economy in the world. Throughout our country's history, that diversity and dynamism have at times also been attacked, and as mayors we take seriously the need for government – federal, state, and local – to protect our residents. To this end, The United States Conference of Mayors for decades has taken a strong position in support of civil rights and in opposition to racism and discrimination of all kinds.

Tragically, extremism and violent bigotry continue to rear their ugly heads in America and, in recent years, at an alarming rate and scale. We are now witnessing efforts in our states and at the highest levels of our government to gut existing civil rights laws and reduce their enforcement. We have seen an increase in hate violence, xenophobic rhetoric, and discriminatory actions that target Muslims, Jews, African Americans, Latinos, and others. Intolerance, lack of respect for those with differing opinions, and incivility have risen to crisis levels, and damaging rhetoric and a dramatic shift away from collaboration leave us unable to solve the challenges confronting our communities and our country.

To protect constitutional civil rights and encourage inclusionary practices that support our efforts to grow our cities and local economies in ways that benefit all, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Promote inclusive and compassionate communities and an inclusive and compassionate nation that recognizes and values all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation.
- Oppose any policies, actions or comments that discriminate against people because of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation.
- Acknowledge the profound impact of structural and systemic racism on communities of color, and look toward policies that remedy long-standing inequities, including promoting Black male achievement.
- Work to foster tolerance and prevent hate crimes, with a particular focus on the increasing trend of violence toward individuals and institutions based on faith and condemn such incidents whenever they do occur.
- Support and work to achieve passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and the implementation of policies that ensure economic equality for women.
- Support LGBTQ rights and work toward assuring them in cities and the nation as a whole.
- Oppose violence and discrimination against transgender individuals.
- Revive civility and respect by listening respectfully to people who have different views, supporting efforts to work together across ideological and political lines, and working to rebuild civic trust through civil discourse.
- Strongly enforce the federal Fair Housing Act, which helps local governments address discrimination and segregated housing patterns.

Reimagine and Modernize the Nation's Transportation Infrastructure

Our cities are ground zero in terms of the nation's congestion, traffic safety, economic mobility, and transportation sustainability challenges. Immediate and collective effort is needed to bring together all available tools - technology, infrastructure, operations, regulations, funding, financing, and energy - to help deliver a seamless mobility experience today and tomorrow.

Immediate attention is needed to protect the gains of the past, and further action is needed to plan, build and fully integrate a transportation network capable of providing seamless regional and local mobility, reducing congestion, increasing opportunity, enhancing resiliency, improving air quality, and maintaining our position as global economic leaders.

Public investment in our nation's transportation infrastructure must make the lives of all Americans better - not just those living in cities, but those who work in them and the communities that surround them as well. Public investment in our transportation infrastructure connects people to jobs and homes, makes communities safer and more accessible, and helps businesses prosper - leading to growth in local, regional, and national economies.

Mayors recognize and embrace the bipartisan nature of funding for transportation specifically and infrastructure broadly, including efforts to stabilize and grow funding and streamline project delivery. As transportation projects are often multi-year undertakings requiring significant planning and capital commitments, funding as well as regulatory certainty are absolutely crucial to advancing needed improvements and reducing and/or managing costs.

For too many years, federal underinvestment in our airports, bridges, roads, ports, transit systems, and other facilities has resulted in additional deterioration or delayed maintenance that has cost local taxpayers money and hurt our economic growth. Although cities have taken bold steps to increase local and regional commitments to transportation, Washington now needs to do more to partner with, incentivize, and reward cities for taking action.

While the nation continues to extract considerable economic output from the nation's existing infrastructure, including our vast network of transit lines, roads, pipes and other facilities, the rate of future economic growth is at risk as deferred maintenance mounts and strategic new investments are delayed. This underinvestment or "investment gap," which measures the additional resources needed to sustain existing networks and undertake necessary expansions, continues to grow and has been widely documented for the various infrastructure areas.

To the extent there has been any significant growth in our funding commitments to transportation infrastructure, that growth has been led by local officials and their cities and counties. In a recent Conference of Mayors' analysis of three key infrastructure sectors (airports, highways, and public transit), cities and other local governments raised their new revenue commitments in these areas at a faster rate than their federal and state partners.

Despite this growth in local transportation funding commitments, as well as in other local infrastructure sectors, the nation's overall infrastructure investment level - all governmental commitments combined - continues to decline as a share of our Gross National Product. This trend is particularly alarming as our transportation infrastructure ages and further exceeds its design life at the same time that new challenges, such as the need to "harden" existing transportation facilities to reduce or minimize disruptions from disasters and other climatic events, are emerging.

