

JANUARY 24, 2007

**Strong Cities...
Strong Families...
for a
Strong
America**

Mayors' 2007 10-Point Plan



**THE UNITED STATES
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*“I want the cities
to know that they
have a friend in the
Speaker’s Office.”*

- House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (CA)

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On January 11, 2007, Conference President Trenton Mayor Douglas H. Palmer convened a Special Mayoral Leadership Meeting in Washington, DC of Executive Committee Members and Standing Committee Chairs for the purpose of developing an action agenda for the 110th Congress, and beyond.

After a day-long working session, the Leadership approved a new Mayors' 10-Point Plan: Strong Cities, Strong Families, For a Strong America. The Plan reflects policy priorities that have been developed by the Standing Committees.

In an historic meeting the following day, January 12, Mayor Palmer and the Conference of Mayors Leadership met with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (CA) in her Speaker's conference room to establish a new partnership on key domestic priorities impacting cities and families. The mayors presented Speaker Pelosi with the 10-Point Plan and discussed the details with her. The Speaker welcomed the policy recommendations, said that she will work with mayors on the proposals, and stressed, "I want the cities to know that they have a friend in the Speaker's Office."

The 10-Point Plan is now being sent to every member of Congress, President George W. Bush, the Administration, and the 2008 presidential candidates. Mayor Palmer has requested that the Standing Committees of The U.S. Conference of Mayors work closely with new Chairs and Ranking Members of the Congressional committees on these key priorities.



1.

Energy and Environmental Block Grant

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mayors from across the nation, working through The U.S. Conference of Mayors, are leading the nation in taking action on the critical issue of global warming. Local governments are in a unique position to implement and coordinate local action that will lead to significant and real reductions in energy use and its impact on global warming.

When our federal government refused to take action on the issue of Climate Change, over 350 cities pledged their commitment to the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement to call attention to the global warming crisis and to begin development of local programs to reduce carbon emissions. This community-based, grass roots effort is key to a successful national strategy to reduce our energy dependence, decrease carbon emissions, and improve the environment.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors proposes creation of an Energy and Environmental Block Grant, modeled after the highly successful Community Development Block Grant, to provide funding directly to cities and urban counties for programs that 1) improve community energy efficiency; 2) develop and implement community strategies to reduce carbon emissions, including but not limited to achieving “carbon free” buildings by 2030; 3) develop and implement community and transportation energy conservation programs; 4) encourage the development of new technologies and systems to decrease our dependence on foreign oil; and 5) promotion and development of alternative/renewable energy sources. Funds could also be used to support local non-profit organizations to meet the objectives of the program. The Block Grant would be distributed under a formula based on population and other factors, modeled after CDBG, and include measurable objectives.

Initial funding for the Block Grant could come from (in part or in whole) from revenues derived from the proposed repeal of the 2004 tax cuts for the oil and gas industry and royalty payment from off-shore oil and gas leases.

Eligible activities under the Block Grant would include, but not be limited to, development of comprehensive energy, environment, and climate protection strategic plans, weatherization programs, energy efficiency audits, alternative fuel infrastructure, incentives for energy efficiency technologies, promotion of public transit, methane recovery programs, conversion of alternative fuel fleets, public education, brownfields redevelopment, land-use policies, etc.

2.

Federal-Local Partnership on Crime Prevention

VIOLENT CRIME RISING, FEDERAL RESOURCES CUT, TRUST FUND NEEDED

For a growing number of cities across the United States, violent crime is accelerating at an alarming pace. The FBI's Uniform Crime Report for 2005 showed the largest single year percent increase in violent crime in 14 years. This trend continued in 2006 according to a Police Executive Research Forum survey of 55 law enforcement agencies, with many cities seeing double-digit increases in murder, assault and robbery rates.

Mayors and police chiefs have identified a number of contributing factors for this rise in crime including a growing culture of violence among youth, gangs, a proliferation of illegal guns, drug activity, the re-entry of ex-offenders, and social problems related to school truancy and a lack of jobs. Funding for major Department of Justice law enforcement programs has been slashed in recent years, with the COPS hiring program (once funded at almost \$1.5 billion) and Local Law Enforcement Block Grant program (once funded at approximately \$523 million) both being eliminated.