To reverse this decline in our transportation infrastructure investment and also to meet our new challenges, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

Bridges, Roads, and Transit

- Secure the highway trust fund, first established in the 1950s, so that the federal government can continue to partner with city, county, and state leaders as they work to maintain and expand the nation's vital transportation networks.
- Direct more highway dollars - through the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and other programs - to support mayors and other officials in their regions who show how locally-initiated transportation solutions grow the economy faster and deliver more travel options, among other benefits.
- Make public transit investment a higher priority to support local and regional efforts to increase connectivity, access, and frequency of services to better serve all residents, especially those who are transit dependent.
- Reward cities that embrace new initiatives and innovations that help local areas continue to grow and prosper while advancing complete streets and safety first outcomes, improving transit access and services, promoting transit adjacent housing, reducing air pollutants that threaten public health, curbing transportation emissions that fuel climate change, and hardening existing transportation facilities and networks to make them more resilient to climatic events.
- Support continuing local efforts to deploy new transportation technologies and update local regulatory regimes to address autonomous vehicles, unmanned air taxis, and Hyperloop pilots, among other technologies, and to embrace shared mobility services and resources that expand travel options in cities and their regions and increase the throughput of urban networks serving people and vehicles.

Airports and Ports

- Modernize the nation's airports - especially important now, as more people than ever before are flying, and airports are straining to keep pace - by directing more FAA program dollars to local airport capital projects and by empowering individual airport operators to raise more capital funds from passengers using their airports (i.e., raising the cap on Passenger Facility Charges).
- Spend down the funds now being collected by users of our port facilities and stop diverting these funds to other governmental purposes, which is especially important now with our harbors and other ports facing so many unmet infrastructure needs.

Invest in America's Water and Wastewater Systems

Local governments have long been significant environmental and public health stewards by providing clean and safe drinking water and wastewater. In fact, American cities provide some of the safest public drinking water in the world. To achieve this, local governments today currently spend \$125 billion annually, which is raised through constituent user fees and taxes. In comparison, the federal government contributes less than \$2 billion annually, largely in the form of loans, which must be paid back.

Unfortunately, due to numerous unfunded rules and regulations, this money is often diverted to fund other priorities separate from local government's core purpose of protecting the public health of its citizens by keeping waterways drinkable, swimmable, fishable and livable for aquatic life per the Clean Water Act. As one example of mounting water infrastructure needs, the water crisis in Flint, Michigan called attention to the potential threat of lead contamination in drinking water systems. It is currently estimated that replacing existing lead service lines will cost between \$27 billion and \$48 billion nationally.

To mitigate this, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Raise existing federal funding commitments substantially, particularly in the form of grant funding, to support the modernization and expansion of our nation's drinking water, wastewater treatment, stormwater and flood protection systems - whether it is addressing public health threats from lead contamination in older, legacy water systems or helping mitigate the impact of unfunded federal mandates on communities where user fee increases to comply with these mandates are making water rates unaffordable for more and more local residents. The federal government should assist localities in meeting Clean Water Act obligation including (but not limited to) TMDLs for stormwater as it did in the past by funding upgrades of treatment plants to secondary treatment.
- Implement the Integrated Planning Permit law to ensure cities and their customers are not overly financially burdened and to allow cities maximum flexibility to address it in a prioritized manner.
- Change the current clean water act law to allow cities to have 10-year, rather than five-year, treatment works permit terms.
- Continue to advocate for better "Affordability" assessments involving compliance with unfunded federal mandates, including the elimination of costly penalties.
- Direct new resources funding to support local government efforts to study, evaluate and undertake capital investments to combat cybersecurity threats and improve water system resiliency from natural disasters.
- Assist in providing funding or federal credits for premise plumbing upgrades on private property to address contamination from pipes.
- Fund the Corps of Engineers' authority to allow for water and wastewater infrastructure investment which would allow for additional grant funding for the nation's water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Increase funding for newly established programs including the water workforce development grant, CSO and stormwater infrastructure needs, increasing system resiliency, and accelerating innovative technologies in the water sector.

Fight Climate Change by Accelerating Clean Energy Use

The need to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions is a world-wide imperative in order to combat permanent changes to our climate. Mayors have taken a national and global leadership role in climate protection by promoting the use of renewable and alternative energy sources, investing in energy conservation programs, and designing more resilient communities.

Cities are the best laboratories for innovation, with so many mayors successfully pioneering and demonstrating cost-effective clean energy and efficiency solutions. Often, in cities, this means increasing the energy performance of public and private buildings, promoting greater energy independence through the use of alternative low and zero carbon energy sources, transitioning vehicles to alternative fuels as well as better fuel economy standards, and building new infrastructure to support citizens and business in switching to greener energy and transportation options.

Buildings are the nation's top energy consumer, accounting for about 40 percent of U.S. energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Cities are at the forefront of improving the energy performance of the nation's buildings, with actions that include stronger building codes, innovative building practices, efficient construction materials, and increased use of renewable energy. Not only will these actions rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve indoor air quality, but they will put Americans to work directly in our communities.

Relatedly, cutting energy use in the transportation sector, the second largest emitter of carbon, can be accomplished by providing more transportation options. Beyond federal fuel economy standards, much of the work to reengineer existing transportation networks, services and practices to cut emissions in this sector falls to local leaders.

Therefore, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Recommit to providing federal resources directly to cities, counties, states and tribal governments through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program to rapidly accelerate efforts to promote the use of renewable energy, implement energy conservation efforts, invest in cleaner alternative fuel options, installing Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations, and begin designing more resilient communities. These programs should ensure an emphasis on communities and residents in greatest need of support, such as low-income, multifamily, and small business focused programs.
- Authorize use of these grants for energy assurance strategies designed to limit or mitigate interruption of vital energy networks and services due to natural disasters and to protect micro grids, distributed energy systems, and local energy networks from cybersecurity threats.
- Establish policies and incentives for new and existing buildings to be carbon neutral.
- Establish and Implement a national Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reduction strategy to cut nationwide emissions and achieve carbon neutrality.
- Adopt a national renewable portfolio standard and provide incentives for clean and renewable energy.
- Recommit to research at the Department of Energy to improve and promote hydropower as renewable energy.
- Expand tax credits to purchase electric vehicles (EV).

- Create Investment/grant opportunities for net zero energy/zero energy demonstration projects and fleets at ports and airports.
- Support policies that allow for the responsible development of the nation's offshore wind energy industry, including the extension of federal tax incentives and predictable, inclusive policy approaches to ocean planning, leasing, and permitting.
- Provide an Energy Decoupling Incentive program that requires States to adopt decoupling into their ratemaking regulatory regime that would encourage utilities to conduct energy conservation programs.
- Provide incentives to the energy sector to ramp up research and investments in renewable energy to expand electric generation, and research to capture and reduce carbon emissions from clean energy.
- Develop a comprehensive solid waste strategy to reduce the amount of solid waste sent to landfills that includes: 1) an extended producer responsibility scheme at the national level with incentives to encourage shared responsibility; 2) policies to shift away from single-use materials; 3) development of post-consumer content markets, and the infrastructure needed to process recyclables within the U.S.; and 4) increased efforts to more effectively reduce, reuse, recycle, and generate energy from waste.
- Provide additional resources to redevelop the estimated 400,000 to 600,000 brownfield sites as an effective means of utilizing existing infrastructure and promoting infill development while providing affordable housing and avoiding displacement of current residents. Redeveloped brownfields can also be used for microgrids and renewable energy sites.

Embrace Modern Technology While Protecting Consumers and Cities

According to a 2018 Gallup poll, 72 percent of U.S. adults say they have a “great deal” or a “fair amount” of trust in their local government. The public’s confidence in the actions of their local leaders and local governments is an important asset as many new technologies, increasingly disruptive ones, are being deployed throughout the U.S.

Among the examples of this leadership, cities have been pioneers in digital government and have embraced transparency and collaboration with open data. Cities are leading the public debate about the need to secure governmental systems from the threats of domestic and international threats. In the transportation and communications sectors, cities have been leading all governments in the piloting and testing of autonomous vehicles and drones, and in building new partnerships with the telecommunications companies to expand access to broadband and wireless services.

To support this local leadership, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Work with all levels of government in developing data standards to improve access, interoperability, transparency, and security, and provide resources to cities to respond to intentional and deliberate cyber crime.
- Protect election systems and other technology assets in local government with financial and technical support.
- Support local efforts to provide for greater digital equality and literacy, including senior citizens.
- Support local efforts to pilot and test new technologies, especially in the transportation sector, giving communities the opportunity to evaluate and deploy these systems free from unnecessary federal preemption and/or “one-size-fits-all” federal regulatory regimes.
- Reverse actions by the Federal Communications Commission that subordinate local property rights and zoning powers to the agency’s efforts to subsidize the nation’s communications companies with local government property, actions which exceed authorities granted by Congress in previous statutes.

Strengthen Education and Build the Workforce of the Future

We are at a crossroads in American history around the future of work. The pace of change is rapid, and mayors are examining the trends shaping the workforce of tomorrow, including artificial intelligence and automation, the changing models around work structure, the impact of the gig economy, and whether city residents will be able to work sustainably and earn a living wage or will be left behind. The skill transitions are going to be quite substantial, and many will lack the skills necessary to thrive in a changing workplace. Mayors are facing up to the challenges and are examining ways to help workers and businesses manage their way through this transition.