To address these issues, the nation's mayors are calling for a new crime initiative to restore the federal-local partnership on hometown security. As was done under the 1994 Crime Bill, mayors are calling for a federal trust fund to provide flexible resources for the deployment of law enforcement personnel, support local innovations, fight domestic violence, and fund technology that helps fight crime. Specifically, funding for COPS and the local block grant should be restored, and mayors fully support strong accountability standards tied to these grants. In addition, resources are needed to help promote crime prevention and provide positive alternatives for youth, and address the need to provide alternatives for the more than 600,000 ex-offenders who are coming back into cities each year.

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3.

Community Development Block Grants

SUCCESSFUL RESULTS, THREATENED, DOUBLE RESOURCES

For 32 years, the Community Development Block Grant program has served as a vital resource to help cities, counties, and states meet their unique community development, affordable housing, and economic development needs. Since its enactment in 1974, the program has been, and continues to be, a critical affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization tool for communities. While providing essential services to citizens nationwide, CDBG also improves local economies. According to HUD, in FY 2004 alone, CDBG provided funds for thousands of activities, assisting over 23 million persons and households. CDBG funds a broad spectrum of activities, including: expanding homeownership opportunities, elimination of slums and blight, improved infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer systems, libraries, fire stations, community centers, adult day care and after school care for children, homeless facilities, employment training, transportation services, crime awareness, business and job creation. In fact, according to HUD, more than 78,000 jobs were created by CDBG in FY 2004 alone.

But over the last several years, CDBG formula grants have been significantly reduced. The program was also targeted for elimination at HUD, and transferred to the Department of Commerce along with 17 other programs at a greatly reduced funding level. In FY 2006, the program was cut by 10 percent, and in FY2005, the cut was 5 percent, resulting in a 15 percent cut in two years. A survey released in March, 2006, by the Conference of Mayors and 20 other organizations found that the reduced formula allocations has had a substantial negative effect on entitlement communities and states.

The nation's mayors recommend that CDBG formula funding be doubled to \$8 billion. This additional funding would address the delayed projects and activities which have come about because of cuts to CDBG, and further build on the proven record of an effective affordable housing and revitalization program.

4.

Affordable Housing Fund

Last October, the House passed H.R. 1461, the “Federal Housing Finance Reform Act of 2006,” creating a strong, world-class regulator for the Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSEs), Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The legislation would also create a new affordable housing fund with the GSEs contributing initially 3.5 percent increasing to five percent of their after-tax earnings for projects in underserved areas.

The nation’s mayors support an affordable housing fund to be administered by the GSEs, (not by HUD or state housing agencies) funded by at least 5 percent of their profits, with local government projects eligible to be assisted.

5.

Public Housing

Operating Subsidies: On December 28, HUD sent a memo to public housing agencies informing them that they would have to operate with 76 cents for every dollar needed for their operations. This memo, announcing a 24 percent cut, did not take into account an already existing problem: HUD’s budget request was \$300 million or more below what the public housing agencies actually needed. When the Continuing Resolution expires on February 15, the situation could actually get worse with Congress holding spending to the FY 2006 level. This would result in an even lower funding level for operating subsidies.

The nation’s mayors support restoration of all public housing operating subsidies in FY 2007, including funding that was not part of the budget request but that is now needed because of utility costs previously not anticipated.

HOPE VI: HOPE VI for severely distressed public housing has been targeted for elimination over the past several years, but has survived through nominal congressional appropriations. The nation’s mayors support the restoration of HOPE VI to a funding level that returns the program to an effective national tool for public housing development.



6.

Infrastructure Tax Incentives and Bonds

TRANSPORTATION, WATER, WASTEWATER, BROWNFIELDS, ENERGY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS, SCHOOLS, AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Congested highways, crowded schools, transit demand exceeding resources, aging water facilities and a crumbling energy infrastructure are urgent reminders of the infrastructure crisis that is jeopardizing America's prosperity. From transit to energy, this critical infrastructure has been neglected for far too long by the Federal government and it is now deteriorating at an alarming rate. And, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers' 2005 Report Card for America's Infrastructure, the nation's overall infrastructure received a D grade with the Report Card calling for \$1.6 trillion to alleviate our nation's infrastructure needs.

To address this growing infrastructure threat, the nation's mayors are calling for tax incentives, bonds, and other measures to support local and state efforts, and stimulate private sector participation, to improve infrastructure including transportation, water, wastewater, brownfields, energy, telecommunications, schools and affordable housing options in America's cities. These tax incentives and bonds would help create hundreds of thousands of family-wage jobs and revitalize our critical infrastructure across the country at the same time.