Accordingly, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

Increase Funding for Workforce Innovation

Faced with unprecedented skills gaps, governments are pursuing alternative pathways to recruit and develop new talent - non-traditional apprenticeships, immersive internships, coding bootcamps, etc. These innovative efforts require mayoral leadership and a willingness to partner with a number of different stakeholders. The Chicago Apprentice Network is one such best practice, with the tools needed to build successful, collaborative apprenticeship programs. Similarly, the Center for Workforce Innovation (CWI) is a partnership with the City of Atlanta, the Atlanta Committee for Progress, Atlanta Technical College and sponsor companies, committed to supporting high demand career fields within the Skilled Trades (Carpentry, Electrical, Plumbing, HVAC, Welding), IT/Coding (IT Support, Networking, Cloud Technologies) and Aviation. Code Louisville is another success story – a strong public-private partnership that bolsters technological innovation in the region. To build on these and other local innovations, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) must be fully funded at authorized levels and reauthorization must further promote and support workforce innovation and flexibility in cities.

Improve Coordination and Access to Jobs and Job Training Opportunities

Mayors are leading the way with innovative solutions and initiatives to address the economic insecurity and community challenges associated with rapid changes to work. Accordingly, the President and Congress are urged to:

- Expand apprenticeship opportunities and on-ramps to serve adults, in addition to young people.
- Offer recognition and incentives for skills gains, including nationally-recognized occupation credentials and transferable, stackable competencies.
- Systematically authorize the delivery of skills, training, and learning with support of federal Pell Grants, Perkins funds and other resources by providers beyond the limited scope of accreditation by traditional institutions, including credentials, badges, certificates, and other non-degree validated indicators of aptitude, knowledge, and skills.

- Substantially broaden the governance of accreditation to include mayors and other public representatives in addition to existing representation of postsecondary institutions, in order to assure that the public interest in quality, equity, innovation, and workforce development is served.
- Build on prior reforms to provide better coordination and adopt frameworks that incentivize career pathways, dual enrollment approaches, and recognized postsecondary credentials and employment outcomes in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization.
- Expand Pell grant eligibility to short-term training and credentials and strengthen connections to local and regional economies.
- Promote better coordination between WIOA and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in reauthorization. Incompatible performance measures between WIOA and TANF impede collaboration and should be addressed.
- Restore the long-term commitment to a strong summer jobs program by establishing separate ongoing funding for youth summer jobs programs enabling students to have work experience and on-the-job training.
- Adopt immigration policies which help American companies attract and retain the best and brightest workers, provide green cards for advanced degree graduates of American universities, create a new green card category for entrepreneurs, and reform current H-1B visa programs.
- Create new funding programs and grants for labor workforce upskilling and reskilling to deal with the effects of automation.

Prepare the Future Workforce

Universal Pre-K Education

High-quality preschool provides the foundation for success in school and helps mitigate educational gaps that exist between children from high- and low-income families before they enter kindergarten. America's mayors have been strong advocates for high-quality early learning, and many of our cities have demonstrated that universal early learning has a proven, powerful impact for our children and profound impacts on later learning and success. Accordingly, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Enact federal legislation that provides access for all three- and four-year olds from families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line to a high-quality, full-day early childhood education.
- Expand access to high-quality early childhood education for all of our nation's children.
- Expand access to subsidized child care for children ages 0-3 years old for low-income parents.
- Improve the quality of all child care.
- Expand enrollment in Early Head Start.

K-12 Education Excellence

The failure of many schools to properly educate students leaves them unprepared to compete in the global economy. Together, we call on the President and Congress to:

- Reform K-12 education to attract and retain the most talented educators and ensure their efficacy.
- Expand customized learning, matching instructional tasks to skill levels, interests, and abilities.
- Enhance parental choice and competition among public schools to help overcome the lasting effects of decades of redlining and segregation.
- Fuse academics with wraparound supports to address issues of poverty and meet the needs of the whole child to improve student achievement.
- Reintroduce modern skills training and promote science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).
- Enhance physical education, health awareness and performing arts within the K-12 system.
- Establish a coordinated, national effort to assess whether students are equipped to safeguard America's future prosperity.

Higher Education Access

Our college completion agenda must embrace every student, and we must increase our efforts to open the door to higher education access to more Americans. Therefore, we call on the President and Congress to:

- Make two years of community college free for responsible students.
- Increase college affordability by raising the maximum Pell Grant and assure its continued growth, restructure tuition and financial aid policies to meet the needs of low-income students and implement incentives to improve measurement and lower costs using advanced technology.
- Expand and enhance community college infrastructure to reflect changes in technology, advanced manufacturing and workplace needs.
- Erase the limitations on federal student aid for incarcerated individuals and for students with prior drug-related offenses.
- Establish an industry-led task force, co-chaired by top-level administration policymakers, to coordinate federal efforts and ensure the private sector is poised to support and leverage federal training and education investments.

Join with Mayors and Police Chiefs to Support Public Safety for All

While there has been progress in making America's cities safe, much remains to be done. Although homicides and other violent crimes continue to decrease, some cities still grapple with high crime levels, and some have seen an uptick. Firearms account for nearly 40,000 deaths a year; mass shootings have become almost a common occurrence; and guns are readily available on our streets. Although progress has been made, there is much more to do to build trust between police officers and the communities they serve.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security recently reported that the nation, "faces an increasingly complex, and evolving, threat of terrorism and targeted violence," and that while "foreign terrorist organizations remain intent on striking the Homeland...the nation also faces a growing threat from domestic actors inspired by violent extremist ideologies, as well as from those whose attacks are not ideologically driven."

While improvements have been made in the criminal justice system, and these are a good first step, much remains to be done to make the system equitable and fair. To support our constant efforts to make our cities safe, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

First Responders

- Maintain and increase funding for key first responder programs, including COPS hiring grants and other COPS Office programs, Byrne JAG grants, and SAFER and Firefighter Assistance Grant programs.

Community Policing

- Increase financial assistance to local police departments that can be used for promoting neighborhood-based policing; providing officers needed training, body cameras and other equipment; and improving department practices.
- Aid local efforts to build and maintain trust between the police and the community. This could include providing sensitivity, cultural, and ethnicity training, as well as training in how to defuse incidents.

Gun Violence

- Make background checks universal and strengthen the background check system.
- Strengthen the regulation of gun sales and dealers.
- Reinstate a strengthened, effective ban on military-style assault weapons, their component parts, large-capacity magazines, and bump stocks and related devices.
- Support local efforts to reduce and combat gun crimes.
- Encourage cities to purchase guns from responsible gun manufacturers and dealer by using city procurement processes to influence and increase responsible behavior of gun manufacturers and dealers who sell guns to cities.
- Endorse the use and adoption of Extreme Risk Protection Orders and urge Congress and state legislatures to introduce and adopt Extreme Risk Protection Order (Red Flag) laws to bring this potentially life-saving tool to as many communities as possible.
- Treat violence as a public health problem.

Domestic and International Terrorism

- Maintain and strengthen homeland security grant programs, with funding increased and provided directly to local governments so that local officials are equipped to prevent and respond to terrorist acts and reduce violent extremism.
- Increase support for police officers through both Homeland Security and Justice Department programs, including COPS hiring grants.
- Share intelligence with local authorities in a continuous, timely, and reciprocal manner.

Criminal Justice Reform and Reentry

- Continue efforts to make the criminal justice system fairer and more equitable, especially in the area of sentencing.
- Establish a national criminal justice commission to examine and make recommendations regarding all aspects of the criminal justice system.
- Increase support for reentry programs, including the provision of substance abuse and mental health services and of housing, education, and employment assistance to better serve the various needs of those leaving prison, and revise employment, health care, and other policies that impede the ability of people released from prison to reintegrate successfully into their communities.

Fix our Broken Immigration System

The United States has always been a country of immigrants; it was founded by immigrants and enriched by the diversity of its immigrants, many of whom have come to escape religious persecution, war, genocide, and tyranny in hopes of sharing in freedom and prosperity through hard work. Mayors recognize that our cities are diverse, multicultural centers reflecting core American values that foster economic prosperity and opportunity, and that our diversity keeps us competitive and makes us strong.

Further, immigration is often the difference between population loss and population growth for U.S. cities. Mayors around the country are welcoming immigrants and refugees because they bolster local economies, fill vacant homes and storefronts, strengthen municipal finances, and rekindle economic dynamism.

Despite what cities actually are experiencing, recent federal policies and the rhetoric accompanying them can be characterized as anti-immigrant, have hurt immigrants residing in this country, struck fear in our immigrant communities, and reduced our standing in the world. Efforts to fix our broken immigration system have stalled.

To preserve the dignity of our immigrant communities, recognize the contributions that immigrants make to cities and the nation, and counter the growth of anti-immigrant sentiment, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Halt punitive federal policies aimed at reducing the number of immigrants coming to our country. This includes, but is not limited to, repealing the public charge rule; ceasing to try to withhold public safety funds from cities with welcoming policies; reinstating legally mandated humane procedures for those requesting asylum and those entering the country without documentation, including keeping families together and out of detention; eliminating barriers to naturalization; and returning to previous levels of annual refugee admissions, as a minimum.
- Enact legislation to ensure that Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, Dreamers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) recipients continue to live in, contribute to, and ensure the prosperity of the cities and the nation they call home.
- Provide funding directly to local communities and non-governmental organizations to address the humanitarian crisis at the southern border and return Customs and Border Protection and other federal officials deployed to the border to their original duty assignments as quickly as possible.
- Halt immigration policies that separate young children from their parents at the border and invest in resources that promote family unity as cases are being adjudicated.
- Embrace the idea of “Heartland Visas,” providing a new pathway for skilled immigrants with adequate labor protections to be matched with welcoming communities.