7.

Competitive Workforce

In this time of global competition, America's economic health depends on the development of a skilled workforce with the knowledge and ability to adapt to an ever-changing economy. Baby boomers are retiring at increasing rates, and the next generation of workers does not have the required post-secondary degree attainment nor the necessary technical skills to replace them. More importantly, and more alarmingly, our emerging workforce is increasingly disconnected from educational pathways and the world of work. High school dropout rates in some cities are as high as 50 percent, and the youth unemployment rate is at its highest level in decades.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors believes that it is crucial to support a sustained commitment to local workforce development programs that produce measurable results to ensure our continued competitiveness in the 21st century global economy. As such, the nation's mayors call for timely reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act, and full funding of its programs to ensure a significant investment in lifelong learning for every American citizen. In addition, resources are needed to help train and provide employment opportunities for the more than 600,000 ex-offenders who are coming back into cities every year.

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8.

Children and Youth

No Child Left Behind: Mayors know that better schools make better cities. As they work to more effectively align city policies and programs that affect children and families, mayors are taking on an increasingly stronger leadership role on issues related to public schools. As such, it is critical that **mayors be involved in every aspect of No Child Left Behind reauthorization, including discussions on full funding, teacher quality, performance standards, testing and evaluation, and methods of assessment and accountability.**

Children's Health Insurance: Mayors recognize that student achievement is inextricably linked to early childhood programs, health and nutrition, social service supports and parental involvement. As such, it is crucial that **funding for programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) be increased to their full authorization levels.**

Summer Youth: And, to further address these issues, **the nation's mayors are calling for a new summer youth employment initiative to provide funding directly to cities and urban counties for programs that 1) offer educational work experiences that provide linkage between job skills and classroom learning standards; 2) provide skills training and education strategies to young people as part of a local workforce development system that aligns with the labor market demands of local economies; and 3) establish opportunities for skills development and career exposure to young people.**

After-School Youth: Mayors also call for an **increased funding commitment directly allocated to cities for quality after-school programs.** Most specifically, it is crucial to strengthen and fully-fund the 21st Century Learning Centers and other after-school programming.



9.

Homeland Security

9-11 COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS NOT COMPLETED

While significant progress has been made on homeland security since 9/11, more can and should be done to make sure that our nation's first responders are prepared to prevent, respond and recover from either attacks or natural disasters. We must continue the emphasis on key issues related to airport, port, rail, transit, and border security.

Interoperable Communications: First, a major concern is the limited funding to assist cities and their first responders to achieve full communications interoperability. The Office of Management and Budget estimated interoperability solutions would cost more than \$15 billion, but since 2003, the Department of Homeland Security has only awarded \$2.9 billion in funding for state and local interoperable communications efforts. **The nation's mayors are calling on a well-funded, stand-alone, Federal emergency communications grant program to carry out initiatives to improve interoperable communications, including flexible direct grants to cities and their first responders.**

Transit Security: Second, with more than 7.8 billion trips taken on public transit in the first nine months of 2006, securing this critical infrastructure and protecting riders from terrorist attacks must be a major priority. Congress has allocated only \$386 million to transit security through Fiscal Year 2006, yet according to the American Public Transportation Association, transit agencies have identified \$6 billion in security needs. **The nation's mayors are calling for a flexible Federal transit security initiative to improve security in the areas of communications, surveillance, detection systems, personnel and training. As we have done with aviation, securing public transit is a Federal responsibility and should not require a local or state match. Furthermore, security funds should go directly to the operator of that system or the jurisdiction providing the security.**

Funding Mechanism: Third, we must continue to make improvements in the grant application process and delivery mechanism for federal homeland security resources to make sure that the process is user friendly, the funding quickly reaches cities, and that funding is flexible to meet local needs.

10.

Unfunded Mandates/Preemptions

The passage of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 was a positive step towards restricting the ability of Congress to impose new, costly unfunded mandates on state and local governments, or preempt their ability to fund critical local programs. However, the issue of unfunded federal mandates remains a major problem. For example, members of Congress continue to propose legislation that would preempt local governments in areas such as internet access fee collection and wireless telecommunications services.

Therefore, mayors call for new legislation to strengthen the federal-local partnership and further restrict the ability of Congress to impose unfunded federal mandates or preempt local authority.