- Reform our broken immigration system by enacting legislation that:
 - » Sustains border security and supports federal immigration enforcement and keeps our cities safe by ensuring state and local law enforcement remains focused on community policing and not on enforcing federal immigration laws.
 - » Establishes an efficient, less bureaucratic, expedient, and more time-sensitive system with adequate labor protections that allows workers of all types to lawfully come to the United States, either temporarily or permanently, and contribute to our economy.
 - » Provides an employment verification system that is uniform, accurate, and timely.
 - » Enables people to come out of the shadows and pursue the American Dream for themselves and their families. This is essential to the economic vitality of our cities and our nation as a whole.

Make Housing More Affordable and End Homelessness

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 their neighborhoods once they start coming back, physically and economically.

- Home ownership should be attainable for any family that wants to plant roots in their community. The benefits of homeownership are numerous.

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.

Community Development Block Grant and HOME Investment Partnerships Programs

Investment in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Program has not kept pace with need over the last several years. In fact, both partnerships have been severely cut since 2010.

CDBG responds to current and emerging community development needs. The program assists businesses in creating and retaining jobs in low and moderate income areas, improves the existing housing stock, funds public improvements such as senior centers and homeless facilities, and provides vital public services such as day care for low-income working families, health care for children, and meals to the elderly.

CDBG was cut by nearly \$1 billion from FY 2010 to FY 2015, down to a level of \$3.0 billion. A total of 594 grantees were eligible to receive CDBG formula grants in 1975; today that number has grown to nearly 1,200 grantees receiving direct allocations. The overall outlay to CDBG has not increased proportionally. The program has never been adjusted for inflation, but the associated costs, such as construction, labor, leasing, and maintenance of facilities, increase annually.

Serving as a resource to expand affordable housing through state and local public-private partnerships, HOME has completed nearly 493,000 units for new homebuyers, over 230,000 units for owner-occupied rehabilitation, and over 464,000 rental housing units. It has also provided direct rental assistance to over 228,000 households. Yet the HOME program has been cut over 50 percent, or \$925 million, since FY 2010 and is now funded at the lowest level in its history. Need continues to increase, with 300 more communities now participating in the program than when it started in 1993.

With respect to these two vital programs, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Restore CDBG funding to a level commensurate with clearly established needs taking into account the inflation rate over the course of the program's existence, and raise the public service cap.
- Reverse the deep cuts to the HOME program made over the past decade in an effort to align funding with the dramatic increase in demand for the program over this same period.

Blighted Neighborhood Restoration

During the Great Recession, thousands of residential and commercial properties were foreclosed, leaving blighted neighborhoods and communities throughout the country.

From 2008 to 2010, the Neighborhood Stabilization Program distributed nearly \$7 billion, supported an estimated 88,000 jobs, completed rehabilitation of nearly 50,000 units of affordable housing, and demolished nearly 25,000 blighted properties. But the work is not yet done, so we call on the President and Congress to:

- Create a new program designed to purchase, rehabilitate, and redevelop foreclosed, abandoned, demolished, or vacant properties on both commercial and residential lots.

Rental Housing Supply

There is an increased need for rental housing. The nation needs to create and pursue policies to develop more rental housing. Specifically, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Create a new rental housing production program to serve the needs of working families.
- Support the National Housing Trust Fund.
- Increase funding for the HOME Investment Partnerships program.
- Maintain one of the nation's largest infrastructure investments – public housing – through significant funding increases geared toward capital improvements.

A Comprehensive Approach to Homelessness

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reports that roughly 553,000 people were experiencing homelessness during a point-in-time count in January 2018. About one-third (35 percent) of these individuals were in unsheltered locations, such as on the street, in abandoned buildings, or in places not suitable for human habitation. The United States Conference of Mayors' Annual Hunger and Homelessness Survey has consistently found the lack of affordable housing to be the leading cause of homelessness.

Therefore, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Support local governments in developing a systemic response that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible or, if it can't be prevented, it is a rare, brief and one-time experience.
- Recognize that people living in unsheltered locations is unacceptable, and that cities face a crisis of homelessness and lack of affordable housing that requires immediate comprehensive and bold federal action, which should include expanded eligibility for housing/homeless resources through the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Increase funding for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants.

Support Holistic and Inclusive Community Development

Housing Affordability and economic mobility are perhaps the greatest challenges faced by cities. As the affordability crisis grows, both renters and homeowners become increasingly stressed and cost burdened. The challenge before us is to ensure that as cities continue to grow and prosper, our longtime residents can remain in their neighborhoods and are not displaced. To promote the growth of strong cities, there must be a connectivity network which supports a community development infrastructure which leads to the provision of stable, quality, and affordable housing. Therefore, we call on the President and Congress to:

- Support the Capital Magnet Fund.
- Incentivize local governments to adopt and implement policies that foster inclusive growth.
- Increase funding for housing vouchers and prohibit discrimination based on source of income.
- Strengthen consumer protections for homebuyers to reduce predatory lending practices.

Guarantee Access to Affordable Quality Healthcare and Critical Human Services

Mayors recognize that a strong federal, state and local partnership is necessary to ensure that everyone has the services they need to live healthy and productive lives. Mayors also share a responsibility for the health, social welfare and well-being of our communities, which includes ensuring access for all to affordable health care and comprehensive human services; robust and coordinated systems of care; walkable/bikeable neighborhoods; easy access to public transit and open space; safe and stable housing; protection from emerging public health threats; and access to affordable, healthy foods.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) decreased the number of uninsured, expanded health care coverage, and ended barriers to treatment for millions of residents in our cities. Additionally, ACA reduced medical gaps in coverage to ensure that essential health services like emergency, rehabilitative, pediatric, maternal and newborn care, lab, prevention and wellness, and mental health and substance use disorder benefits are protected.

Because these services and many others are of critical importance to our residents, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Strengthen local and federal partnerships by investing in public health and prevention programs, and support research, evaluation and tracking of key health measures.
- Ensure that any future health care proposal reduces long-term growth of healthcare costs for individuals, businesses, and government; protect families from bankruptcy or debt driven by health care costs; and guarantees choice of doctors and health plans.
- Invest in prevention and wellness; improve patient safety, quality, affordability of care; assure affordable, quality health coverage for all Americans; include comprehensive mental health and substance use disorder treatment options; maintain coverage when someone changes or loses a job; and continue to reduce barriers to coverage for people with pre-existing medical conditions.
- Explore options to get additional funding directly to local government through changes in eligibility requirements of existing programs and/or create dedicated funding for local governments to address mental health and substance use disorders in our communities – to help more people find recovery and save lives.
- Expand support for child care and early childhood development.
- Combat the growing youth vaping epidemic by supporting federal, state and local anti-tobacco initiatives; and establish 21 as the legal age for the sale of tobacco products nationwide.
- Evaluate pricing for prescription drugs based on their effectiveness and treatment outcomes; enact measures to prevent companies from using price gouging to increase profits; and include clear enforcement mechanisms to protect the American consumer.

While obesity and diet-related chronic disease also remain a growing epidemic, they are largely preventable. Today, more than one in three children and adolescents, as well as two-thirds of adults, are overweight or obese. Healthy food and food insecurity have been established as important considerations for local governments as they are fundamentally linked to issues such as health, equity, environmental sustainability and economic development.

Federal nutrition and emergency assistance programs offer a vital safety net, while other important programs are increasing access to healthy foods, stimulating new economic activity, creating links between cities and rural communities, and ensuring environmental stewardship.

Thus, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Sustain a comprehensive national food policy that feeds the hungry, supports small farmers in urban and rural areas, and promotes access to healthy and affordable food for all residents. This includes strengthening incentives and infrastructure for local food production and distribution as well as environmentally sustainable farming practices. It also includes providing better access to fresh foods, investment in programs providing healthy food, expansion of programs that help communities invest in retail markets or food-based businesses, increased access to farmers' markets, and expansion of farm-to-cafeteria programs that bring the freshest locally-grown food into school lunch programs, hospitals, and other institutions.
- Reauthorize the Child Nutrition Act, WIC and Older Americans Act.
- Strengthen the food safety-net by maintaining current benefit levels for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Support and strengthen local and regional food system infrastructure to ensure access to healthy and affordable food.

Rewrite the Tax Code, Grow the Middle Class, and Reduce Economic Inequality

Since the adoption of the federal income tax in the early 20th century, it has been recognized that independent state and local government tax structures should be respected. The deduction of state and local taxes has contributed to the stability of state and local revenues that are essential for providing public services. Because state and local governments must balance their budgets every year, any change that disrupts the stability of their tax structure will harm their ability to fund essential services.

The principle of fiscal federalism underpins the necessity of ensuring that any federal tax reform allows state and local governments to retain authority over their own tax policies. It is essential that state and local governments retain the full deductibility of personal state and local property, sales, and income taxes on federal tax returns. Also, it is critical that the deductibility of municipal bonds be maintained, and that state and local governments are allowed to refinance those bonds, which will help ensure cities have support for critical infrastructure. Further, it is essential to increase tax incentives that promote investment in cities and support working families.

Restore Full Federal Deductibility of State and Local Taxes (SALT)

Mayors call for the President and Congress to:

- Restore the full deductibility of state and local property, sales, and income taxes. Recognizing the partnership that exists among federal, state, and local governments ensures that taxpayers are not double-taxed and helps maintain essential public services on which Americans rely.

Tax-Exempt Municipal Bonds

For more than 100 years, tax-exempt municipal bonds have been the principal means used by state and local governments to finance critical infrastructure: schools, hospitals, water and sewer facilities, roads, mass transit systems, and public power projects. Together, state and local governments are responsible for building and maintaining 75 percent of the nation's infrastructure, which is mostly financed by tax-exempt municipal bonds. This federal, state, and local partnership represents a fair allocation of the cost between the different levels of government for infrastructure used by the general public.

In 2017, Congress and the President approved tax reform legislation that eliminated tax-exempt advance refunding. As a result, local and state governments can no longer save significant amounts through refinancing and thereby lower their borrowing costs when there is a drop in interest rates.

Mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Reinstating tax-exempt advance refunding, which has enabled state and local governments to save significant amounts in taxpayer dollars and invest more in critical infrastructure projects to better serve the public.
- Make permanent the Build America Bonds Program, not as a replacement, but as a supplement, to tax-exempt municipal bonds. State and local governments that issued these taxable bonds were paid a direct federal subsidy under the 2009 stimulus bill equal to 35 percent of the interest cost, which enabled them to save significant amounts in borrowing costs.

Community Revitalization Incentives

As local communities continue to recover from the Great Recession, our cities need more support to stimulate investment in underserved distressed communities. Low-income urban neighborhoods and rural communities do not have access to capital needed to support and grow businesses, create jobs, and sustain a healthy local economy. Mayors call for the President and Congress to:

- Pass legislation to raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 per hour to \$10.10 per hour in order to increase the buying power of low-income working families.
- Enact a permanent extension of the New Market Tax Credit, which has a proven track record of stimulating economic growth. Between 2003 and 2012, the program generated \$31 billion in direct investments to businesses, leveraged another \$60 billion in total capital investment in distressed neighborhoods, and created 750,000 jobs.
- Enact legislation to make permanent the Child Tax Credit to support working families.

Wage and Income Gap Reduction

The nation's mayors believe the economic security of their residents is essential to the future prosperity and stability of their cities. Unfortunately, the gap between high-income and low-income households continues to grow. Between 2008 and 2018, average inflation-adjusted income increased by 21 percent for the top 5 percent of households by income, while it grew only 1.1 percent for the bottom 20 percent. Mayors call for the President and Congress to:

- Pass legislation increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit for existing recipients.
- Reduce student debt through a mixture of scholarship, repayment, and debt forgiveness programs.
- Provide incentives to increase homeownership by increasing assistance for down payment and closing costs through increased funding of the Community Development Block Grant program.

Promote Exports, Fair Trade, and International Tourism

Expanding exports will help cities grow their economies and increase jobs. Ninety-five percent of the world's consumers live outside the United States, and trade supports 41 million jobs. Modernizing trade agreements to create a level playing field by lowering tariffs on U.S.-made goods and promoting universal adoption and enforcement of high labor and environmental standards will help American businesses sell products in expanding global markets.

U.S. metro areas play a critical role in American exports, accounting for nearly 90 percent of U.S. goods sold abroad and providing key infrastructure such as ports and intermodal facilities to efficiently move goods. Port- and export-related jobs have 15-18 percent higher wage levels and therefore contribute to building a sound middle class. Federal programs that assist small and medium-size businesses in exporting are crucial to balanced growth. Congress must reauthorize the Export-Import Bank, which helps American businesses sell goods overseas and keeps U.S. exports competitive.

Canada and Mexico are America's top two export markets. The renegotiation of our trading relationship with our North American partners must include: Mexican Labor Law reform; the elimination of special protections for pharmaceutical companies; strengthening environmental standards; and curtailing the use of Investor-State-Dispute-Resolution to demand taxpayer compensation for domestic environmental and health policies. Once these concerns are addressed, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) should be considered by Congress to ensure America's economic future.

International travelers to the United States stay longer and spend more than domestic travelers. In 2018, almost 80 million international visitors travelled to the United States, spending more than \$156 billion. International travel accounted for over 1.2 million jobs and over \$23 billion in tax revenues. International travelers also help support artistic performances and cultural attractions in the United States.

Therefore, mayors call on the President and Congress to:

- Strengthen the Labor and Environmental provisions of the USMCA.
- Support high-standard trade deals with enforceable labor and environmental standards.
- Expand national programs to help small- and medium-sized businesses export goods overseas.
- Support the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank of the United States.
- Support expanding the Visa Waiver Program to facilitate travel and trade.
- Support expanding national arts and cultural programs that support international travel.



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